

Children's Plan 14–19 Expert Group Report

department for
children, schools and families

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Introduction

1. A range of influences will be critical to children and young people's life chances over the next 10 years. Globalisation will demand that young people have higher skills levels as they move into adult life – both in terms of qualifications and social and emotional skills. Society will be increasingly diverse; opportunities through travel, the media, new technologies and higher family income will be greater than ever before. These factors mean that young people will have even greater opportunities than now, although the transition to adulthood will become ever more complex. Some young people will find these changes difficult to cope with but with appropriate and timely support **all** young people will be able to improve and meet their aspirations for a successful future.

Background

2. The Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families announced in summer 2007 that he would be launching a nationwide consultation to draw up a Children's Plan for England. The creation of the new Department, focused exclusively on the needs of children and their families, provides a unique opportunity for Government to set out its emerging vision for children, young people and the services that support them.
3. The Children's Plan will set out how the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) will achieve its key objectives to:
 - secure the well-being and health of children and young people;
 - safeguard the young and vulnerable;
 - achieve world-class standards in education;
 - close the gap in educational achievement for children from disadvantaged backgrounds;
 - ensure young people are participating and achieving their potential to 18 and beyond; and
 - keep children and young people on the path to success.
4. As part of the consultation process and development of the Children's Plan, three Expert Groups, covering the age ranges 0-7, 8-13 and 14-19, were established in order to cover the full 0-19 age range. The groups' deliberations were set in the context of the Department's strategic objectives and departmental funding allocations announced in the Comprehensive Spending Review 2007.
5. The groups were presented with information on outcomes and current policy, but did not spend time revisiting existing policy in order to concentrate on developing ideas for improvement. The full terms of reference for the groups is attached at Annex A.

6. The Secretary of State asked for a report from each group that identified priority issues and made recommendations on where to focus available resources and capacity. All three Expert Group reports are being published concurrently.

14-19 Expert Group

7. The 14-19 Expert Group was chaired by Jackie Fisher, Chief Executive and Principal of Newcastle College, and Jim Knight, DCSF Minister of State for Schools and Learners. Membership of the group was drawn from a range of sectors and settings, including senior managers from schools and colleges, health professionals, senior police officers, and representatives of national organisations including The Association of Directors of Children's Services, Parenting UK, The Children's Society, and Barnardo's. A full list of 14-19 Expert Group members is attached at Annex B.
8. The group met four times between September and November 2007:
 - the focus of the first meeting was on prioritising issues for debate;
 - the second meeting allowed further debate in more depth on the issues identified, informed by early feedback from the 'Time to Talk' consultation, and the group started to set out the main points for their report;
 - the third meeting focused on a discussion of two cross-cutting themes – Universal, Targeted and Specialist Services, and Culture Change – and on agreement of the final recommendations to be made to the Secretary of State; and
 - all three Expert Groups met on 19 November to identify points they wished collectively to emphasise. These included: the importance of the workforce and clear roles within different professions; the need for a common language between different workforce areas; and the importance of the role of the school.
9. Within the context of the Every Child Matters and 14-19 reforms, the group agreed that much good progress had already been made in local areas. During discussions a set of principles emerged that guided the debate and the formation of the priorities and recommendations covered in this report:
 - the importance of putting the young person at the centre when considering what support they need, and providing more opportunities for young people to input their 'voice' to influence and direct service delivery;
 - recognising that whilst preparedness for adult life is important, the 14-19 phase is not just about transition to adulthood and is a valuable time of life in its own right;
 - a need to focus less on crisis management and more on preventative strategies and early intervention when things start to go wrong, and concentrate less on being critical of young people and more on enabling and celebrating achievement; and
 - an awareness of what is already working; there are many examples of excellent existing policy and practice that could be collated and disseminated.

Themes

10. All the groups were asked to consider the four themes of Positive Childhood, Parents and Families, Personalisation, and Prevention. Inevitably, given the breadth of these themes, it would not have been possible for the groups to consider the full range of potential issues for children, young people and their families and to write a completely comprehensive report; hence the groups were asked in their first meeting to identify the areas within this theme that they wished to focus on to guide their debate towards areas relevant to each age range.
11. Each of the themed chapters sets out why the theme is important, describes some of the challenges the 14-19 Expert Group felt needed to be overcome if the Department's key objectives are to be met, and sets out the group's recommendations within each theme. A brief summary of discussions follows:
- **Positive childhood:** the group discussed the transitions that young people experience in the 14-19 phase, how schools, colleges and young people's services can best support young people through these transitions, and the critical need to capture, listen to and act upon the 'voice' of young people;
 - **Parents and families:** discussion focused on the need to support parents and families, educate the parents of the future, motivate more parents and adults to act as role models, and improve a range of skills that are critical to successful parenting;
 - **Personalisation:** which centred on building on existing curriculum reforms to improve the learning experience – particularly for vulnerable groups, the critical importance of Information Advice and Guidance, and the need for services to have clear roles and be better integrated; and
 - **Prevention:** where the group discussed the need to refocus support systems and resources towards the much earlier identification of problems, and to identify earlier those young people who are vulnerable or at risk.

Structure of the report

12. This report includes:
- Chapter 1: some initial evidence and research information around the 14-19 phase, although some evidence may also have been included for earlier age groups where it was relevant or of interest to the Expert Group's work. This chapter should be read in conjunction with the evidence report *Children and Young People Today: Evidence to support the development of the Children's Plan* published by DCSF in November 2007;
- Chapters 2-5: discussions and recommendations around the four key themes which were set by the Secretary of State to inform the groups' discussion, a summary of recommendations is attached at Annex C; and
- Chapter 6: focuses on how to deliver the changes in practice.

13. The report reflects the collective view of the 14-19 Expert Group rather than the views of any particular individuals. It was not possible to reflect all the points made in the group's discussions in this report. Throughout the process, however, the richness of the wide-ranging debate has helped to inform the Department's thinking. The main points the group agreed on are set out in bold and numbered. The group believes that a focus on these issues will contribute significantly to better outcomes for young people and families and recommends that the Secretary of State consider these in the development of the national Children's Plan.

Chapter 1: Evidence

- 1.1 There are over three and a half million young people aged 14-19 in England. According to the mid-year 2006 population estimates for England¹ the number of 14-19s is 3,988,000. The number of young people is forecast to fall in the next 10 years before beginning to rise slowly in 2022. A similar picture is evident when this group is considered as a proportion of the whole population (see table below).

	Numbers ('000)	As percentage of total population
2006	3,988	8
2007	3,981	8
2008	3,950	8
2009	3,910	8
2010	3,862	7
2011	3,808	7
2012	3,752	7
2017	3,514	6
2022	3,781	7
2027	4,104	7

- 1.2 The majority of young people aged 14-19 are white (86 per cent). The next biggest ethnic group is Asian at 7 per cent, followed by black (3 per cent), mixed race (2 per cent), and Chinese and other ethnic groups (1 per cent). The predominant religion among those aged 15-19 is Christian (65 per cent), followed by Muslim (5 per cent). However, a significant 19 per cent state that they have no faith. There is great regional variation in faith with London having the lowest Christian population (51 per cent) and the highest Muslim population (14 per cent).
- 1.3 There are approximately 150,000 young people aged 15-19 who consider themselves as having a limiting long-term illness. This is about 5 per cent of the 15-19 population. Slightly more males (5.3 per cent) than females (4.9 per cent) consider themselves as having a limiting long-term illness.

¹ ONS (2007) *Mid Year 2006 Population Estimates*

- 1.4 Young people's educational attainment is improving. The proportion of young people leaving school with five good GCSEs continues to rise, from 45 per cent in 1997 to 60 per cent in 2007; in addition, the proportion achieving five good GCSEs including English and Maths has increased from 36 per cent to 46 per cent².
- 1.5 However, the gap in achievement between pupils from low income families, as measured by uptake of free school meals (FSM), and the average remains stubbornly constant³. White British boys in receipt of FSM, black Caribbean FSM boys and white British FSM girls are all doing significantly less well than the national average. Likewise, while the results for children in care have improved, their achievement remains significantly below the average.
- 1.6 The last 30 years have seen major changes in young people's school-to-work pathways and more young people are now staying on in education. There have also been improvements in the proportions of young people entering higher education. 78 per cent of 16-year-olds were in full-time education in 2006 compared to 70 per cent in 1997. However, by age 17 the incidence of full-time education has already fallen to 65 per cent⁴.
- 1.7 Young people are learning in a wide range of institutions and settings. 30 per cent of those aged 16 or 17 (in their first year post compulsory schooling) were studying full time in a maintained school; 7 per cent were studying in independent schools; 11 per cent in sixth form colleges; 30 per cent in further education colleges; and 0.5 per cent in higher education institutions.
- 1.8 Participation in education post-16 is relatively low by international standards – the UK is ranked 24th out of 29 OECD countries for participation in education at age 17.
- 1.9 Around one in ten of those aged 16-18 (about 200,000⁵) are not in any form of education, employment or training (NEET). This level has remained constant over the last 10 years. A further 12 per cent of 16-18-year-olds are in employment without training.
- 1.10 Research suggests that rates of mental health problems among young people probably rose between 1974 and 1999 and then levelled off⁶. In 2004 more than one in ten 11-16-year-olds (12 per cent) had a clinically diagnosed mental disorder; figures for boys and girls were 13 per cent and 10.2 per cent respectively⁷.
- 1.11 A significant number of young people receive help from children's social services. In a census week in February 2005 nearly 67,000 young people aged 14-18 received support from local social services. In March 2006 around 22,500 14-18-year-olds were being looked after by a local authority.

2 DfES (2007) *GCSE and Equivalent Results in England 2006/07 (Provisional)*, Statistical First Release 34/2007

3 DfES (2007) *National Curriculum Assessments, GCSE and equivalent Attainment and Post-16 Attainment by Pupil Characteristics, England, 2005/06*, Statistical First Release 04/2007

4 DfES (2007) *Participation in Education, Training and Employment by 16-18 year olds in England: 2005 and 2006*, Statistical First Release 22/2007

5 DfES (2007) *Participation in Education, Training and Employment by 16-18 year olds in England: 2005 and 2006*, Statistical First Release 22/2007

6 Cited in: Green, H., McGinnity, A., Meltzer, H., Ford, T. and Goodman, R. (2005) *Mental health of children and young people in Great Britain, 2004*, National Statistics

7 Categorized as: 'emotional disorders', including anxiety and depression; 'conduct disorders', 'hyperkinetic disorder', and 'less common disorders' such as autistic spectrum disorder and eating disorders

- 1.12 A minority of young people account for the majority of offences committed by young people. Three-quarters (75 per cent) of young people had not offended in the last 12 months, and of the 25 per cent that had committed an offence many had offended only occasionally or committed relatively trivial offences. Seven per cent of all young people were classified as frequent offenders – they had committed an offence six or more times in the last 12 months. This group were responsible for the vast majority of offences – 83 per cent.
- 1.13 In August 2007 the population of 15-19-year-olds in custody in England and Wales was 7,808 (2,473 were 15-17-year-olds and 5,408 were 18-19-year-olds)⁸. The UK has one of the largest proportions of children in custody (as a percentage of the overall prison population) although accurate international comparisons are hard to make.
- 1.14 For pupils with special educational needs, effective teaching approaches are based on considered and ongoing assessment and strategies to support independence. Combinations of approaches to behaviour, emotional and social development are more effective than single approaches alone. Mainstreaming should be supported by a differentiated pedagogy and support mechanisms.

8 Ministry of Justice and NOMS (August 2007) *Population in Custody*, SfR

Chapter 2: Positive childhood

Introduction

- 2.1 The years from 14-19 see young people making the transition from being children to young adults – a transition involving significant physical, emotional and social changes and, for many, a journey from compulsory schooling to employment, either directly, or through forms of further and higher education and training.
- 2.2 However, the 14-19 Expert Group thought that childhood is not just about training to be an adult, and that it should be a positive and valuable experience in itself. In discussions, they focused on how children and young people might be better prepared for transitions in life and how to measure preparedness for, and positive achievement of, those transitions.

Services

- 2.3 Government and support services should be committed to supporting and promoting the well-being of all children and young people in the broadest sense. This includes helping them to understand and manage the risks of today's world and ensuring that they are able to benefit from today's opportunities.
- 2.4 The group thought that, for 14-19-year-olds, it is not just their learning experience at school or college that is important. Every 14-19-year-old should also have the opportunity for positive relationships and experiences outside learning, at work, and in leisure, social and family situations. This will ensure that they have experiences that they value, as well as giving them the best possible start to achieve their potential and contribute as citizens in the future. For many young people, securing a job with an employer who is committed to providing opportunities for employees to learn as they work is an excellent option.
- 2.5 14-19-year-olds are subject to specific and changing influences – some of which may impact negatively on their well-being. Improving positive interaction between children, young people and adults could be one of the key factors in preparing them for transitions in life, improving the community experience and engaging more young people in learning to get them on the road to success.
- 2.6 Mentoring has proved to be a helpful and successful approach in raising aspirations and achievements, particularly when it leads to a clear action plan for the young person. It is especially relevant for those who are vulnerable, have a disability, have special educational needs, or who may have no proper or effective adult role models. Increased exposure to employer mentors and the world of work will also help to provide positive experiences and interaction with adults in a different setting. In practice, mentoring could operate in different ways, and at different levels, including peer-to-peer mentoring, trusted adult role models, and employers. Some members highlighted the issues this might bring, particularly

around the skills of individuals, finding enough high quality mentors and funding, but the **(i) concept of a national entitlement to mentoring support, according to age and need**, was agreed as one of the main recommendations from the group.

- 2.7 The group discussed the opportunity for schools and colleges to act as a central point for prevention, intervention and effective service delivery. Schools, colleges, children and youth centres could:
- build further on their role in the community;
 - encourage and support a positive approach to equality and diversity; and
 - position themselves as centres of broader provision and services for young people, parents and the wider community.

The group recognised that, if this broader direction was introduced, it would bring additional pressures, including the need to recognise and reflect the impact on school and college inspection systems and performance measures. The group recommends that the Department **(ii) consider how to build further on the role of schools, colleges, and children and youth centres as central and important places in the community.**

- 2.8 Schools, colleges and support systems need to adapt and change if we are to improve the opportunities for all children and young people to make successful transitions. Systems should focus on ensuring that those who require additional support get what they need quickly to help them get back on track as soon as possible. The group recommends that **(iii) more work should be done to clarify what support is required through transition stages, and to identify those in need and tailor support appropriately.** This is especially important for vulnerable young people, but the group was keen to ensure that all young people are encouraged and supported to raise their aspirations whatever their starting point in terms of ability or situation.
- 2.9 To help inform and improve the experience of 14-19-year-olds, more should be done to seek and act on their views. Members confirmed that where activities such as young people's surveys were operating, the young people felt that their views were being listened to and valued. The group agreed that what is important is not just that feedback is sought, or a survey is undertaken, but how seriously the school, college or service takes the information that comes from it. This includes how the institution responds, by adapting the service or provision and closing the feedback loop. The group recommends that **(iv) all schools and colleges be asked to introduce a formal system to capture and act on the 'voice' of young people. Accountability and inspection frameworks should also take account of the level and impact of young people's feedback as well as the degree to which these systems are learner-led.**
- 2.10 Understanding the transition phases that young people experience is critical to enabling us to identify and develop appropriate support. Transition is also about opening up the right routes and choices for young people. The group thought that more work could be done to look ahead to the next stage, including employment where appropriate, and establish how well prepared young people are for those transitions.

2.11 Preparedness for transition might be defined through a combination of positive achievements and qualities; once defined, the task of measurement can be considered. Such a definition might include a range of factors:

- school or college attainment – academic and vocational qualifications;
- skills, including those sought by employers, such as communicating effectively and teamworking;
- understanding the importance of citizenship and being healthy;
- awareness – of opportunities, choices, and sources of advice about qualifications, careers and life issues; and
- social and emotional skills, such as self-awareness and control, confidence, resilience and optimism.

2.12 The group recognised that some of the data suitable for measurement are being captured already and some are likely to be relatively easy to define, but others, like resilience, are likely to require more work around both definitions and measurement. Some form of preparedness measure might help to make the system responsible and accountable for the choices young people make and ensure that managing transition is given greater weight alongside attainment and aspiration. The group recommends that DCSF **(v) undertake more work to identify and consider introducing a preparedness measure that would add value by supporting young people to make successful transitions.** This might also help to address issues around low participation in identifying what additional, or specific, provision and support young people might need in order to keep them engaged in learning.

Chapter 3: Parents and families

Introduction

- 3.1 Parents are the biggest single influence throughout their children's lives. Research shows that parental involvement in a child's learning between the ages of 7 and 16 is a stronger determinant of educational attainment at age 16 than family background, size of family and level of parental education.
- 3.2 Parenting is complicated for the 14-19 age group, as young people become increasingly independent and their friends become increasingly important to them. Successful parenting will have a mediating effect on negative factors and appropriate support must be provided to ensure that young people, their parents and families, no matter what their background, all have high aspirations for the future and are able to access the support that is available to them.
- 3.3 Public services therefore need to be more responsive and meet the needs of parents and families with high aspirations and expectations for their children. A culture also needs to be developed so that more parents continue to be supportive of their children's learning beyond primary school age. Alternative support approaches, such as mentoring, also need to be available for those young people who do not have good, or effective, parental role models.
- 3.4 In their discussions under this theme the group considered how to develop effective parenting education which includes support for parents and parenting skills for young people.

Support for parents and families

- 3.5 More needs to be done to support adult parents and also to educate the young people who are parents now, or will be the parents of the future. This is particularly important for those young people with multiple risk factors, such as young people who don't have parents in their lives or those who are in the youth justice system. In some cases, we are dealing with parents who are still children themselves.
- 3.6 Group members discussed their experiences of intervening when young people were at risk of dropping out or lapsing into bad behaviour. Some members favoured a one-to-one case management approach but others felt that this had been tried before and proved too resource intensive to manage.

- 3.7 The group discussed the lack of universal support available to parents. It seems that parents of teenagers are worried about accessing statutory services which are perceived to play a policing or punishment role. Interventions for parents of teenagers may be seen as only necessary when things go wrong or for those who cannot cope. Other organisations, such as those in the voluntary sector, can often provide helpful links with parents, families and young people outside the education system. In discussion the group agreed that:
- we need communities and society to promote the importance and understand the challenge of being a parent;
 - services need to work harder to engage groups who typically under use services, but who would benefit most, by ensuring services are easy to access and available out of work hours;
 - the workforce should reflect client groups, for example so that male parenting practitioners are able to work with fathers; and
 - outreach and drop-in services and home visits should be permitted as a successful way to engage families.
- 3.8 Another challenge is the need to change the level of parents' engagement post-primary school. Schools and colleges need to do more to welcome and engage more parents. This might be achieved by encouraging more schools and colleges to act as a focal point in the community, perhaps with a 'space' for parents within the institution. The group acknowledged the good work already being done in this area under the extended schools policy and recommends that **(vi) more research be done to test the effectiveness of developing the extended school concept further**. The group also felt that the approach could be used in further education and recommends that **(vii) the concept of 'extended colleges' be explored**.
- 3.9 The boundaries of parental responsibility for the 14-19 age group are complex, making it harder to engage some parents in their children's education and learning. The group felt that the responsibility of parents does not end when the child reaches 16. Members felt there was a significant opportunity to address this by encouraging and making better use of positive parent and adult role models. They noted that it was also important to provide access to a wide range of suitable, and diverse, individuals so that a young person would have more, and more appropriate, choices when seeking support. The group recommends that **(viii) more parents and adults should be encouraged to act as role models in schools, colleges and the wider community**. This would provide young people who have poor parental or family support with a positive influence.
- 3.10 The group discussed the issues for young people who are not in a 'home' environment and thought it was particularly important to identify and address the needs of those in the youth justice system. These young people face multiple disadvantages and need additional support and guidance, including on the responsibilities of being a good parent. They also need to be supported and prepared for their release, and those who support them inside and outside the system need to be properly trained. The group recommends that **(ix) more should be done to understand and address the support needs of young people in the youth justice system, and the workers who support them, with a view to finding the most effective way for them to re-enter the universal system with reasonable expectations of success**.

- 3.11 Successful parenting calls for the development and application of a range of skills including 'soft' skills, relationship skills, awareness of health and mental health issues, and critical thinking skills. The group recommends that **(x) the scope to improve development of these skills through school and college activity should be considered**. This might be achieved by building more time into the curriculum to allow coaching and guidance time by ensuring that some members of the workforce are trained to deliver these skills, and by examining whether the accountability system can be developed to reflect this improvement.
- 3.12 We know that parents and families have a significant role in advising and guiding children and young people. A key tool to engage parents and raise their aspirations is through the provision of high quality Information Advice and Guidance (IAG). This would help equip them to be better, and more informed, 'influencers' of young people. The group's view was that parents and families are currently neglected as a primary customer of IAG and they recommend that **(xi) more should be done to establish the IAG requirements of parents and families and their preferred methods of receiving IAG, and then to engage them as a positive influence on young people**.

Chapter 4: Personalisation

Introduction

- 4.1 The personalisation of children and young people's services centres on the delivery of a tailored approach that takes into account the needs of an individual or their family and involves them in decision making about these services.
- 4.2 Personalised learning involves having high aspirations for every young person, offering them, and their families, specific support that meets their diverse requirements and motivating them to become fully engaged and active learners. This is especially important for those who may be vulnerable, including those in care or who have special educational needs, and the group considered how the effectiveness of services might be improved for these young people.
- 4.3 A significant proportion of young people may be disengaged due to a narrow curriculum offer and the impact of teaching styles that do not meet their needs. This leads to a gradual build up of disaffection and can influence young people to leave education at 16.
- 4.4 The group acknowledged a number of new policy developments, such as diplomas, the new secondary curriculum and the development of Information Advice and Guidance quality standards, that have the potential to offer a more relevant and personalised approach that will engage young people at all levels of achievement, regardless of their starting point.
- 4.5 Personalisation has become especially important following the Government's recent 'Staying in Education & Training post-16' Green Paper setting out proposals to require all young people to remain in education or training until their 18th birthday, from 2013. The group felt that this will bring into sharper focus the importance of effective advice and guidance services for all young people and their parents to ensure they receive accurate and impartial information about the options open to them and associated career pathways. Similarly, it is critical to ensure that the voice of the young person is heard and responded to in local decision making.

Personalising the curriculum to engage and motivate

- 4.6 The group explored the potential offered by reforms to the curriculum. The approach of providing smaller chunks of learning can engage and motivate vulnerable young people. It is critical, however, that these still count towards recognised, accredited qualifications that allow the learner to progress. That rate of progress should stretch the individual whilst setting realistic and achievable learning goals. The group recommends that **(xii) young people should have access to learning that recognises 'stages not ages' and enables them to progress through the key stages of the curriculum at a pace appropriate to them.**

- 4.7 Vulnerable young people, and those with special educational needs, are often turned off by a purely academic curriculum and a multiple pathway model in schools and colleges is more appealing. The group felt that more scope should be given to investigating different ways of achieving this so that these young people are encouraged to progress and meet their personal aspirations.
- 4.8 It is important to have appropriate, high quality, vocational and academic routes so that learners of all needs and abilities can pursue courses that match their interests and skills. This will also offer all young people real opportunities to progress and aspire to achieve greater things. The group recommends that **(xiii) all young people should be encouraged to consider a range of qualification routes and should be challenged when they make traditional decisions which may not serve their long-term goals.**
- 4.9 The curriculum must also be used to develop the 'life skills' of young people. The reformed secondary curriculum is the first systematic attempt to embed development of personal learning and thinking skills and the 14-19 diplomas will extend and develop this approach further. Schools and colleges should be encouraged to see the curriculum as a vehicle for learners' personal development. The group recommends that **(xiv) young people should be encouraged to consider and try new experiences that build self-esteem.** For this approach to be successful, practitioners must be supported through training which promotes a more sophisticated understanding of progression in skills, and new forms of curriculum organisation which integrate subjects with skills development.
- 4.10 The group also cited the importance of talking to young people about their experiences. They recommend that **(xv) more should be done to engage with young people who drop out of courses, and explore the reasons for their leaving** so that this has a hard empirical evidence base. The 14-19 reforms are key to tackling disengagement and offering a more diverse curriculum but it is critical that the views and experiences of the learner are used to further inform and develop learning programmes to ensure they meet the needs of young people at all levels. The group also recommends the **(xvi) inclusion of young people in discussions about service delivery.**

Information, Advice and Guidance

- 4.11 High quality Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) is critical if we are to continue to raise standards. A flexible curriculum will provide excellent opportunities for all young people. Good advice will help them to achieve their goals, including accessing good learning or employment options. The group debated the limitations in IAG for young people considering post-16 options, with many only being given information about A level courses rather than the full breadth of learning opportunities available to them. This issue will become more critical as diplomas provide an even greater degree of choice for the learner. To maximise the impact of 14-19 reforms, it is vital that good IAG and a flexible curriculum operate side by side.
- 4.12 When discussing sources of information and advice for young people, peer mentoring was suggested as an excellent way of encouraging young people to talk to someone they trust, and who has developed a real understanding, through recent experience, of the challenges young people face. There is a risk that peer-to-peer support may be well-intentioned but ill-informed. Peers often may not challenge stereotypes in the same way as a professional

worker with a wider perspective. The group advocated that combining a peer-to-peer approach with workers who have a wider understanding could assist in ensuring that the young person receives impartial IAG that challenges their perceptions and boosts aspirations. For peer support to be effective the group recommends that **(xvii) individuals likely to offer IAG support should have access to better materials and work inside a managed IAG system.**

- 4.13 The group was in favour of the concept of 'progressive universalism' which advocates strengthening the focus on the individual needs of young people but ensuring that this is done through a core approach. The universal IAG approach is often very patchy and there are tensions between this more targeted approach and the need to achieve everything within budget. Whilst the group acknowledged the importance of IAG in the transition from secondary education into further learning, they recommend that **(xviii) IAG should be embedded from a much younger age** as evidence suggests that gender stereotyping and individual aspirations are already fixed in young children. In particular, cross-curricular work about aspirations and opportunities should begin at primary school.
- 4.14 The group also recommends that **(xix) impartiality in IAG could be demonstrated through the involvement of someone from outside the school or college**, such as a local authority or Children's Trust, who might bring a different perspective, and look and feel different, from a member of the school or college staff.
- 4.15 The discussion on IAG concluded with a focus on the need to consider the added value of any policies that are implemented. Qualitative measures are required which give a real indicator of value in return for input. It was agreed that the progression measure for young people could be effective in this area as the quality of IAG will be crucial in determining whether young people make the right choices and progress effectively. The group recommends that **(xx) there needs to be an accurate measure of the added value IAG brings to young people.**

Monitoring and tracking

- 4.16 The group highlighted the importance of monitoring and tracking young people against national expectations and providing targeted support and intervention when it is needed. The leaders and staff in every school and college could be encouraged to do more to help identify vulnerable young people and ensure that appropriate interventions are put in place. The group recognised that schools and colleges would require adequate resources and an effective infrastructure in order to make this work. To increase the scope for effective, targeted support, the group recommends that **(xxi) schools and colleges have a mandate to take young people out of the normal curriculum to allow them extra time to catch up or access specialist support as required.**
- 4.17 Effective monitoring of young people 'at risk' is crucial in increasing their chances of more positive outcomes and a better transition in both educational and personal development terms. This could also bring a positive impact on progression and career pathways in exploring how choices at the 14-19 stage can influence what an individual might achieve in the future.

- 4.18 The group discussed whether vulnerable young people could have access to an advocate early in the 14-19 phase to increase their chances of making an effective transition. The advocate would represent them and facilitate their access to support services. This is particularly helpful for vulnerable groups, and those with special educational needs, as it enables risk factors to be identified and effective monitoring to take place. The group thought that, currently, colleges have more success than schools in this area, but there is a need for interventions at an earlier age. The group therefore recommends that **(xxii) there could be a role for advocates who work with and monitor vulnerable young people from an early age.**

Integration of professional services to support young people

- 4.19 Multi-agency working is important as a means of focusing all professionals on the needs of the child or young person and this can improve outcomes across the board. The capability of the children's workforce is therefore an important consideration. There are many effective initiatives in place but the group recommends that **(xxiii) more needs to be done to look at current demands on workers in the system. A greater understanding of the roles of individuals and the skills they require to fulfil their roles effectively would be beneficial.**
- 4.20 Managers and leaders play an important role in ensuring that services work together successfully. Professionals need to be clear about how far their role extends and understand when they move into the realm of another service area and need to begin working closely with them. The group felt that there must be honesty and lots of dialogue about this difficult but critical area of overlap between two professional domains. The group recommends that there should be **(xxiv) an acknowledgement of responsibility within a school or college to work with other institutions and focus on the area of overlap between professional services.**
- 4.21 For the majority of young people, schools and colleges should be the access point for professional services. However, for a minority of young people, other access points would need to be made available, such as children's, youth or neighbourhood centres.

Chapter 5: Prevention

Introduction

- 5.1 A child's background environment, socio-economic status, their family's health, income, parenting quality and aspirations all influence outcomes and life chances. We know that building resilience in young people is vital in reducing the risks of poor outcomes.
- 5.2 Prevention is at the heart of this, both to prevent poor outcomes arising in the first place for children and young people, but also to prevent problems within the family that can otherwise impact on wider society through lost economic contribution, poor health and the effects of anti-social behaviour. The group focused its discussion on how better to link preventative work to universal services and build capacity in this tier.

Preventing negative outcomes

- 5.3 The group discussed the importance of preventing negative outcomes for children and young people in the broadest sense, including teenage pregnancy, offending, substance misuse, and addressing the needs of those not in education, employment or training (NEET). The risk factors and protective, or preventative, factors were similar for all these negative outcomes. What is important is the role of family, community, peers, school, college, and mitigating the effects of poverty.
- 5.4 The need to identify children already at risk, and those showing signs of becoming so, highlights a key role for universal services such as schools, colleges and health services. The group agreed that preventative services need to be responsive to the needs of parents, carers and family members to address risks at the family level. A key challenge is to improve the ability of services to move from servicing acute needs towards earlier interventions.
- 5.5 Universal services need to be more responsive to young people's needs, offering timely advice and support and, where necessary, involving specialist services and working with the family to address underlying difficulties. Teacher training should raise awareness of the broader Every Child Matters agenda, developing staff skills and confidence at responding to the difficulties that children at risk may experience. This needs to be underpinned by improved access to multi-disciplinary advice and support, facilitated by a key worker, or similar, in every secondary school. Members recommend the need for **(xxv) a wider awareness of Every Child Matters so that leaders and staff of governing bodies and services, schools and colleges understand the role of their institutions in delivering the Every Child Matters agenda, know which support pathways are available, and know who might be able to advise or help.**

- 5.6 The group discussed the importance of seeing young offenders as young people with serious needs of their own. The age of criminal responsibility varies between countries – for example it is age 10 in the UK but age 16 in France – and there are differences between countries in the way young offenders are managed. The group debated the importance of concentrating on support and preventative measures for young people at risk of being involved in criminal behaviour, rather than focusing on punishment for those who behave badly. The group recommends that **(xxvi) more work should be done to focus on preventing young people's involvement in crime and to see what lessons can be learned from other European countries where the age of criminal responsibility is higher or where they have a different approach to managing young offenders.**

Role of services

- 5.7 The group thought that whilst educational institutions clearly have a role in preventative work, they could not do this in isolation. There needs to be a strong community partnership and a joined-up approach across all services. Members thought it was particularly important to respond quickly and in response to small triggers, for example, the first time a child comes to school without breakfast or appears to be emotionally withdrawn. The group discussed the importance of having people who are not teachers available to talk to children and young people, and this indicated having someone available to go out of school to give support and make a link with home and community. They recommend that **(xxvii) there should be a key worker, or similar, available in the school or college for young people to talk to in confidence, to offer advice and support.**
- 5.8 We know that early intervention brings lasting benefits to the individual, their family and society. As such, it represents a good investment, but local services have struggled to achieve this shift in practice and resources remain focused at the acute end. More investment should be made in preventative approaches and disseminating effective preventative models. Although the group recognised that funding constraints often restrict the movement of money away from the sharp end, they recommend that **(xxviii) more should be done to refocus and reprioritise funding towards prevention.**
- 5.9 Members considered that we should move away from always assuming that institutional responses are the only way forward for all young people. Some young people will not be attending school or college and in these cases we should look at other approaches such as youth provision. Targeted youth support has an important role to play alongside education in improving outcomes for this group. There is a need for non-stigmatised services in the local community, which young people want and would be more likely to engage with. The group recommends that **(xxix) more should be done to build on targeted support approaches for young people.**
- 5.10 Research could play a part as an important first step in: identifying appropriate responses, raising staff awareness, and putting in place effective processes. The group recommends that **(xxx) more work should be done to identify the characteristics of vulnerable and 'at risk' young people, and develop a risk indicator framework to prevent situations occurring** rather than crisis intervention being necessary. This should include exploring existing frameworks including the 'Communities that Care' framework of risk and protective factors and their preventative processes.

Chapter 6: Conclusion and delivery challenges

- 6.1 This report has outlined the discussions and recommendations of the Expert Group for services and policies that affect children and young people aged 14-19 and their families. These have covered the four areas of Positive Childhood, Parents and Families, Personalisation, and Prevention.
- 6.2 The group recognises that some of the subjects and recommendations outlined in the previous chapters, if introduced, would have an impact at national and local level. The group's thoughts on delivery and impact are summarised below under four impact themes:
- the role of universal services including schools, colleges and other support services;
 - the role of Government and delivery partners;
 - implications for workforce and leadership; and
 - culture change.

These themes also came through strongly in the discussion involving members of all three Expert Groups on 19 November 2007.

The role of universal services

- 6.3 We cannot eliminate all the events or circumstances that put young people at risk of poor outcomes. Therefore all children and young people must be educated to understand these factors. We need universal, targeted and specialist services to:
- build the resilience of all young people so they can overcome difficulties in their lives when they occur;
 - work effectively together to identify, early, young people who are at risk and when additional or special educational needs emerge; and
 - deliver the high quality services that all children and parents need.
- 6.4 Universal services mean health, early years and childcare, schools, colleges and youth, and also wider local authority services such as housing, environment and leisure, transport and planning, and adult services for young people in transition to adulthood and for young people who are also parents. Schools and colleges need to work more closely with others outside the educational establishment, including the voluntary sector, to reach and support young people.

- 6.5 The group thought that some of the key protective factors which build resilience in children and young people are positive parenting, social and emotional skills, and educational attainment. All children and young people's services should explicitly focus on building these to enable successful transitions.
- 6.6 Early intervention and prevention require a different way of working in services at all tiers. More needs to be done to identify what works in terms of preventative responses for the 14-19 group, and the roles and responsibilities in making this happen. More thought also needs to be given to the incentives to drive this forward, reinforced through an effective accountability framework.
- 6.7 Services must recognise and respond to the support needs of all families by providing swift and easy access to targeted services, particularly for those with special educational or additional needs. Young people with special educational needs should be supported to access mainstream provision and enabled to meet their individual aspirations.
- 6.8 Schools' and colleges' experience as a universal service in developing personalised learning approaches must involve wider engagement with parents and communities, as well as tailored and targeted approaches for individual children and young people. It is particularly important that the universal offer provides appropriate levels of tailoring and support so that young people stay in education, employment or training and progress to the extent of their ability and aspirations.

The role of Government and delivery partners

- 6.9 The group thought that Government should work with, and through local partnership groupings including: local authorities; Children's Trusts; local strategic partnerships; and voluntary organisations, to agree, plan, co-ordinate and deliver a coherent range of services driven by the needs of young people, their parents and families. Partnership arrangements need to be properly defined and the roles, responsibilities and accountability of each partner clearly articulated. There is also a need to:
- ensure sufficient supply of the right combination of services to meet demand;
 - drive up quality and standards;
 - help to support links between different services to develop a common language, improve close working across service boundaries, and encourage integration where this is the best means of delivering outcomes for children;
 - ensure that the young person and parent voice is heard and acted upon;
 - shape and stimulate supply and demand so that vulnerable and disadvantaged groups make good use of high quality provision and services; and
 - be accountable for delivering required outcomes.
- 6.10 One of the main challenges for Government and delivery partners is how to improve and measure the effectiveness of the services that support young people and their families. Schools and colleges could do more to assess the preparedness of those young people making the transition within and beyond the school system. More could also be done to encourage employers, further and higher education, and social services to assess how well individuals are prepared for progression and adult life. Further consideration of a preparedness measure for different stages of transition might help to meet this need.

Implications for workforce and leadership

6.11 The group's debates have indicated that the role of the children and young people's services workforce will be fundamental in delivering many of the changes suggested. Increasing the focus on, and communication of, the Every Child Matters agenda would help to clarify the roles and responsibilities of services in delivering it. Some of the general challenges include:

- members of the workforce are not always clear about their own individual role, or that of others, and thus how to work alongside them to bring about effective working between universal, targeted and specialist services;
- there can be a variation in the personal ability and skills of individual members of the workforce necessary to carry out effective delivery across different service types; for example, supporting parents is crucial if we want to extend emphasis on this role, and specific training will be needed to bring workers up to the necessary skill level;
- success currently depends on effective individuals and effective relationships: but churn or turnover in the workforce means that key links are lost between staff who are trying to carry through an integrated response around the child and have to start again;
- recruitment and retention difficulties in some places mean that key posts are not filled, such as social workers – and this puts pressure on delivering across important universal, targeted and specialist fields; and
- reliance on top level leadership where the leaders may have little or no direct professional experience, a lack of clarity around their role, and, often, limited leverage to drive forward the changes that are required.

Culture change

6.12 The group discussed the importance of culture change in seeking to change behaviours, and acknowledged the central importance of parents and families in achieving that behavioural change. Some of the biggest culture change challenges are:

- to overcome the complexity that surrounds content and delivery of services;
- introducing more clarity and accountability for delivery partners;
- the importance of focusing on the young person when considering what support they need, and providing more opportunities for young people to input their 'voice' to influence and direct service delivery; and
- the need to change the level of parents' engagement post-primary school, including the opportunity for schools and colleges to do more to welcome and engage more parents.

6.13 The group concluded that significant progress has already been made for the 14-19 age group and that the drive for improvement should continue by building on what has already taken place. The cultural element of the change required is fundamental and will, in particular, take time to achieve. The Every Child Matters agenda creates a good opportunity to make further progress, including a greater focus on positive outcomes such as celebrating young people's achievement, engagement and self-actualisation.

Annex A: Terms of reference

Remit

There will be three Expert Groups (ages 0-7, 8-13, and 14-19) whose remit will be to look at services and policies affecting children, young people and families and to make recommendations to the Secretary of State on how best to deliver his long-term objectives⁹ to:

- improve the health and well-being of children and young people;
- safeguard the young and vulnerable;
- close the gap in educational achievement between those from disadvantaged backgrounds and their peers;
- 'raise our game' on raising standards;
- increase post-16 participation and attainment; and
- increase the number of children and young people on the path to success.

The focus will be on Every Child Matters and schools standards, renewing our determination to reach those children and young people who are still not achieving better outcomes and intervening early to prevent problems developing. Each group will also need to work within the constraints of the Department's spending review settlement, and should focus on how available resources can be most effectively deployed using our policy levers and breaking down barriers to effective co-ordination and co-operation.

Each group will draw on evidence, research and views from delivery partners, children, parents and families to provide recommendations to the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families on the development of the Children's Plan. The groups will generate and agree the key issues on which to engage using four central themes:

- Positive childhood
- Parents and families
- Personalisation
- Prevention

⁹ Please note that this wording has now been updated.

Membership

The groups will be chaired jointly by leading professionals and Ministers as follows:

0-7 group:

- Jo Davidson, Group Director of Children and Young People's Services for Gloucestershire County Council
- Rt Hon Beverley Hughes MP, Minister of State for Children, Young People and Families

8-13 group:

- Sir Alan Steer, Headteacher, Seven Kings High School, London Borough of Redbridge
- Lord Andrew Adonis, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Schools and Learners
- Kevin Brennan MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Children, Young People and Families

14-19 group:

- Jackie Fisher, Chief Executive and Principal, Newcastle College
- Jim Knight MP, Minister of State for Schools and Learners

Wider membership is at the discretion of the Secretary of State and selection is based on professional experience, expertise, status and personal qualities. Members have been invited in their personal capacity to join the groups and it is not appropriate for deputies to attend meetings. We have sought to ensure that there is ethnic, gender and geographical balance, and also to achieve a mix of professions across the groups.

Working arrangements

The group and its members will:

- consider the evidence, research and consultation findings;
- collect views of peers and users through regional, local and sector-based consultation;
- act as champions in generating a national debate;
- give particular regard to hearing the views of young people, e.g. through the Youth Parliament, the DCSF Children's Board, the Office of the Children's Commissioner;
- report and make recommendations on the delivery of services to children and families to the Secretary of State in autumn 2007; and
- act as ambassadors for the recommendations and promote the delivery of the Children's Plan.

The groups will meet at least three times to:

1. Consider the range of issues relating to their age band and prioritise them to feed into the wider public consultation; commission any initial research analysis.
2. Review any research commissioned at the first meeting; receive any feedback on the consultation questions from the public events; start shaping their reports.

3. Focus on the results of the consultation and commission the secretariat to draft their final report drawing on the emerging consultation responses.

DCSF will provide the secretariat and analytical support to each group. The secretariats will work closely together to ensure cross-fertilisation of ideas and that cross-cutting ideas are picked up so that we have a full picture of how the world should work for children and young people.

The groups will want to contribute to, and draw on, the work of the National Council for Educational Excellence.

Confidentiality

Minutes, papers and advice may be covered by Freedom of Information (FOI) exemptions as they relate to formulation and development of government policy and/or free and frank provision of advice and exchange of views for the purposes of deliberation. However, we may wish to provide a public forum via the DCSF website on which to publish factual papers and the final group reports (which will be in the public domain).

To maintain trust between members, members are expected to treat group discussions in confidence and not report externally. Members are asked to clear lines with the Secretariat before talking to the media about the group and its business.

Annex B: Members of Children's Plan 14–19 Expert Group

Co-Chairs

Jim Knight, Minister of State for Schools and Learners

Jackie Fisher, Chief Executive and Principal, Newcastle College

Members

Tom Aldridge, Young People's Manager, National Treatment Agency

Sarah Anderson, Consultant and Non-Executive Director, Carter and Carter

Lionel Bailly, Consultant, North East Essex Mental Health Trust

Richard Bryan, Deputy Assistant Commissioner Metropolitan Police, and Association of Chief Police Officers

Gareth Cadwallader, Board Member, Sector Skills Development Agency

Mary Crowley, Chief Executive, Parenting UK

John Freeman, Joint President, Association of Directors of Children's Services, and Director of Children's Services for Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council

Terry Grange, Chief Constable Dyfed-Powys Police, and Association of Chief Police Officers

Tony Hartney, Head Teacher, Gladesmore School, Haringey

Professor Deian Hopkin, Vice Chancellor, London South Bank University

Rod Kenyon, Director, British Gas Engineering and Apprenticeship Ambassador Network

Stella Mbubaegbu, Principal and Chief Executive, Highbury College

Joyce Moseley, Chief Executive, Rainer

Rachel Mulvey, President, Institute of Careers Guidance

Anne Pinney, Assistant Director Policy and Research, Barnardos

Hazel Pulley, Head Teacher, Caldecote Community Primary School

Bob Reitemeier, Chief Executive, The Children's Society

Zara Todd, Board Member, Whizz Kidz

Beth Walker, Vice President elect National Union of Students (Further Education)

Michael Wilkins, Executive Principal, Outwood Grange College

Annex C: Summary of recommendations

The group made recommendations on the following:

Positive childhood

- i) consider introducing a national entitlement to mentoring support, according to age and need;
- ii) consider how to build further on the role of schools, colleges, and children and youth centres as central and important places in the community;
- iii) more work should be done to clarify what support is required through transition stages, and to identify those in need and tailor support appropriately;
- iv) all schools and colleges be asked to introduce a formal system to capture and act on the 'voice' of young people. Accountability and inspection frameworks should also take account of the level and impact of young people's feedback as well as the degree to which these systems are learner-led;
- v) undertaking more work to identify and consider introducing a preparedness measure that would add value by supporting young people to make successful transitions.

Parents and families

- vi) more research be done to test the effectiveness of developing the extended school concept further;
- vii) the concept of 'extended colleges' be explored;
- viii) how more parents and adults could be encouraged to act as role models in schools, colleges and the wider community;
- ix) more should be done to understand and address the support needs of young people in the youth justice system, and the workers who support them, with a view to finding the most effective way for them to re-enter the universal system with reasonable expectations of success;

- x) the scope to improve development of 'soft' skills, relationship skills, awareness of health and mental health issues, and critical thinking skills through school and college activity should be considered;
- xi) more should be done to establish the IAG requirements of parents and families and their preferred methods of receiving IAG, and then to engage them as a positive influence on young people.

Personalisation

- xii) young people should have access to learning that recognises 'stages not ages' and enables them to progress through the key stages of the curriculum at a pace appropriate to them;
- xiii) all young people should be encouraged to consider a range of qualification routes and should be challenged when they make traditional decisions which may not serve their long-term goals.
- xiv) young people should be encouraged to consider and try new experiences that build self-esteem;
- xv) more should be done to engage with young people who drop out of courses, and explore the reasons for their leaving;
- xvi) inclusion of young people in discussions about service delivery;
- xvii) individuals likely to offer IAG support should have access to better materials and work inside a managed IAG system;
- xviii) IAG should be embedded from a much younger age;
- xix) impartiality in IAG could be demonstrated through the involvement of someone from outside the school or college;
- xx) there needs to be an accurate measure of the added value IAG brings to young people;
- xxi) schools and colleges have a mandate to take young people out of the normal curriculum to allow them extra time to catch up or access specialist support as required;
- xxii) there could be a role for advocates who work with and monitor vulnerable young people from an early age;
- xxiii) more needs to be done to look at current demands on workers in the system. A greater understanding of the roles of individuals and the skills they require to fulfil their roles effectively would be beneficial;
- xxiv) an acknowledgement of responsibility within a school or college to work with other institutions and focus on the area of overlap between professional services.

Prevention

- xxv) a wider awareness of Every Child Matters so that leaders and staff of governing bodies and services, schools and colleges understand the role of their institutions in delivering the Every Child Matters agenda, know which support pathways are available, and know who might be able to advise or help;
- xxvi) more work should be done to focus on preventing young people's involvement in crime and to see what lessons can be learned from other European countries where the age of criminal responsibility is higher or where they have a different approach to managing young offenders;
- xxvii) there should be a key worker, or similar, available in the school or college for young people to talk to in confidence, to offer advice and support;
- xxviii) more should be done to refocus and reprioritise funding towards prevention;
- xxix) more should be done to build on targeted support approaches for young people;
- xxx) more work should be done to identify the characteristics of vulnerable and 'at risk' young people, and develop a risk indicator framework to prevent situations occurring.

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