

Celebrating children's rights with Cherie Booth

Cherie Booth QC headed a line up of leading figures championing children's rights to mark the coming of age of the Children's Legal Centre.

Almost 200 representatives from government, children's organisations and the legal profession joined in the 21st birthday celebration seminar, which took place at the Law Society in London in March.

Ms Booth, praising the achievements of the Centre, said: 'I sincerely hope the Centre will continue to support and promote the rights of children and families nationally and internationally.

'However, I would also like to think that the day will come when the need for such an organisation is

no longer there, as we will have arrived at a point where children are acknowledged as possessing rights which deserve equal protection to the rights of adults.'

Dame Brenda Hale, the Court of Appeal judge, speaking on '*21 Years of Children's Rights in England and Wales*' compared the topics covered in the first issue of the Centre's magazine *Childright*, with those highlighted in 2003. She said while much had been achieved, many of the problems dealt with 20 years ago were still topical today.

She concluded: 'Through it all, the Children's Legal Centre has lived up to its early promise of cutting across departmental and professional boundaries: it has done more than

that: it has shown the rest of us how the concerns of departments and professionals are meaningless unless they are also the concerns of the children themselves.

'One thing that the last 21 years has shown us is that the price of respecting children's rights is eternal vigilance: they are so much less likely to be able to protect them for themselves that we all owe it to them to do so.'

Other speakers were Professor Jaap Doek, of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, Professor William Duncan of the Hague Conference on Private International Law, and Fred Tyson-Brown of the young people's campaigning group Right Here, Right Now.

Established as the major UK project for the International Year of the Child, the Children's Legal Centre, based at the University, is a national charity staffed by lawyers and experts in child law. ■



Lady Justice Hale reflects on the first issue of *Childright*



Speakers at the 21st birthday celebration, from left, Cherie Booth, Fred Tyson-Brown, Jaap Doek and Carolyn Hamilton



Cherie Booth with Children's Legal Centre staff