

PRESS RELEASE

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THE NATIONALISATION OF CHILDHOOD

The Government's new strategy for children undermines parents and puts more vulnerable children at risk.

In a bid to reduce inequality, the Government has drawn up a detailed strategy which prescribes outcomes for every child, “from conception to age 19.” These outcomes are to be measured by Government agencies. Parents are expected to comply with them. To accomplish its strategy, the Government is merging child protection services with the education system and putting every child’s ID into a national computer database to monitor their use of services.

This agenda is both dangerous and misguided, warns Jill Kirby in *The Nationalisation of Childhood*, published today, Sunday 5 March by the Centre for Policy Studies. Her report analyses for the first time the full scope of the Government’s agenda for children and its impact on the relationship between parents, children and the state.

Based on the Chancellor’s doctrine of “**progressive universalism**”, the Government’s new strategy enables it to **intervene in the lives of all 11 million children in the country in the hope that this will help the most vulnerable of them**. But, as recent evidence from Sure Start confirms, this is more likely to divert attention from the most needy, leaving them at greater risk. It also directly contradicts the Prime Minister’s stated desire to provide more “personalised and responsive” public services.

To implement the new strategy, **all services to children and families are to be centred in the education system**, using a network of Children’s Centres for birth to five year olds; and Extended Schools for five to 14 year olds. In what the Government describes as “a new frontier for the Welfare State”, universal childcare will be available through this network on a “dawn to dusk” basis.

As Jill Kirby concludes:

In the guise of a caring, child-centred administration, this Government is making a radical change in the balance of authority between parents, children and the state. It is nationalising the upbringing of children.

Because it refuses to identify the real-life causes of the worst outcomes for children, such as young lone motherhood and family disruption, the Government is incapable of helping the most vulnerable. At the same time, it is undermining the most reliable source of security and wellbeing for every child: the presence and commitment of both parents.

NOTES TO EDITORS

1. *The Nationalisation of Childhood* by Jill Kirby is published today Sunday 5 March 2006 by the Centre for Policy Studies. Price £7.50.
2. Jill Kirby is a policy analyst who writes and broadcasts on family issues. A graduate of Bristol University, she qualified as a solicitor and practised in a leading City law firm until the birth of the first of her three sons. She chairs the CPS/Civitas Family Policy Project and is the author of the acclaimed *Broken Hearts: family decline and the consequences for society* (Centre for Policy Studies, 2002); *Choosing to be different: women, work and the family* (CPS, 2003); and *The Price of Parenthood* (CPS, 2005).