The Scottish Government has this month re-launched the successful ‘Play Talk Read’ campaign which is aimed at encouraging parents with children under the age of three to play, talk and read to their children.

This national drive includes TV adverts and roadshows.

Announcing plans for the campaign during a visit to North Edinburgh Childcare Centre, Education Secretary Michael Russell said:

“The Play, Talk, Read campaign highlights how the first few years represent a golden opportunity for us to give our children the best possible start in life.

“Simply by playing, talking and reading with our children more often we can make a real difference to their development.

“Improving the life chances of all our children is a key priority for this government. By the age of three a child's brain is three-quarters of its adult size, with 50 per cent of language skills already developed, making the need to get the early years right beyond debate.

“As well as the benefits to the individual it makes good financial sense for the wider community. Every one pound invested in a child’s early years can generate an eventual saving of nine pounds for the taxpayer.”

Minister for Children and Young People Angela Constance said the renewed campaign was just the start of a package of measures aimed at making the Early Years a key priority for the Scottish Government.

Ms Constance explained:

“There is growing and conclusive evidence that what happens before birth and through the early years of a child's life dictates their longer-term life chances. The Play, Talk, Read campaign is crucial as it has proved very effective in encouraging parents to engage with their children right from the start.

“There are hard-edged economic benefits to early intervention. Early and effective intervention can significantly reduce costs to the state, both in the short and long term, and deliver better results for the individuals involved.”
“That is why I will be ready and willing to do whatever is necessary. We will start by investing £750,000 in expanding this groundbreaking programme. In addition we are developing a National Parenting Strategy which will ensure parents are supported to help their children reach their full potential. We will also establish a £50 million Early Years Change Fund and introduce legislation early on in this Parliamentary term to ensure that investment in early years is not just an optional extra.”

The Play, Talk, Read campaign has been independently evaluated showing:

😊 84% parents realised that the more they played, talked and read, the greater the benefits would be for their child’s learning and development

😊 Those aware of the campaign were more likely to agree strongly that they should play, talk and read more, so that their child becomes a better learner

😊 The campaign clearly inspired parents with 79 per cent saying they would try out some of the ideas suggested at home

😊 All three behaviours were deemed more important for learning and behaviour than previously, with each reaching high levels: playing (82%), talking (83%) and reading (76%). In the case of reading this was a 16 per cent uplift in perceived importance, following the campaign

😊 Frequency of actual playing and reading behaviours increased following the campaign, with a 7% uplift in those playing several times a day and a seven per cent rise to 45% for those reading at least once a day post campaign. Frequency of talking remained at a similarly high levels both pre and post campaign.

Useful Links:  [www.playtalkread.org](http://www.playtalkread.org)  
[www.scotland.gov.uk](http://www.scotland.gov.uk)