



Every Child Matters: Change for Children in Social Care

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Front Cover Foulstone Mural photograph: Gavin Joynt.

Social Care



Every child matters, the Government's vision for children's services, was published in September 2003. It proposed reshaping children's services to help achieve the outcomes children and young people told us are key to well-being in childhood and later life.

- Be healthy
- Stay safe
- Enjoy and achieve
- Make a positive contribution
- Achieve economic well-being

The Government has legislated for changes in the way children's services work together. *Every Child Matters: Change for Children* explains how the new Children Act 2004 forms the basis of a long-term programme of change. This document is one of a series that describe the implications for different services. All of these documents and others referred to in the text are available at www.everychildmatters.gov.uk.

The purpose of this document is to explain for a social work and social care audience what the changes are, how they will make a difference to children and families and how the changes will affect you. Your leaders and managers will need to work with you and the partners in other agencies to make these changes happen.

The leadership role of Local Authorities

The Children Act 2004 gives a particular role to Local Authorities in setting up the arrangements to secure co-operation among local partners, such as Primary Care Trusts, Youth Offending Teams, the Police Service, District Councils and others. The duty to co-operate will be implemented through the development of children's trust arrangements. The co-operative arrangements need to involve among others, schools, GPs, culture, sports and play organisations and the voluntary and community sector (VCS). We have just published a document describing how we want to work with the VCS in delivering better outcomes for children and young people. This is called *Working with voluntary and community organisations to deliver change for children and young people* and is available on the Every Child Matters website www.everychildmatters.gov.uk.

The children's trust arrangements will drive the programme of change and will have four essential components which are described in more detail below. These are:

- integrated front-line delivery
- integrated common processes
- integrated strategy – the planning and commissioning framework
- inter-agency governance

In addition there will be a strengthened role for universal services which is also described below.

Social workers and social care workers need to be at the heart of the Every Child Matters Change for Children programme. You play a central role in trying to improve outcomes for the most vulnerable through your work with children in need including those in need of protection, children who are looked after and disabled children. The aim of the programme is to achieve whole system-change to improve outcomes for all children but especially the most disadvantaged and vulnerable.

We must improve outcomes for children and young people

The five outcomes for children and young people are given legal force in the Children Act 2004. They are described above and in more detail in Box 2 at the end of this document. To achieve the outcomes for all children and young people it will be essential that listening to and involving children and young people are at the heart of the way services are delivered. The appointment of a Children's Commissioner will help to monitor the effectiveness of the efforts across the country to improve the well-being of children and young people and ensure their voices are heard.

The new integrated inspection framework and Joint Area Reviews of children's services will ensure the five outcomes are the focus for everyone's efforts. This will be a key part of helping to make the inspection and review process proportionate and less time consuming. You will be able to use the outcomes as a way to focus and improve your work and evaluate what difference you are making. This will help to deliver accountability to service users and the local community just as Joint Reviews, which were undertaken by the Social Services Inspectorate and the Audit Commission, have helped raise standards and improve accountability for social services.

The Children Act 2004 is the legislative spine for the reforms, supporting:

- a sharper focus on safeguarding children, with statutory Local Safeguarding Children Boards replacing the current Area Child Protection Committees and a duty on all key agencies to safeguard and promote the welfare of children;
- partnership: Local Authorities working with other services through children's trust arrangements to agree local priorities for improving services for children, young people and parents;

- accountability: Local Authorities appointing Directors of Children's Services who will have responsibility for education and children's social services and designating Lead Members (Councillors) to provide vision and impetus; and
- review and inspection: new Joint Area Reviews of children's services based around the five outcomes.

The Act also places a duty on Local Authorities to promote the educational achievement of looked after children and strengthens the notification scheme for children who are privately fostered.

The social services functions of Local Authorities, for example those arising from the Children Act 1989, remain unchanged but the way that services are delivered will change radically as they become integrated around the child or young person and their family and carers. There will be an increased emphasis on early identification and earlier intervention.

Our national programme of change will also implement the *National Service Framework (NSF) for Children, Young People and Maternity Services* and the children's aspects of the Public Health White Paper – *Choosing Health: making healthy choices easier*. The NSF provides the policy context and framework for health and social care services over the next ten years and is integral to the delivery of the Every Child Matters: Change for Children programme. The NSF, published in September, aims to:

- set national standards for the first time for children's health, which promote high quality, child centred services and personalised care that meets the needs of children and their families;
- give children, young people and their parents increased information, power and choice over their treatment and involve them in planning their care and services;
- prevent ill health and disease by encouraging children to develop healthy lifestyles and promoting physical health, mental health and emotional well being;
- tackle health inequalities and address the particular needs of children and young people who are often at risk of achieving poor outcomes, such as disabled children and children in special circumstances; and
- promote the safeguarding of children and ensure all staff are suitably trained and aware of action to take if they have concerns about a child's welfare.

The Public Health White Paper – *Choosing Health: making healthy choices easier* identifies the health of children and young people as a key priority so that we start people on the right path to health and provide parents with the support they ask for in giving their children a healthy start in life.

Strengthened role for universal services

All children require access to first class universal services provided by a range of agencies from the public, private, voluntary and community sectors. It is important for children in need to have access to good schools where they can achieve or to good primary care services which ensure their health needs are met. The development of children's centres should help improve the quality of life for all children.

Social workers and social care workers working with other agencies will have an important role in supporting universal services in meeting a wider range of needs.

An example of how universal services can be strengthened is the development of a multi-disciplinary safeguarding children team in Sheffield which provides advice on safeguarding children and young people to all services for children and young people in the city. This sort of initiative can, for example, help a school respond more confidently to children and young people affected by domestic violence.

The duty on agencies to safeguard and promote children's welfare, Section 11 of the Children Act 2004, should help ensure safeguarding and promoting children's welfare becomes everyone's business. In Cambridge, for example, the Crime Reduction Partnership has contributed funding to support intensive family support services for substance abusing parents to help improve the care of their children.

We will see children's social care involved in multi-agency work in a wider range of settings. Full details can be found in *Every Child Matters: Change for Children*, but key links to social care include for example:

Early Years

- The *DfES Five Year Strategy for Children and Learners* set out the future direction of services for children, parents and families, including one-stop support at Sure Start Children's Centres – with childcare and education, health and employment advice and family support on offer together, within easy reach of every parent.

Extended Schools

- Extended schools are one way of integrating service delivery and ensuring that services are delivered closer to where children and their families spend much of their time. Extended schools could play a greater role for example in supporting looked after children through the development of individual support programmes within their school, or by assisting disabled children to gain access to mainstream leisure and out of school activities so that they have less need for specialist services.

We will see more effective earlier intervention by a range of agencies working with social workers and social care workers. This will help to ensure that any child or young person identified as having additional needs, such as substance misuse or serious behaviour problems, receives the right multi-agency intervention early on to prevent the development of longer term problems.

Integrating front-line delivery

Two of the key drivers for the Every Child Matters: Change for Children programme were:

- the Victoria Climbié Inquiry; and
- the Joint Chief Inspectors Report on Safeguarding Children.

It is important to remember the messages from these reports as we take forward the changes. These have at their heart a determination to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children.

The key messages are:

- our task is to safeguard and promote the welfare of each and every child;
- do the simple things well, because these will make the biggest difference to children's lives;
- the child is always the focus of our endeavours and their experience is our central concern;
- all agencies and their staff must work together; and
- we can only do the work by making the best use of specialist skills and by being authoritative and confident in our individual and collective practice.

To implement the programme of change and these key messages, we will need to develop the workforce. Local leaders will want to give a strong focus to effective, more integrated workforce planning and development. They will need to put in place staff training and development to promote the culture change required for effective multi-disciplinary working. Workforce reform will be essential to ensure there will be enough people with the right range of skills and knowledge to work with children and young people. We will introduce a Common Core of Skills and Knowledge, so that all those in the children's workforce can share language and an understanding of issues, and be supported in working more closely together. Above all the needs of children and young people will come first and this will mean that over time roles and professional boundaries will have to shift as needs change.

Ensuring there are sufficient numbers of qualified and experienced social workers is a priority for the workforce strategy. There is good evidence from inspection that those Local Authorities like Tower Hamlets which have invested in local recruitment and on-going training and development for all staff have been able to develop a stable workforce capable of delivering sustained service improvement.

A central part of the Every Child Matters: Change for Children programme is addressing the weaknesses in how we work together including with children, young people and their parents and carers. We know that the picture on working together is inconsistent. Too much is dependent on local relationships and there is too little implementation of what we know is good practice. For example disabled children and their families often need services from a number of agencies or providers. Whether or not they are successful in working together can either add to or reduce family stresses and strains.

As social workers and social care workers, you have a unique contribution to make in assessing and analysing information in order to make judgements about, for example, risks to a child's welfare or how best to promote the educational achievement of a child looked after by the Local Authority. In addition the legal responsibilities that social workers carry in relation to family law give you a distinct and vital role in safeguarding children from harm. These contributions made as part of a multi-disciplinary team whether based together, perhaps in a school-based service hub, or on a virtual basis will be central to the change programme. The changes do not mean a one size fits all approach or that we can all do each other's jobs.

Social work and social care practitioners and managers will need to be confident and authoritative and use their skills in partnership working. Your knowledge and skills will be vital to the successful development of this transformed system of services for children and young people.

Integrated processes

The Common Assessment Framework (CAF) and improved practice in sharing information will enable practitioners in schools, health settings, children's centres and other early years services to identify with greater accuracy what additional services a child may need. Usually this will be through additional support delivered in universal or targeted services.

The CAF aims to provide an early assessment to a common format across children's services. It aims to:

- improve the quality of referrals between agencies by making them more evidence based;
- help embed a common language about the needs of children and young people;
- promote the appropriate sharing of information; and
- reduce the number and duration of different assessment processes which children and young people undergo.

Following consultation, work is being undertaken to produce the Framework, guidance for its use and an implementation plan, to be published in March 2005. In 2005/06, all Local Authorities and their local partners should be preparing for the implementation of the CAF in their areas by 2008.

Better early assessment, and clearer arrangements in local services for sharing information, working together with existing specialist assessment frameworks, will help improve how universal and specialist services work together. This will help promote earlier intervention and a focus on prevention. These improved processes should underpin our aim that children with additional needs such as those with disabilities, those whose parents have mental health problems, or those who need to be protected from harm, should have:

- a high quality multi-agency assessment;
- a wide range of specialist services available close to home; and
- effective case management by a lead professional working as part of a multi-disciplinary team.

The experience in North Lincolnshire Council where a common referral and assessment process has been developed over a number of years is that it has enabled much better inter-agency working and enabled earlier and more effective intervention by all agencies including by social services.

Local Authorities and their partners are already working to improve practice in the sharing of information between practitioners in children's services. The Children Act 2004 includes duties to co-operate to improve well-being and to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people. The statutory guidance relating to these duties will underline the importance of effective information sharing arrangements. Working across Government clear guidance for all children's services

practitioners on information sharing covering health, education, social care and youth offending will be developed and published by September 2005.

Integrated strategy – planning together for children and young people

The Children Act 2004 gives the Local Authority the leadership role in making arrangements to bring together local partners. The Director of Children's Services and the Lead Member for Children's Services will play key leadership roles in bringing together local partners, both statutory and non statutory, across the full range of local services.

They will want to focus, with partners, their energy and resources on meeting the most urgent and important needs for children and young people in their area, balancing local and national priorities. The Children Act 2004 requires Local Authorities to prepare a Children and Young People's Plan. This will set out how the Local Authority and partners will improve the well-being of children in their area as evaluated by improvement against the five outcomes.

The Children and Young People's Plan will set out an analysis of local needs, the resources available to meet the needs and the commissioning strategy to deliver improved services including how joint commissioning and the pooling of budgets can reshape local services around children's needs. An important part of developing the plan will be ensuring the views of children, young people and families are taken into account in planning and developing services and that the experience and views of practitioners are fed into the process. The work to develop the plan and develop the programme of change needs to start now.

Inter-agency governance

Key elements of inter-agency governance will be:

- effective leadership by the Local Authority;
- full engagement of all key partners;
- clear accountabilities;
- relationships built on trust, a shared vision and a determination to improve outcomes; and
- engagement of senior representatives of all key partner organisations to give shared strategic leadership and direction and drive through change.

Local Safeguarding Children Boards (LSCBs) will lead inter-agency work on safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people, building on the good work of Area Child Protection Committees (ACPC). For example Hull and East Riding ACPC has commissioned a joint service to support child witnesses. This is the kind of service development which LSCBs might help their children's trust partnership to commission. LSCBs will monitor the effectiveness of all agencies efforts to safeguard children and young people.

We have already made progress

The Quality Protects Programme has already shown what can be done by working together with clear objectives and a shared sense of purpose. The thinking behind the changes and their aims are not new for social work and social care as the examples below show. We now have to build on that experience and increase its depth and scope.

The experience of social workers and social care workers and that of other agencies is that we must work with others to deliver improvements for children and young people in need, to safeguard children and young people from harm and to discharge our responsibilities for children and young people in our care. Examples of how we have seen this work are:

- progress in improving educational achievement for children and young people in care and in improving their health has been made possible through better joint working;
- the safeguarding of children and young people has been enhanced where Area Child Protection Committees have given leadership to inter-agency working through:
 - the development of inter-agency training
 - the development of inter-agency audits
 - joint commissioning of services e.g. child witness support, services for children with harmful behaviours
 - critical challenge of practice between agencies to help improve practice;
- where adult substance abuse services work well with children's services to safeguard children. Specialist staff work in maternity units to identify parents with substance misuse problems and contribute to their multi-agency assessment.

There will be support for the change process. The field forces which have supported the implementation of the Quality Protects initiative will be continuing to support improvement in children's social care services. They will work with the Regional Change Advisors working specifically on the change programme to ensure that the programme addresses the full spectrum of children's needs

You will want to discuss within your agency and with colleagues in partner agencies how you can implement the Every Child Matters: Change for Children programme to build on current achievements. You and your local partners will want to understand what needs to change and how each agency and each practitioner can best make their contribution to building services that deliver more effective help for all children and young people. It is especially important that these changes work for children in need and those suffering particular disadvantage.

Where to get further information

The Programme is described in more detail in *Every Child Matters: Change for Children* available at www.everychildmatters.gov.uk. The DfES Every Child Matters website contains downloadable presentations for discussion; links to the ten year strategy for childcare, links to the *National Service Framework for Children, Young People and Maternity Services*, the Public Health White Paper – *Choosing Health: making healthy choices easier* and links to further information for you on children’s trust arrangements and Extended Schools.

Box 1 Some Key dates

What should happen	Date
Set up partnership arrangements to promote co-operation to improve wellbeing	Duty to cooperate commences 1 April 2005 All Local Authorities to have children’s trust arrangements in place by 2008
Common Assessment framework published	March 2005
Duty to promote the educational achievement of looked after children	Commences 1 June 2005
Children Act 2004 measures on Private Fostering	Implementation from 1 July 2005
Joint Area Reviews	Commence September 2005
Duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people	Guidance May 2005 Commences 1 October 2005
Information Sharing Guidance	September 2005
Children and Young People’s Plan	From April 2006
Director of Children’s Services	Most Local Authorities appoint by 2006 and all by 2008
Local Safeguarding Children Boards	Established in all Local Authorities by April 2006

The outcomes

The five outcomes for children and young people are given legal force in the Children Act 2004. They are central to the programme of change. They are described in more detail below.

Box 2 What the outcomes mean

<p>Be healthy</p>	<p>Physically healthy Mentally and emotionally healthy Sexually healthy Healthy lifestyles Choose not to take illegal drugs <i>Parents, carers and families promote healthy choices</i></p>
<p>Stay safe</p>	<p>Safe from maltreatment, neglect, violence and sexual exploitation Safe from accidental injury and death Safe from bullying and discrimination Safe from crime and anti-social behaviour in and out of school Have security, stability and are cared for <i>Parents, carers and families provide safe homes and stability</i></p>
<p>Enjoy and achieve</p>	<p>Ready for school Attend and enjoy school Achieve stretching national educational standards at primary school Achieve personal and social development and enjoy recreation Achieve stretching national educational standards at secondary school <i>Parents, carers and families support learning</i></p>
<p>Make a positive contribution</p>	<p>Engage in decision-making and support the community and environment Engage in law-abiding and positive behaviour in and out of school Develop positive relationships and choose not to bully and discriminate Develop self-confidence and successfully deal with significant life changes and challenges Develop enterprising behaviour <i>Parents, carers and families promote positive behaviour</i></p>
<p>Achieve economic well-being</p>	<p>Engage in further education, employment or training on leaving school Ready for employment Live in decent homes and sustainable communities Access to transport and material goods Live in households free from low income <i>Parents, carers and families are supported to be economically active</i></p>

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