

# Care Matters: Ministerial Stocktake Report 2009





## Executive Summary

# Introduction

### MESSAGE FROM CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

*'Just because a child is in care does not make us different to any other child'*

The Care Matters White Paper issued in 2007 set out an ambitious programme of change to improve the outcomes of children in care.

We said we would review progress annually and this report sets out what we have achieved so far, and our plans for 2010.

Care Matters set out a vision to ensure that in the future children in care would have the same opportunities in life as their peers – a good education, good health care, and consistent support, advice and practical help to give them strong foundations on which they can build happy and successful lives.

### FOUR KEY MESSAGES

- *There has been steady progress in improving outcome for children in care. For example we have seen more children in stable placements, more achieving good GCSE results and more care leavers living in good accommodation and in employment or education.*
- *However we need to go much further and faster. Although education attainment has been improving figures for children in care are still well behind their peers. Some children are still being moved 3 or 4 times a year – sometimes more. Too many care leavers are still living in unsuitable accommodation or are unemployed.*
- *We need to get all local authorities up to the best, which needs strong leadership from Directors of Children's services/(DCS) Lead members for Children's services (LMCS) as corporate parents. Local authorities need to get the basics right: good assessments, having a range of placements available via good commissioning; supporting the development of staff and carers; having a strong focus on educational attainment; and supporting care leavers into employment and good accommodation. Where Ofsted inspections give an "inadequate" marking the Government will intervene in the same way as we do for "inadequate" safeguarding markings.*
- *There needs to be a change of culture in every LA so that children are listened to more on key issues such as: placement decisions; personal education plans; their health; when and how they should leave care. We are changing Regulations to strengthen the role of Independent Reviewing Officers and asking all local authorities to set up Children in Care Councils.*

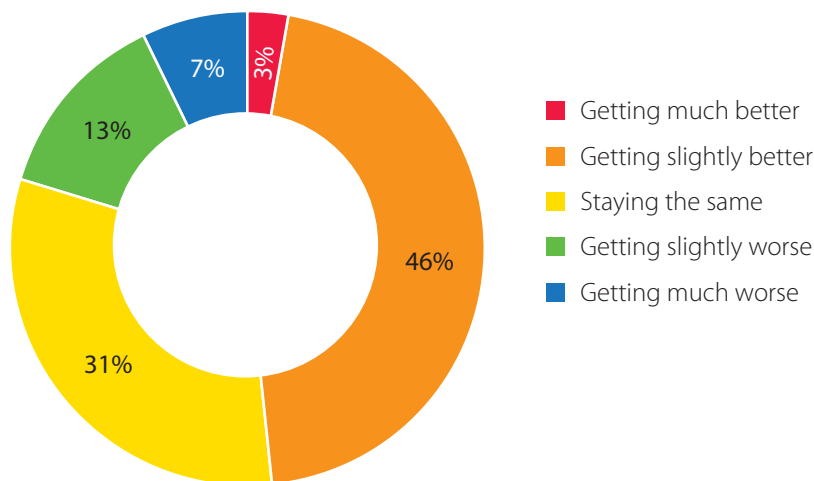
## MESSAGE FROM CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

*"You just want to be treated the same and feel the same as everybody else."*

### Progress Made

Over the past 18 months we have invested significant resources to support the implementation of Care Matters. Last year the Children and Young Person's Act 2008 was passed by Parliament and through our Care Matters programme we now have a comprehensive set of reforms in place, with clear objectives and standards for the care of children in care.

### Are things generally getting better or worse for children in care these days?



Children's messages to the Minister – Children's Rights Director Report 2009 (Responses from 272 children who are members of Children in Care Councils from across the country.)

In the past year we have seen some substantial improvements. For example:

- a steady increase in the educational attainment of children in care
- more support being given to care leavers, resulting in more care leavers living in suitable accommodation
- young people in care experiencing fewer placement moves
- Children in Care Councils being set up across the country
- evidence based practice pilots showing early positive results
- the introduction of a new inspection framework by Ofsted

However, to be achieving steady progress in outcomes is not good enough. We want to go further and faster and we also want the quality of services for children in care to become much more consistent, both within and between local authorities.

In 2007/08 local authority performance:

- in the proportion of care leavers in Employment, Education and Training ranged from 29% to 96%
- In the percentage of children receiving 5 A-C GCSEs ranged from 0 – 46%
- In the percentage of children with three or more placement moves from 6% to 19%

In the coming year, through Government Offices and the Commissioning Support Programme we will be supporting and challenging local authorities to raise their standard of performance.

## Voices of children and young people

A key commitment of Care Matters was to put the voice of the child in care at the heart of the care system. All parents take children's wishes and feelings into account when making day to day decisions about their lives and corporate parents need to do so too. Research also shows that when children are involved in the development and operation of services, provision is more likely to be what children want and need, leading to more placement stability and better outcomes for children.

We are strengthening the role of the Independent Reviewing Officer to ensure children really are able to participate in the process of planning for their own care, and so that care plans are based on a thorough assessment of all aspects of children's individual needs. In future care plans should record children's views and how local authorities intend to take these into account.

## MESSAGE FROM CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

*"Every child should be listened to, no matter how difficult they are to talk to."*

The Government has asked all local authorities to set up Children in Care councils and to use these to develop pledges on how they will improve the care they give to the children they look after. Over 75% of local authorities have set up or are planning to set up a Children in Care Council. These bodies give children and young people a real opportunity to influence services and we expect all local authorities to establish a Children in Care council during 2010. In statutory guidance we have also asked DCSs and LMCSs to attend meetings of Children in Care Councils on a regular basis, to discuss how their services and support can be improved and to hear directly from children and young people in care.

## Future Priorities

Over the next year the Government will implement the next steps in the Care Matters reform programme. Specifically, we will:

- Issue revised regulations, statutory guidance and National Minimum Standards.
- Put Virtual School Heads in place in local authorities to challenge and support schools in how they help their pupils who are in care.
- Work with the Children's Right Director to ensure the voices of children in care are a consistently strong influence on policy and practice.
- Put into force revised statutory health guidance about the commissioning, delivery and inspection of health services for children in care.
- Work with the Children's Workforce Development Council (CWDC) and others to create a professional development framework for social workers, foster carers and residential workers.
- Challenge poorly performing local authorities through Government Offices and, where necessary, use statutory intervention powers to ensure that practice improves.
- Roll out Fostering Changes, a training and support programme for foster carers to help prevent placement breakdown.
- Disseminate the main findings and messages from the Adoption Research Initiative which is evaluating the implementation of the Adoption and Children Act 2002 and its impact on outcomes for children.
- Work with all local authorities and national employers to deliver the National Employment Support Programme *From Care2Work*, to improve care leaver pathways into employment.

## Conclusion

Good progress is being made in improving the experiences of children in care, but we need to go further and faster. All local authorities need to work with their local partners and with children in care themselves to provide high quality support and services for them that offer them a springboard for success. Children in care can and will achieve if we give them the right support. It is up to all of us to ensure this happens.

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## Chapter 1

# Corporate parenting: getting it right

### Introduction

Care Matters said that children in care should be cared about, not just cared for, and that as corporate parents we should champion the needs of children in care and deliver the best for them. Improving corporate parenting, including through the work of children's trusts, is key to improving the outcomes for children in care.

#### MESSAGE FROM CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

*"They should not only listen to what we want but act on it and make sure that things we are unhappy with change"*

### Care Matters – What we have done

Care Matters set out a range of proposals to:

- Strengthen the focus on corporate parenting by local authorities and Children's Trusts.
- Give a stronger voice to children and young people in care, particularly by the development of Children in Care Councils.
- Improve the accountability of corporate parents through a new inspection framework.

We have:

- Sent a letter from Ed Balls, Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families, to DCSs and LMCSs (April 2009), asking them to ensure that outcomes for children in care are improved "further and faster" during 2009–10.
- Issued new guidance for consultation on Children's Trusts which says that all partners involved in the Children's Trust should ensure that their strategy and practice takes particular account of how they work with the local authority to improve outcomes for children in care.
- Issued new statutory guidance for DCSs and LMCSs on their roles and responsibilities, including specific advice on supporting children in care.
- Disseminated Government funded corporate parenting training materials, developed by the National Children's Bureau.



- Asked all local authorities to set up Children in Care Councils and make Pledges about how they will improve their services to children in care.
- Funded *A National Voice* to support local authorities to set up Children in Care Councils and to spread best practice.
- Revised National Minimum Standards for Foster care, residential care and adoption, putting the voices of children and young people at their heart.
- Agreed that Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission will introduce a three year programme of inspections of how local authorities are improving outcomes for children in care.
- Held a series of events for children and young people to inform this Ministerial Stocktake report.
- Issued new guidance about children missing from home and care.

## MESSAGE FROM CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

*"If the top people set good examples, everything would filter down"*

### What have we achieved?

The National Care Advisory Service reported in their Stocktake briefing paper that *"Evidence suggests that corporate parenting is increasingly embedded in local and regional structures."* However they added that *"some local authorities reported issues of limited ownership and poor engagement of other departments and some elected members in corporate parenting."*

They also said that *"the development of Children in Care Councils and pledges is patchy and young people's involvement has not always been meaningful. Further evidence is needed to evaluate whether these mechanisms are having an impact on service delivery"* They commented that there were specific challenges with engaging young people in rural settings and involving 'hard to reach' young people who may not always wish to get involved in participation opportunities.

Over 75 % of local authorities have set up or are planning to set up a Children in Care Council, and are making Pledges about how they will improve their services for children in their care. Baroness Delyth Morgan, the Minister with responsibility for children in the care system, asked Roger Morgan, the Children's Rights Director to hold an event for members of Children in Care Council members. 121 children and young people took part in the event and were asked their views about the impact of different reforms. Of the 108 who responded to a question during the event about Children in Care councils, two thirds (66%) said that the opinions of their Children in Care Councils make "some" or "a lot of" difference to what happens for children in care in their areas. Around one in eight said they make no difference.

## EXAMPLES OF WHAT CHILDREN IN CARE COUNCILS HAVE DISCUSSED

'Changing documents so kids can understand them'

'Children's views on how they are being treated by social services. We have interviewed the parenting panel and showed them where they are going wrong and how things can be improved'

'Differences in residential and foster care, sleepovers, body piercing, smoking in school'

'Every child matters, positive change for leaving care'

'Having more freedom, treating children in care as individuals, letting us have our say, preventing false hope'

'LAC reviews, consent, contact, payment of YP, Pledge, YP role in corporate parenting, rules & regulations, news letter'

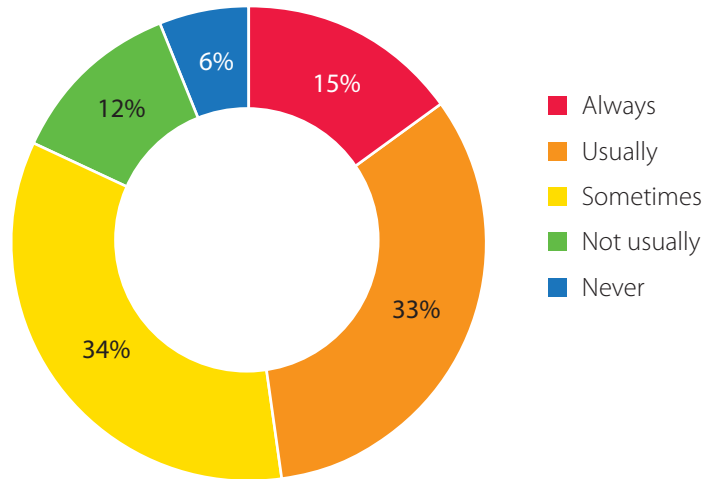
'We have talked about the launch and then we have discussed the pledge'

Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission have introduced a three year inspection programme of children's services focusing on safeguarding services and services for children in care. These inspections will gauge the effectiveness of local authorities as corporate parents. For each inspection, surveys of children who are in the authority's care and who have recently left care are now carried out through the Children's Rights Director.

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## How often children's' opinions make a difference to decisions about their lives



Children's Rights Director Monitor Report 2009 (Out of 1171 children responding)

### Care Matters in Action

- Durham County Council has set up a Multi-agency Looked After Partnership (MALAP), to "facilitate and promote effective mechanisms for working together across agencies to improve outcomes for children in care." The MALAP has: improved care planning, leading to greater placement stability; reduced the number of school moves; developed a new arts strategy; and helped achieve "outstanding" results in inspections of adoption and fostering. A Joint Area Review report, undertaken under the previous inspection framework, said "The multi-agency looked after partnership demonstrates a clear commitment from key agencies to deliver improved outcomes for looked after children."
- In Devon there is a strong culture of corporate parenting at all levels of the council. Elected members receive training and meet regularly with young people. They receive useful information on the progress of children in care and challenge officers appropriately. A corporate mentoring scheme established in 2007 has engaged mentors from across the six directorates within the council and aims to increase educational attainment and improve placement stability among children in care. Devon County Council has produced four films to raise the profile of corporate parenting amongst their elected councillors and officers across the authority and has received good feedback from them. The films would be suitable for all local authorities and can be viewed at:

Corporate parenting *Would this be good enough for my child* –  
<http://www.blip.tv/file/1336577/>

Enjoy and achieve – <http://www.blip.tv/file/2364848/>

Stability - <http://www.blip.tv/file/2246837/>

Moving on – <http://blip.tv/file/2725730>

- In Hackney, to develop the Pledge for children in care, the Youth Service brought together children and young people and made them Pledge Leaders. The group were then trained as peer researchers and devised and analysed a questionnaire that went out to all children in care. The young people presented their ideas to the Corporate Parenting Officer Group, who discussed with them what they thought was possible to implement quickly, what would need more time and work, and why a very few ideas could not be put into practice. The outcomes were presented to the Corporate Parenting Board by the young people. For the young people involved the process of developing the Pledge has been as important as the Pledge itself. It has given them a great opportunity to develop new skills and build their confidence.
- In Lambeth they have effectively used a Children in Care Council and Annual Consultation to ensure children and young people's views are fed into key decisions at the Corporate Parenting Board. Up to six young people are present at every Board meeting. Examples of impact include:
  - The Steps 2 Success work placements scheme, which came out of a presentation by young people to the Corporate Parenting Board and Chief Executive of the council. Over 27 care leavers have now successfully engaged in a three month paid work placement in the council and this scheme continues to develop from strength to strength.
  - The G2K 'Get 2 Know' website was commissioned by the Corporate Parenting Board directly via consultation with children and young people and now provides consistent information and updates to children in care and leaving care.
  - The Peer Inspection Project was commissioned by the Corporate Parenting Board. Through it a group of 10 care leavers has been trained to undertake one-to-one interviews with young people living in semi-independent accommodation to monitor the standard of the care being provided. All recommendations from the young people's report were agreed by the Board and have been upheld.

## KEY MESSAGES FOR LOCAL AUTHORITY AND SCHOOLS – WHAT WORKS

- The DCS and LMCS take a personal interest in leading corporate parenting arrangements – both across the authority and with its partners in the Children’s Trust.
- High aspirations are set for children in care within the overall strategy and are viewed as a barometer of success for the whole local authority.
- All members are fully trained in their corporate parent responsibilities and supported to review services for children in care, including health and sport and leisure services.
- Children’s participation is an integral part of arrangements. The local authority has an effective Children in Care Council which ensures that that every child has the opportunity to air their views.
  - This includes disabled children, black and minority ethnic children, very young children and those with high communication needs.
  - Structures are in place to ensure that Children in Care Councils have an input into the operational, strategic and personal decision making in local authorities.
  - The DCS and LMCS attend meetings of the Children in Care Councils and provide feedback on action taken as a result of listening to the views of children and young people.
- Management information is collected and used to regularly review services, including with Members. Information covers:
  - quantitative data, such as on placement stability, education, health and care leavers outcomes for children in care, numbers missing from care and
  - qualitative data, such as the views of children and carers concerning the quality and suitability of the services to meet their needs and achieve good outcomes
- Children and Young People’s Plans set out how the local Children’s Trust will address the needs of looked after children and care-leavers.
- Transition to adult services, as well as the provision of adult services for parents and carers, are incorporated within this strategic plan to ensure coordinated services that meet the assessed needs of the child.

## Care Matters Priorities for 2010

- Work with the LGA and ADCS to ensure that local authorities give priority to their corporate parent roles and responsibilities.
- Review progress via inspection reports and, where an inadequate judgement is given, consider urgently whether support or intervention is appropriate.
- Through Government offices identify and disseminate good practice.
- Continue to fund A National Voice to support local authorities to develop effective Children in Care Councils.
- Work with the Children's Right Director to ensure that the voices of children in care are fully reflected in policy and practice.
- Ensure the final revised versions of the National Minimum Standards for foster care, residential care and adoption stress the importance of listening and responding to children in care.
- Hold a series of events for children and young people to inform the Ministerial Stocktake report 2010.

### MESSAGE FROM CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

*"I think they should listen to me when I have something important to say"*

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## Chapter 2

# Family and Parenting Support

### Introduction

Supporting families is a vital part of our strategy to improve outcomes for children in care. In response to the Care Matters Green Paper, children and young people told us they would prefer to remain with their birth parents or wider family, rather than come into care. If they did have to come into care they wanted us to help them to maintain their links with relatives and friends, and as the first option to consider placing them with family members or friends.

In 2008 the Children's Rights Director (*Parents on Council Care*) reported on the views of parents of children in care. Fifty-nine per cent said there had been no support to help stop their children going into care. Parents wanted more support and closer working relationships with the professionals that make decisions, as well as better assessments before decisions are made.

Care Matters set out how we wanted to offer better support to families by providing intensive interventions tailored to their needs. It recognised that many children only remain in care for a short period and said they should receive comprehensive packages of support to enable them to return home from care in a planned and sustainable way.

In addition, Children's Trust Boards will need to have a coherent, focused and effective early intervention strategy in place, as part of their Children and Young People's Plan.

### MESSAGE FROM CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

*"I am living with a relative and that is better than living with some one I don't know."*

### Care Matters – What we have done

We set out in Care Matters that where it is in children's best interests they should be enabled and supported to live at home. Our strategy included:

- Encouraging local authorities to manage their care populations more proactively.
- Improved parenting support.

- Pilots for new family-based interventions for older children and young people.
- Improvements to the arrangements for short break care.
- A new framework for enabling children to live with their wider family or friends.

We have:

- Piloted and began a national roll out of the 'Think Family' programme. This will:
  - *Identify families at risk to provide support at the earliest opportunity;*
  - *Meet the full range of needs within each family;*
  - *Strengthen the ability of family members to provide care and support to each other.*
- Provided over £80m in 2009–10 for all local authorities to provide parenting and family interventions, including funding for parenting programmes, Think Family reforms and Family Intervention Projects.
- Introduced Family Intervention Projects (FIPs) to support the most challenging families who require intensive whole family support, to help them overcome complex problems such as drug and alcohol misuse, domestic violence or poor mental health.
- In partnership with the Department of Health and the Youth Justice Board, established ten pilot Multisystemic therapy sites over three years. MST is a licensed and evidence based community intervention for children and young people aged 11–17 and their families, where young people are at risk of out of home placement in either care or custody. The MST team works with young people and their families to enhance parenting capacity, increase young people's engagement with education and training, promote pro-social activities for parent and child, reduce young people's offending behaviour, increase family cohesion and tackle underlying health or mental health problems in the young person or parents, including substance misuse.
- Funded the development and roll out of a tool kit to set up and sustain family group conferences, via a series of regional conferences running from September 2009 until March 2010.
- Funded the University of Stirling to develop training material based on "Safeguarding Children" research.
- Piloted a Family Drug and Alcohol Court in London. Interim evaluation issued in August 2009 showed positive findings.
- Provided increased resources to improve services for disabled children, young people and their families. This includes a total funding package of £370m over the three year period of 2008–11 specifically for short breaks, alongside £340m included in Primary Care Trusts budgets for short breaks, wheelchairs, community equipment and palliative care for children.



- Revised Volume 1, of the Children Act 1989 Guidance, so that local authorities consider the capacity and willingness of family members to care for children at risk of becoming looked after on a short term basis.
- Reduced to one year (from three years) the time before a relative can apply for a special guardianship order or a residence order, bringing it in line with the position for unrelated carers. This will help promote the secure placement of children with their families.

## MESSAGE FROM CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

*"I know that it is better than living with my mum and dad so I'm happy."*

### What have we achieved?

- Family Intervention Projects are currently supporting or have supported over 2,600 families, with the aim of supporting 10,000 families each year from 2011/12 and 56,000 families by 2015. All local authorities will have set up a FIP by early 2010. Among the children in the first 699 families to complete the intervention projects:
  - Education and learning problems declined from 76% to 47%.
  - Truancy, exclusion and bad behaviour at school declined from 56% to 25%
  - Low educational attainment fell from 46% to 28%
  - Parenting issues decreased from 66% to 28%.
  - Child protection issues decreased from 23% to 13%.
  - Domestic violence decreased by 22% to 9%.
- Over 300 families have completed the 3–5 month MST programme. Positive outcomes are being reported in terms of reduced family conflict, reduced offending, reengagement of young people in education and training, fewer young people coming into care or custody and reductions in the period of time young people remain in care if they have been accommodated. 84% of families worked with have completed the programme and 86% of young people are still living at home at the end of the programme.
- In addition to the 10 standard MST sites, Cambridgeshire County Council in partnership with the PCT has been funded to set up an MST Child Abuse and Neglect programme which targets families with children aged 6-17 years, where child physical abuse and/or neglect is a key feature. This programme was launched on 6th July 2009 and is now fully operational and will run for four years.

- We have made good progress in developing short break provision for disabled children. For example, in its first year (2008–09) the 21 Aiming High for Disabled Children short break pathfinder local authorities reported an increase of almost 13,000 more overnight short breaks for disabled children and young people; around 376,000 more total hours of short breaks, and a 46% increase in the number of families with disabled children receiving direct payments to cover short breaks.

## Care Matters in Action

- The Manchester FIP supports families who are at risk of a range of poor outcomes. Mrs B has 2 daughters and 3 sons. Due to neighbour complaints about anti-social behaviour, the family were at risk of losing their home. There were also significant concerns about the care of her children and all were subject to Child Protection Plans. A referral was made to the Family Intervention Project by Children's Services on the basis that the intensive support could help Mrs B stabilize her lifestyle and improve the care of her children. Initially Mrs B refused but it became apparent that without the intensive help that the FIP could offer, she would be unable to make the necessary changes to safeguard her children. She accepted help and worked with the Project for 12 months. By offering support when the family needed it and challenging their behaviour, the family turned their lives around. None of the children is now subject to Child Protection Plans.
- In Enfield, to support the development of a broad short breaks offer, the local authority organised a holiday project for nine families as part of a pilot scheme. The 9 families, along with their disabled children, stayed at the Haven Holiday Camp in Yorkshire. A group of local Yorkshire providers was commissioned to provide carers to offer support to the disabled children while on holiday with their parents and siblings. The pilot allowed families to go on holiday together and the support from local providers enabled the whole family to benefit from the break.
- The London boroughs of Merton and Kingston have set up a joint MST team, which works with young people aged 11–17 and their families where there is a risk of the young person being placed out of home, either in care or in custody. Referrals are received through both local authorities, the Youth Offending Service and local CAMHS. Therapists from the team work intensively with families for 3–5 months, working with parents to develop their skills and also working closely with the young person's school or college. The team has now been up and running for over a year and worked with 25 families, with 87% of families completing the treatment programme and 86% of young people able to remain at home. The team have also worked with families where the young person has been accommodated for a short period, to enable that young person to return home successfully and safely.

## MESSAGE FROM FAMILIES WORKING WITH HULL FIP

*"It's funny how things have worked out – if I'd not been on probation I'd have never worked with FIP and never thought of going to college – now I am doing it."  
(Mother 23)*

*"Because of the stresses I've had where I live – I could have easily used (heroin) again – but because of FIP I've been able to move house and stay clean."*

*"This is the most I've felt listened-to in my life – I can't believe how quickly things have changed since I've been working with the project." (Father 26)*

*"We've enjoyed doing the activities with the children (6, 13 months), we've never done this before – we do it all the time now."*

## KEY MESSAGES FOR LOCAL AUTHORITY – WHAT WORKS

- DCS and LMCS ensure that there is a comprehensive “Think Family” programme to improve the identification and support to families experiencing problems. In particular programmes to:
  - identify families at risk of poor outcomes to provide support at the earliest opportunity;
  - meet the full range of needs within each family they are supporting or working with;
  - develop services which can respond effectively to the most challenging families; and
  - strengthen the ability of family members to provide care and support to each other.
- Family Intervention Projects (FIPs) used to provide intensive support to families in the greatest difficulty.
- Parenting Early Intervention Programmes (PEIPs) used to help improve parenting skills of mothers and fathers of children (aged 8–13) who are at risk of poor outcomes.
- Evidence based practice programmes such as Multisystemic therapy (MST) used to work with families with children at risk of being taken into care or custody.
- The provision of support to kinship care families whose children are not looked after.
- Placing children in ‘family and friends’ care in structured and planned way.
- Having a robust ‘reunification’ strategy for supporting children to return home, including clear targets, monitoring of standards and service interventions required both prior to, and during the return.
- Providing short breaks to families of disabled children, to alleviate family stress and provide children with opportunities to develop friends and develop skills and competencies.

## MESSAGE FROM PARENT ON MST PROGRAMME

*“Everybody else has wanted to dip into my past and I’ve felt blamed. The difference is I don’t feel criticised or blamed with MST.”*

## Care Matters Priorities for 2010

- Continue the roll out of Family Intervention Projects to reach all families who need them – 10,000 families every year from 2011 with additional funding of £26 million. Work with ADCS and a new National Family Intervention Strategy Group to drive the agenda at local level.
- Encourage local authorities, Children's Trusts & PCT partners to commission evidence based programmes, including MST, as part of their CAMHS strategy, with a view to helping to reduce the numbers of children coming in to care and the numbers of young people who offend. A national event on MST is planned for 2010 and emerging findings will be disseminated to local authorities & PCTs.
- Introduce Regulations under section 17 of the Children Act 1989 to make it easier for local authorities to provide financial support to kinship carers looking after children outside the care system.
- Introduce key changes in the Care Planning, Placement and Review Regulations, so effective work continues with birth parents while children are in care and appropriate services are delivered for the child and family to support the return home. We will set out a requirement that all children who return home from care have a child in need plan, to be reviewed regularly.
- Amend the Children act 1989 to make it clear that, where a child meets the criteria for looked after status, their local authority remains legally and financially responsible for them, even where the child is placed with a relative. This will ensure that kinship carers caring for a looked after child receive the appropriate support from the local authority.
- Improve and clarify the regulatory framework around the use of short break care, to enable the use of short breaks as a flexible resource to support families under stress while ensuring that it is recognised and included as a core part of the placement plan for those children who have regular short break care.
- Revise the Children Act 1989 Statutory Guidance. We will include a new framework for family and friends care which will set out the expectations of an effective service to support family carers and the requirement on every local authority to publish their policies for effectively supporting family carers.

## Chapter 3

# Care placements: a better experience for everyone

### Introduction

#### MESSAGE FROM CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

*"You should be given some choice – not just one placement and that's it.!"*

Secure attachment is essential to the healthy development of children. Children in care have often had difficult experiences within their birth families and when in the care system have had too many sets of carers. Each placement breakdown causes more disturbance for children and this can make the next placement even harder to maintain. Children being moved 5 or 6 times a year have very little chance of forming strong attachments with carers and we know that their education will also be disrupted, leading to poor outcomes. The foster carers who gave evidence to the House of Commons Children, Schools and Families Select committee agreed that *"placement breakdown usually happens because of a lack of support"*.

#### MESSAGE FROM CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

*"I feel like I'm part of the family and not just a foster child. I think it is important to feel like this."*

### Care Matters – What we have done

*Care Matters* sets out a major change programme of reform for the care system, including:

- Ensuring a greater focus by local authorities on placement stability.
- Enabling local authorities to improve their commissioning of placements.
- Improving foster care support and training.
- Piloting evidence based foster care.
- Piloting a 'social pedagogy' approach in residential care.
- Strengthen the enforcement regime for children's homes.

We have or we are:

- Issued for consultation revised National Minimum Standards for Children's Homes, Adoption and Fostering, which have more emphasis on improving the relationships between carers and children.
- Piloting a social pedagogic approach in children's homes and commissioned a training and development framework for staff.
- Strengthened the enforcement regime for children's homes through the Children and Young Persons Act 2008.
- Piloting the Multi-dimensional Treatment Foster Care (MFTC) programme which aims to support the most vulnerable children and which offers them close supervision and therapeutic interventions.
- Funded a national roll out of the Fostering Changes programme – a positive parenting programme for foster carers, and through the KEEP pilot projects, enabling elements of the Multi-dimensional Treatment Foster Care programme for children with complex needs to be made available to foster carers more widely.
- Set up a dissemination and implementation group to identify key findings and messages from the Adoption Research Initiative, and to ensure these reach frontline practitioners.
- Funded regional training events on Special Guardianship.
- Started a national roll out of the CWDC Training, Support and Development Standards for Foster Care.
- Funded The Fostering Network to run advice services including Fosterline, the confidential advice line for foster carers and an annual awareness campaign, Foster Care Fortnight.
- Introduced a national minimum allowance for foster carers in 2007.
- Funded six Regional Commissioning Unit pilots during 2007–08.
- Made support available to local authorities on commissioning, through the Commissioning Support Programme.
- Set out in the Children and Young Persons Act 2008 a new general duty on local authorities to secure sufficient accommodation for the children in care within their area.
- Published multi-agency guidance targeted specifically at safeguarding and promoting the welfare of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking children who may have been trafficked, including how to stop them being enticed into running away from placements by those who wish to exploit them for commercial purposes or otherwise do them harm.

## MESSAGE FROM CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

*"I was quite settled where I was and liked living there, however other people thought it was in my best interests to be moved."*

### What have we achieved?

In 2009 the national average for children with three or more placement moves in a year was 10.7%, an improvement from 13.7% in 2004. In 2009 the national average for children in a long term placement was 67.0%, up from 62.9 in 2005. However there was a wide variation between local authorities. 12 local authorities have reduced placement moves so that 4–8% of their children had three or more placement moves a year, whereas some had significantly more. For example, in 9 local authorities 15–19% of their children had 3 or more placements a year.

The Fostering Network has said that they have seen evidence of increased levels of support and training for foster carers. Their 2009 survey (*Getting the Support they need*) found that 95% of foster carers had a named supervising social worker at the time of completing the survey. 75% rated their current supervising social worker as excellent or good. However only about 40% of foster carers thought that the support they received from their child's social worker was good, with 25% rating this as poor.

In 2008 the Children's Rights Director (*Parents on Council Care*) reported on the views of parents of children in care. Seventy-four per cent thought their children were being looked after well or very well, mainly because they had good carers. Fifty-seven per cent of parents thought their child's placement was the right one, 25% that the child was in the wrong placement.

The MTFC pilots have proved to be highly effective. The Pilot is now in its sixth year. 175 children have been admitted to the adolescents' programme and we have seen very good early outcomes. Whereas 45% of the group of graduates entered the programme with convictions for criminal offences, only 13% had received a further caution or conviction on leaving. Of 31% young people with a history of self-harming behaviour on entry to MTFC only 4% had engaged in this behaviour. Whereas residential care often costs £250,000 per year for this group, MTFC costs around £100,000 per year.

However a number of serious challenges remain; for example, the need to develop a better trained, more stable workforce in residential care. Only a small proportion (around 5%) of children's homes meet the expectation in the National Minimum Standards that 80% of staff in children's homes have a relevant NVQ3 qualification.

We have provided funding for the Adoption Register which identifies potential matches between children in need of adoption and prospective adopters. This led to 268 actual matches across England and Wales in the year to the end of

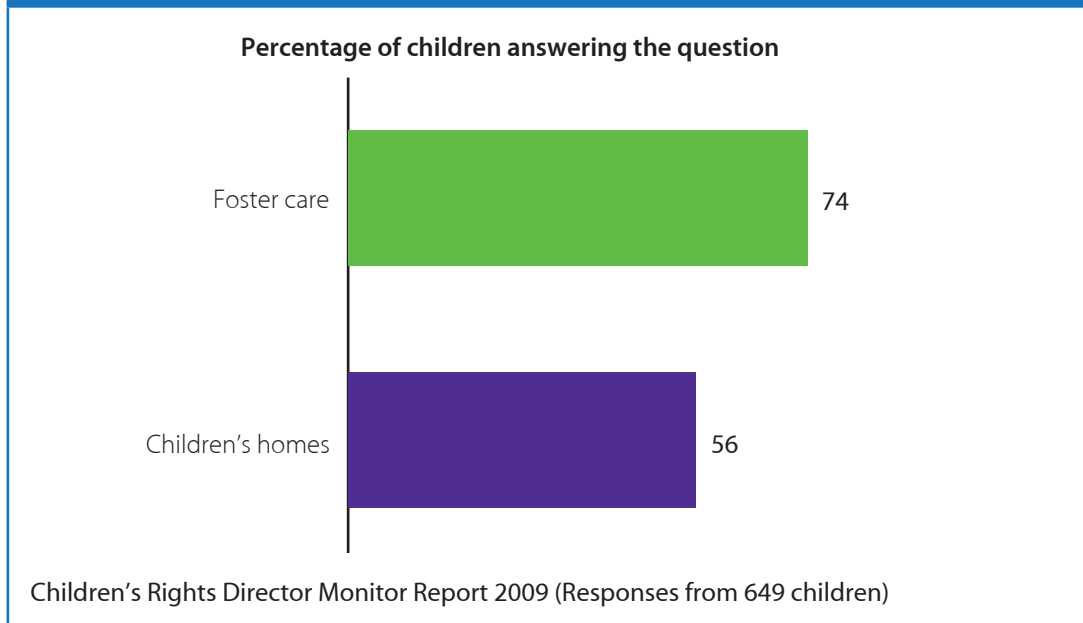


November 2008. It represents an increase of 69 (34.7%) on the previous year. We anticipate that the vast majority of these matches will have become adoptive placements.

## MESSAGE FROM CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

*"It would be wrong to separate brothers and sisters as they would be facing the world apart and stand a chance of never seeing them again."*

## How children in different placements rate their last placement move as being in their best interests



19 out of 23 care leavers in the survey saw their last change of placement out of care as in their best interests, and 30 out of 37 children still in care who had moved back to live with their parents or relatives saw their move back home as in their best interests.

## MESSAGE FROM CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

*"In the children's home that I live the staff especially the manager always keep us informed and involved about everything."*

## Care Matters in Action

- In Middlesbrough foster carers have opportunities to attend courses which are part of the council's in-house training. The fostering service provides support to foster carers in a variety of ways and during 2008–09 carried out a review of the way the support is provided. As a result the service is now running monthly support groups with guest speakers, and choices of morning or evening sessions. They are also providing a support group for sons and daughters of foster carers.
- Reading Borough Council funds their local Foster Care Association to run its own support line. Experienced foster carers are available 7 days a week, 8am to 10pm, to talk confidentially to any carer who calls them. On-duty support line foster carers also pro-actively phone, once a month, foster carers they "buddy". This provides foster carers with added support and the general information collected in these conversations is fed back to the local authority to enable them to improve the support given to both foster carers and children.
- In North Tyneside residential child care officers have been provided with personalised training profiles. No two plans are the same and all are based on a systematic approach to assessing skills and areas for development.
- Havering has a Children's Commissioning Unit which identifies suitable placements for children as part of a Pan London Contract. Children placed outside the borough are supported and visited in the same way as children placed locally. A placements panel chaired by a senior manager oversees all requests for placements or placement moves, to ensure placements meet individual children's needs and to promote placement stability.

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## KEY MESSAGES FOR LOCAL AUTHORITIES – WHAT WORKS

- The DCS and LMCS receive regular reports about placement stability eg how many placement moves are taking place, how many out of authority placements are made, quality of placements etc.
- Local authority has a good understanding of the local needs and has developed a market for placements locally.
- Careful admission planning arrangements and processes avoids the need for emergency placements in all but exceptional cases.
- Investment is made in matching young people to carers at the initial placement. Children's views are fully taken into account.
- Particular attention is given to having a range of placements available for disabled children, those from black and minority ethnic children and Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking children.
- Contingency planning foresees potential difficulties and a range of quality support services (eg CAMHS) are available for carers and children to prevent placements breaking down.
- Regular reviews are held to ensure the placement is working well and meeting the child's needs, drawing on the views of the looked after children and their parents.
- Robust quality assurance mechanisms as part of the commissioning process.

## MESSAGE FROM CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

*"I feel I should have had more say about being moved out of borough into various children's homes. I understand that I kept absconding and was maybe at risk, however I wanted to stay in my own environment, as I didn't have a choice it frustrated me even more."*

## Care Matters Priorities for 2010

- Work with the Children's Workforce Development Council (CWDC) and stakeholders on a wider professional development framework for social workers, foster carers and residential workers.
- Roll out Fostering Changes, a training and support programme for foster carers to help prevent placement breakdown.
- Disseminate the key findings and messages from the Adoption Research Initiative to frontline practitioners.

- Increase the number of local authorities commissioning MTFC and KEEP, a programme to test the benefits of using elements of the MTFC with foster carers more generally. Pilot programmes will test the use of a weekly foster carer meeting and Weekly Parenting Report to help predict the likelihood of placement disruption so appropriate early intervention and support can be provided.
- Develop and put in place new regulations and statutory guidance as part of the implementation of the Children and Young Persons Act 2008 to support improved practice and to promote evidence based practice.
- Set out in the statutory guidance expectations of how local authorities will deliver the obligation to arrange for appropriate advice, support and assistance to be available to every child in care where their placement is outside their area.
- Develop National Minimum Standards (NMS) for foster and residential care. NMS will raise expectations and promote better services.
- Seek to amend regulations to require the foster placement agreement to be reviewed at least annually, so there is regular discussion between the foster carer and the local authority about what decisions can be delegated.
- Disseminate good practice and the findings from the Adoption Research Initiative to support good social work practice.
- Provide funding for the British Association for Adoption and Fostering (almost £300k a year in 2009–10 and 2010–11) for National Adoption Week, which seeks to raise the profile of adoption and encourage more people to apply to adopt.

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## Chapter 4

# Delivering a First Class Education

### Introduction

As part of the Comprehensive Spending Review (2008–11) we have set clear Public Service Agreement (PSA) targets on the educational attainment of children in care and we have asked local authorities to use the increased funding we have provided to improve their educational outcomes. We have seen significant improvements in areas where the education of children in care has been given real priority by the local authority. All local authorities need to follow their example, so that every child in care receives a first class education that allows them to reach their potential.

#### MESSAGE FROM CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

*"It really annoys me that because I'm in care everyone thinks I'm stupid. Its just an unwanted label. I try really hard and achieve at school."*

### Care Matters – What we have done

*Care Matters* set out a range of proposals to:

- Ensure children in care have access to the schools which best meet their needs through admissions arrangements.
- Personalise their learning through better assessment and intervention and personalised tutoring and support.
- Improve accountability at local authority and school level through the introduction of Virtual School Heads (VSH) and designated teachers.

We have:

- Given children in care top priority in admissions arrangements, which has led to children in care being able to attend the schools which best meet their needs.
- Published a document on the attainment of children in care which outlines the steps that local authorities and schools should take to help every child in care to succeed. This sets out the fundamental elements of the system we would like to see in all local authorities and schools, including the roles and responsibilities of VSH and designated teachers.

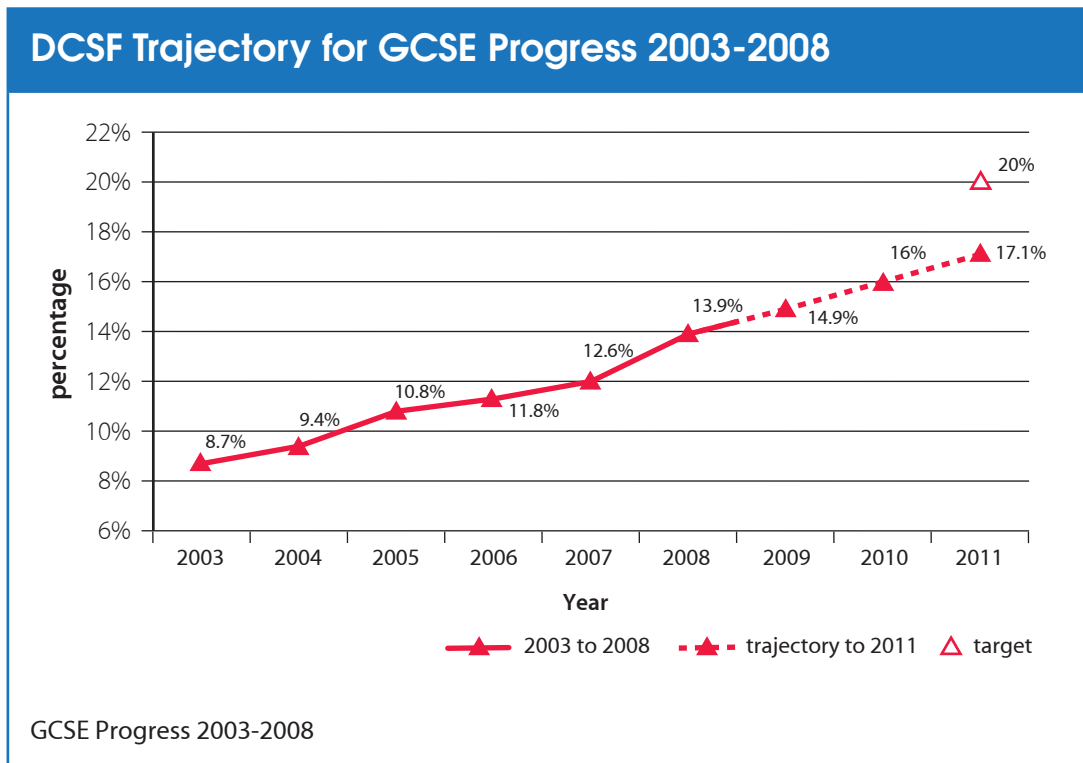
- Piloted the role of VSH for all children in care to ensure a senior manager in every local authority area rigorously monitors and champions attainment. The Bristol University evaluation of the pilots indicated that for educational outcome statistics the 11 pilot authorities performed well compared to the national average and most showed improvement in GCSE results.
- Made statutory the role of designated teacher for children in care in every maintained school from September 2009.
- Taken steps to ensure that children in care are prioritised in other initiatives to drive up attainment for disadvantaged groups. For example, one-to-one tuition has been piloted in 10 local authorities through the Making Good Progress Pilot. This is now being rolled out nationally in Key Stage 2, 3 (and in National Challenge schools in Key Stage 4). In the pilot areas children in care have benefited from such support and have improved their performance faster than other disadvantaged groups.
- Introduced a Personal Education Allowance of £500 from April 2008 for every child in care who does not reach the expected standard. Many local authorities are using this to provide personalised support such as one-to-one tuition.
- Supported Ofsted to introduce a stronger local authority inspection framework giving much greater priority to the attainment of children in care.
- Supported Government Office Networks to develop and spread best practice about how to improve the outcomes of children in their care, with a particular focus on educational attainment.
- Introduced a requirement on local authorities to pay a £2,000 bursary to all care leavers who undertake a designated course of higher education.

## MESSAGE FROM CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

*"I think there should be a specific teacher you can speak to in school about bullying."*

### What have we achieved?

Many more local authorities have prioritised the education support they give to children in care and over the past year we have seen a continuation of the steady progress in results that is evident since 2000. In 2008 14% of children in care achieved 5 A\*-C at GCSE (2008) – double the figure of 7% in 2000. At Key Stage 2 attainment has also been improving steadily. 46% achieved level 4 in English at Key Stage 2 in 2008 compared to 32% in 2000 and in maths 44% achieved this level in 2008 compared to 30% in 2000. There has also been a further reduction in the percentage of children in care permanently excluded from school (from 1.5% in 2000 to 0.5% in 2008), although the number is still higher than for other children.



The Children's Rights Director Monitor Report 2009, shows that 84% (up from 81% in 2008) of children in care rated their education as either good or very good and only 3% as either bad or very bad. It also shows that a majority of children taking part had only had one change of school while in care and that 54% (down from 58% in 2008) thought their last change of school was in their best interest. However, a smaller number had many changes, which resulted in an overall average of four moves.

This is steady progress, but it is not good enough. Despite increased Government investment, more comprehensive legislation and the sharing of good practice, improvement in educational attainment results is patchy across the country. We now know much more about what works and the development of VSHs and designated teachers gives us an opportunity to improve the attainment of children in care further and faster. Only if this happens will we succeed in significantly narrowing the gap in achievement between these children and the general population. There are now record numbers of young people achieving five good GCSEs, but the rise for children in care has been smaller, resulting in the gap between the children in care and their peers actually getting wider. In 2008 although 14% of children in care achieved 5 A\* – C grade GCSEs, this compares with 65% of all children. (Unlike the figure for all children, the figure for children in care does not include qualifications equivalent to GCSEs, but from 2009 these qualifications can be included in data collection figures.)

## MESSAGE FROM CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

*"I believe I am doing well because I am motivated and committed to achieving and I also have the support and advice from my teachers and foster carer."*

### Care Matters in Action

- In North Yorkshire the support and challenge provided by the LA virtual school head to the designated teachers and schools has helped improved the educational outcomes of the children. The proportion of young people in care at aged 16 or over with 5 GCSEs (A–C) was above similar authorities in 2007/08 and improved further in 2008/09, resulting in the council's best ever performance.
- In Cornwall personal education allowances have been used effectively to provide learning opportunities for children. In one case support was provided to a young person to obtain one to one tuition in science and this resulted in their projected grade D becoming a grade A. Other young people have used their personal education allowance to learn a musical instrument or to take Stage coaching lessons outside of school.
- In Richmond a multi-agency team provides a forum for designated teachers once a term, to offer them training, guidance and support. Through the forum designated teachers can access a range of services, including support from an educational psychologist or a CAMHS worker.

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## KEY MESSAGES FOR LOCAL AUTHORITY AND SCHOOLS – WHAT WORKS

The DCS and LMCS give a clear commitment to prioritising the improvement of educational attainment by children in care.

These outcomes are viewed as a barometer of success for the local authority and senior managers feel that they have failed if these outcomes are not good enough.

Children are in a stable family placement, which supports a stable school placement.

The virtual school head has introduced a precise and rigorous system for monitoring the progress of looked after children closely, ensuring personalised support is available when required, and holding schools to account for their outcomes.

Every school has a Designated Teacher who works with each child in care and the virtual school head and ensures that they receive good individual tutoring in schools, their home and other settings. Where appropriate this support continues into higher education.

Children in care who have a special education need receive integrated assessments and support which meets their particular needs.

The particular needs of excluded groups from black and minority ethnic families are taken into account in assessments and Personal Education Plans.

## MESSAGE FROM CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

*“I had my PEP meeting at school. My teacher, social worker and foster carer were there”*

## Care Matters Priorities for 2010

- Ensure all local authorities have a senior official, or “virtual school head” (VSH) to promote the education achievements of children in care.
- Improve education data collections and performance management so that the attainment of children in care is prioritised and that this is reflected in data.
- Embed in local authorities C4EO evidence-based work on raising the attainment of children in care and the findings of the VSH pilot evaluation.
- Government Offices will challenge local authorities and disseminate good practice.
- Ensure schools initiatives around narrowing the gap and improving attainment include a focus on children in care. Children in care are to be included as a priority group in the national roll-out of one-to-one tuition.
- Ensure a consistent understanding of the role of the designated teacher for children in care by schools and local authorities, by the issuing of statutory guidance and encouraging schools to provide training to designated teachers.
- Introduce new Regulations and statutory guidance to strengthen the role of Independent Reviewing Officers, whose responsibilities will include ensuring that education needs are included in care plans. Use these new regulations and guidance to emphasise the fact that significant changes to care plans such as a care placement or school move should only take place following a review.

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## Chapter 5

# Promoting Health and Well-being

### Introduction

Ensuring that local authorities, schools, Primary Care Trusts and Strategic Health Authorities (SHAs) work together, and that they do so in partnership with the voluntary sector, carers and young people themselves, will be crucial to improving the health and wellbeing of children in care. Children in care quite understandably tell us that they want the focus to be on promoting their good health, not on tackling their ill health. So alongside putting measures in place to reduce unplanned pregnancies and to prevent and treat substance misuse, our greatest focus has been and needs to continue to be on improving the wellbeing of children in care. Getting this right will be a litmus test of Children's Trusts.

#### MESSAGE FROM CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

*"Inspectors should be looking for improvements ie in the health of young people. Look at cases and observe if there is improvement."*

### Care Matters – What we have done

Care Matters set out a range of proposals including to:

- Increase the priority given to improving the health of children in care, by
  - putting the guidance on the health of children in care on a statutory footing for local authorities, SHAs and PCTs.
  - Setting out clear roles and responsibilities for promoting the health and wellbeing of children in care
  - Considering how best to ensure that the mental health of children in care is reflected in future local authority performance management arrangements.
- Provide practical support and guidance to help children participate in positive activities during their leisure time.

We have:

- Consulted on revised health guidance which will be a statutory for PCTs and SHAs, as well as for local authorities.

- Used the guidance to address issues including co-ordination, expectations of quality and the provision of targeted CAMHS services for children in care.
- Published the Healthy Child Programme 5–19 which highlights the importance of promoting the health and wellbeing of children in care.
- Introduced a national indicator, NI 58, into the National Indicator Set to measure the emotional health of children in care. This is supported by guidance that states that all children in care should be screened for emotional and behavioural difficulties, to be followed by diagnosis and treatment where appropriate.
- Referred to the needs of children in care in the statutory guidance on the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, which supports local authorities and local health bodies in working together to measure local needs and to respond to them.
- Commissioned the Centre for Excellence and Outcomes in children's and young people's services (C4EO) to gather evidence and then build capacity in children's trusts to meet the emotional health needs of children in care.
- Issued new statutory guidance for DCSs and LMCSs on their roles and responsibilities. This included specific advice on ensuring that the health and well-being of children in care is a priority for local health services, and for leisure services.
- Issued new guidance for Children's Trusts which says that all Children's Trust partners should ensure that their strategy and practice takes particular account of how they work with the local authority to improve the health and well-being of children in care. In particular, the guidance sets out an expectation that plans are agreed with health partners to improve access to health services; and with district councils, to improve access to positive activities for the children in their care, including free access to their leisure facilities.
- Issued statutory guidance on the Education and Inspections Act 2006 duty to ensure that young people have access to positive activities, which makes clear that children in care should be a priority group and that local authorities should consult with them about how they can best implement their duty to help them.
- Recommended that children in care be included in "vulnerable children" definitions for the extended schools subsidy pilots, to increase access to extended services in schools. Evaluation of the pilots showed most of them included children in care.
- Amended the regulations regarding the responsible health commissioner, to clarify PCT commissioning responsibility for children placed out of area.

## MESSAGE FROM CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

*“Don’t make YP pay for the activity they want to do. Offer an incentive to be YP for example if they stick to a certain thing for a month they would be given a day out.”*

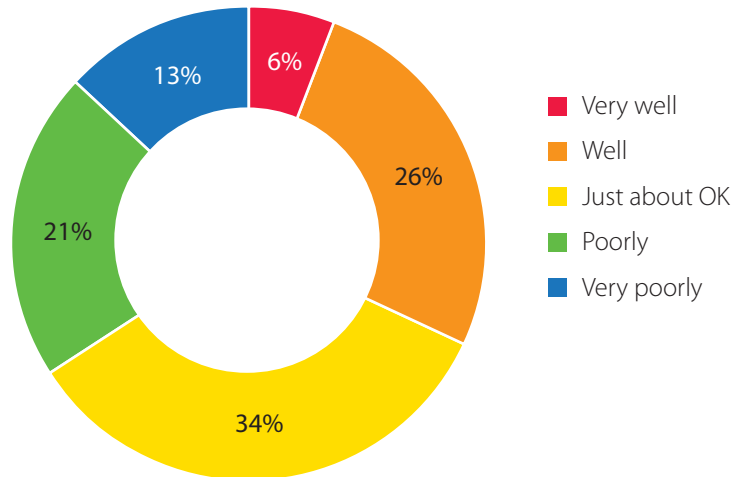
### What have we achieved?

We have evidence that some outcomes are improving:

- In 2008, 82 per cent of children in care immunisations were up to date, 87 per cent of children had a dental check, and 87 per cent had an annual health assessment. This is an improvement from 2007 when the figures were 80 per cent, 86 per cent and 84 per cent respectively.
- The first national data release on the emotional and behavioural health of children in care was published in October 2009, although further work will be needed to improve the overall number and quality of returns in future years.
- A joint Chief Inspector’s report in 2008<sup>1</sup> confirmed improvements in health monitoring for children in care and leaving care since 2005. The National Care Advisory Service in its Stocktake briefing said that *“Feedback from services demonstrated there are a range of initiatives to improve the health and wellbeing of young people across the country.”*
- The majority of Primary Care Trusts now have designated doctors and designated nurses for children in care.

1 OfSTED (2008) Safeguarding Children: The third joint Chief Inspectors report on arrangements to safeguard children.

## How well are councils doing at keeping children in care healthy?



Children's messages to the Minister – Children's Rights Director Report 2009 (117 members of Children in Care Councils responded from across the country.)

Clearly, there is still considerable room for improvement. The National Care Advisory Service report said *"some gaps in statutory services were highlighted such as between Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) & adult services, poor access to dentists, and lack of help for certain groups e.g. those with borderline personality disorders and complex needs."* The 2008 Ofsted report also stated that the quality of individual health plans was still judged to be variable and the role of the corporate parent in promoting the health of the children in their care was not fully understood by council members and officers. Overall, particular areas for development identified in inspection reports included:

- The safe administration of medicines in residential settings.
- Arrangements for securing health services for children placed out of authority.
- Waiting times for assessment and treatment for children with behavioural difficulties and lower levels of mental health needs.

The programme of inspections that is now underway by OfSTED and the Care Quality Commission will inform our understanding of how policy and practice need to improve in order to secure the good health and wellbeing of every child in care.

## Care Matters in Action

- In Hartlepool the introduction of a strengths and difficulties questionnaire was used to improve CAMHS services for children in care. Questionnaires were completed by foster carers (100%) and teachers (75%) and showed a high correlation between their scores for the same children. An analysis of the forms was carried out by the designated looked after children psychologist in CAMHS. Agreement has been reached between the LA and health service on a fast track referral to CAMHS for intervention and support of any children whose score indicated particular difficulties.
- Tower Hamlets provides free access to leisure facilities for all their children and young people in care. They give monthly passes for any child in care who uses the facility 6 or more times a month, with everyone else paying on an as and when basis. This concession is extended to all children and young people regardless of where they are placed. The local authority has also set up a bike scheme through its environment department whereby children and young people receive a bike and equipment on condition that they complete a cycling proficiency test.
- Hounslow has a well co-ordinated children in care team comprising a Medical Adviser, Specialist Nurse, Clinical Psychologist and two Adolescent Clinical Social Workers. The team have fast track referrals to CAMHS and sexual health clinics. Each child has a comprehensive health plan and a tracking and monitoring system is in place to ensure it is fully implemented.
- The Young Person's Support Service (YPSS) in Hull has established a counselling service for children in care. Referrals can be made by young people, Personal Advisers or support workers on the young person's behalf. Six counselling sessions are offered but this can be extended. The service has been very well received, with one young person reporting: "I've started walking down the street being pleased to be me, which is a great feeling".

## KEY MESSAGES FOR LOCAL AUTHORITY AND HEALTH BODIES – WHAT WORKS

- The DCS and LMCS ensure that through Children's Trust arrangements there is effective co-ordination and commissioning of health services, including CAMHS.
- Strategies are in place to address health inequalities and health promotion, include specific actions to support children in care.
- Systems are in place to ensure children and young people in care are registered with GPs and have access to dentists.
- Statutory health assessments inform care plans and address a child's emotional and physical needs. Children and young people have a choice in who carries out their health assessment.
- Results from strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) support referrals to local targeted and specialist mental health services.
- All staff working with children in care understand the referral pathways in relation to specialist services including substance misuse services and Child and Adolescent Mental Health services.
- Dedicated CAMHS provision for children in care, ensure that they get the help they need in a timely, accessible and effective way.
- Foster carers given basic training on health, hygiene issues and first aid, with a particular emphasis on health promotion and communicable diseases.
- Systems are in place to monitor whether the health needs of: children placed out of authority; disabled children; black and minority ethnic children are being met.
- Leaving care services ensure that health and access to positive activities are included as part of young people's pathway planning.



## Care Matters Priorities for 2010

The main focus will be on improving joint working and on ensuring greater consistency in terms of policy and practice across the country. In particular:

- We will issue the revised statutory guidance on the commissioning, delivery and inspection of health services for children in care and support local areas in putting it into practice by disseminating best practice.
- We will work with stakeholders to ascertain how to improve the commissioning of health services, particularly for children placed out of authority.
- We will work with stakeholders to improve the consistency and quality of the content and documentation of the health assessment for children in care.
- We will ask C4EO to build capacity in Children's Trusts to improve the emotional health of children in care.
- We will take action to ensure children in care are included in the expansion of extended school subsidies for vulnerable groups, which will help increase the range of free positive activities which they can access.
- We will work with local authorities and PCTs to promote their use of the strengths and difficulties questionnaire, not only to provide high quality data at a national and local level, but also to support improvements in the planning, commissioning and delivery of local services to improve the emotional health of children in care.

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## Chapter 6

# Transition to Adulthood

### Introduction

#### MESSAGE FROM CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

*".....being a care leaver has to be the most pressure I've been under in my life, one minute I was 12 and living at home then I'm 21 and find my self being homeless....."*

The Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 extended the duties of local authorities to provide personal support and planning for care leavers until they are twenty-one. The Act imposed new duties on local authorities so that, like reasonable parents, they have to provide financial support 16–17 year old care leavers and to maintain them in suitable accommodation.

Although the Act resulted in some improvement, Care Matters recognised that children in care continue to face many barriers as they make their transition to adulthood. The trend for young people to exit care in their sixteenth year had been reversed but not yet eliminated, and very vulnerable young people are among those who continue to leave care early.

#### MESSAGE FROM CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

*"Within a couple of weeks, I can feel that I'm going to be on the streets and another number."*

### Care Matters – What we have done

Care Matters set out a range of proposals to encourage an approach whereby care leavers are supported for as long as they need extra help, with talk about 'leaving care' ceasing and with it being understood that young people need to be able to move on in a gradual, phased and, above all, prepared way. In particular, Care Matters stressed the need to:

- Pilot greater involvement of young people in deciding when they move to independence.
- Provide young people with the opportunity to benefit from staying with foster carers – or, if appropriate, in residential care – until age 21.

- Provide personal adviser support for those who haven't achieved the qualifications they need by the age of 21, and to those young adults who request additional support up to 25.

We have:

- funded eleven local authorities to pilot Right2B Cared4. This programme gives young people much more support around decision making about their readiness to move on from their care placements.
- funding Staying Put: 18+ Family Care pilots. These recognise the importance of giving care leavers the opportunity to remain with their former foster carers into legal adulthood, so that they are able to make the transition to adulthood that is more like the way that all other young people leave their own families.
- included provision in the Children and Young Persons Act 2008 to give care leavers entitlement to Personal Adviser (PA) support from the leaving care service of their responsible authority where they wish to resume education and training beyond the age of twenty-one.
- worked with DCLG to offer support to regional local authority leaving care networks and individual local authorities to promote access to suitable accommodation for care leavers.
- announced £7 million additional funding for local authorities to build new units of supported accommodation for care leavers in 8 local authorities.
- launched the *From Care2Work* programme to improve employment opportunities for care leavers, including funding the National Care Advisory Service (NCAS) to:
  - develop and test models of support for care leavers into employment;
  - develop a 'national register' of employers – bringing together large national employers from the public, private and voluntary sectors who will sign up to make a clear commitment to improve employment opportunity for care leavers.
  - work with local authorities to develop their services to support care leavers.
- put forward in the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learners Bil, currently before Parliament, clauses to extend the new apprenticeship entitlement to care leavers aged 19 to 25.

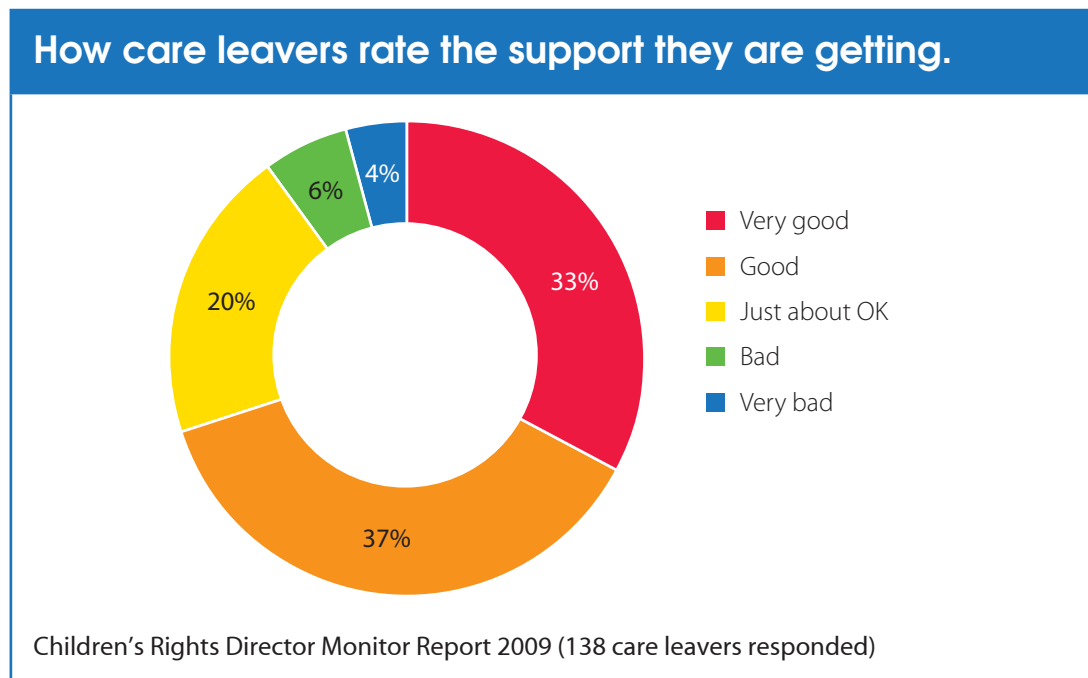
## What have we achieved?

Since the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 commenced in 2001 there has been significant positive change for young people making the transition out of care and into adulthood. The numbers of care leavers participating in education, employment and training increased from 55% in 2004 to 63% in 2009 (down from 65% in 2008), with 7% of care leavers now going on to university. Similarly, the

numbers of care leavers living in suitable accommodation after moving on from their care placements has steadily increased from 77% in 2004 to 90% in 2009.

As in other areas of practice to do with children in care there were wide variations between local authorities. 15 local authorities had over 80% of their care leavers in education, employment and training, but 13 local authorities had less than 50%. Similarly, 17 local authorities had 100% of their care leavers in suitable accommodation, but 18 local authorities only had between 60–79%.

The Children’s Rights Director report on care leavers’ views on the support they receive shows that 70% of care leavers rated their support as good or very good. This was slightly improved from 67% in 2008.



**MESSAGE FROM CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE**

*“I think my leaving care workers are doing a brilliant job. Keep up the good work.”*

The National Care Advisory Service stocktake briefing report says that there has been an “increased focus” on supporting care leavers into education, training and employment and suitable accommodation. However “the impact of the recession on the availability of work is a concern, with the number of care leavers not in education, training and employment increasing in 2008–09.”

## Care Matters in Action

- Camden's Young Persons Pathway offers accommodation to support young people (16–21) to make a successful transition to independent living. The project is jointly funded by Supporting People, children's services and the homelessness department. Children's services also provide 'top up' services, e.g. where young people require 24-hour support. The project has three assessment services, each containing an emergency bed, able to take young people whose placement has broken down, but care leavers can be referred directly into accommodation appropriate to their needs. The provision includes hostels, shared housing, flats and bedsits, training flats, and specific provision for 16/17 year-olds; those with mental health or disability needs; women only; teenage parents and services for young people in education or training.
- East Riding of Yorkshire Council has appointed a care leaver into a newly created apprentice post – jointly working across the participation team and the Pathway team. He is undertaking NVQ 2 in Customer service and, amongst other things, will be helping with the running and development of the Children in Care Council, an evaluation of the council's work experience schemes with young people and producing newsletters for young people in care.
- The leaving care team in Leeds has appointed a disabled children's social worker to address concerns about transfer and access to adult services. The disability social worker undertakes needs assessments and helps develop pathway plans; they liaise with both the adult services teams and with other disability professionals.
- Merton is one of the pilot authorities for R2BC4 and Staying Put. As a result of the impact of a number of initiatives increased numbers of young people are remaining with their previous foster carers or moving to in-house supported housing, or to family placements having previously been in residential care.

## KEY MESSAGES FOR LOCAL AUTHORITY – WHAT WORKS

- DCS and LMCS have high aspirations and expect all care leavers to live in suitable accommodation and participate in Employment, Education or Training.
- There is a general philosophy that “leaving care” will involve a gradual transition from their care placement for each child.
- Local commissioning strategies involve housing agencies and housing related support commissioners and providers and ensure that care leavers have a range of suitable supported accommodation options.
- Strategies and plans take account of the DCSF and CLG guidance on Joint Working between housing and children’s services
- Local authority actively takes part in the *From Care2Work* programme.
- Strong pathway planning processes build on care planning, put the needs of the young person at the centre so that their views are listened to and acted on. Each care leaver’s care/pathway plan is kept up to date and regularly reviewed. The plan includes
  - robust assessments of what support young people want and need.
  - levels of support and assistance which meet the needs of individual care leavers.
  - a staged, tailored programme of accommodation, where young people can learn from mistakes without limiting their future housing options.
  - giving care leavers the opportunity to remain with their foster family on a “supported lodgings” basis.
- Particular priority is given to supporting excluded groups such as disabled young people and unaccompanied asylum seeking children and young people whose support needs are accompanied by challenging and risky behaviour.
- Processes and services are routinely assessed against the NCAS national leaving care standards.

## Care Matters Priorities for 2010

- Roll out the *From Care2Work* programme to all local authorities including working with 30 national employers to develop opportunities for care leavers.
- Work closely with the regional leaving care networks, the Government Office Care Matters leads and NCAS to spread best practice.
- Work with Government offices and DCLG to support and challenge poorly performing local authorities.
- Continue to fund the Staying Put: 18+ Family Care pilots and use evaluation evidence from these to spread best practice with all local authorities.
- Consult and publish revised Statutory Guidance to local authorities about planning successful transitions to adulthood for care leavers, including specific guidance on the most vulnerable and excluded groups such as disabled young people.

## Chapter 7

# Good practice on the frontline

### Introduction

#### MESSAGE FROM CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

*"My ideal social worker would be a good listener, caring, reliable, punctual, understanding, and would help me to have a say in reviews."*

In their report on the care system, the Children's Schools and Families' Select Committee said that the "greatest gains in reforming our care system" would be achieved by building a care system on good relationships and that "It is the quality of relationships that will determine whether a child in care feels cared about on a day to day basis." Through Care Matters we want to ensure that children in care experience a high quality seamless service which is consistent, and really responsive to their wishes and feelings. To achieve this, it is particularly important that everyone who works with children in care has the skills and knowledge to ensure that children who are vulnerable or who have additional needs get the extra help they need to achieve their full potential.

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## MESSAGE FROM CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

What makes a good social worker?

- *They care about their job.*
- *They're there when you need them.*
- *They don't give excuses for not doing things for you.*
- *Truthful – they don't lie to you.*
- *Come to see you on time – they are always late.*
- *Honest – don't write reports that aren't accurate – I've had hurtful things written about me that are lies and that just breaks the trust you have in them.*
- *They should be able to build up a good relationship 24:7.*
- *People who want to stay in the job – there's too many changes.*
- *Listen to you more.*
- *They need to be able to speak properly to us – not street talk which just sounds stupid. Show us some respect when you talk to us.*
- *A person who works full time and visits weekly.*
- *Someone who doesn't keep information back from you.*
- *They should know what they are doing – they are always checking things out but they never come back to you with an answer.*

## Care Matters – What we have done

Care Matters set out a range of proposals on improving the quality of the workforce including:

- Developing a tailored recruitment campaign for social workers.
- Bringing in reforms to the training of social workers.
- Piloting 'Social Work Practices' models.
- Reforming the Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs) Role.
- Improving access to independent visitors, and to independent advocates.

We have:

- Established the Social Work Task Force to examine social work practice and make recommendations to government later this year for any long term reform needed in the system.

- Increased funding for the children and families' social work workforce to over £130m between 2008 and 2011. This funding is to tackle issues relating to the recruitment and retention, professional development and role of social workers.
- Launched the social worker recruitment campaign in September 2009. We have also launched a Return to Social Work programme to help former social workers to come back into the workforce.
- To improve support for social workers in the profession we have launched and rolled out the Newly Qualified Social Worker programme.
- In 2009, the sister programme to NQSW – the Early Professional Development programme was launched. This provides support for social workers in their second and third years of practice.
- Sponsored graduates to undertake Masters-level social worker training.
- Supported the Children's Workforce Development Council's Remodelling the Delivery of Social Work pilots in 11 local authorities. These are seeking to improve services and particularly to increase the amount of face-to-face time social workers spend with service users.
- Established two regional social worker recruitment and retention pilots which are supporting local authorities in West London and the West Midlands to work together on social worker recruitment and retention issues.
- Set up Social Work Practice pilots in six local authorities (Blackburn with Darwen, Hillingdon, Kent, Liverpool, Staffordshire and Sandwell).
- Introduced legislation to strengthen the role of the IRO, in particular so that each IRO can ensure that children are able to participate in planning their own care, with the care plan that the local authority prepares for them being based on a thorough assessment of all aspects of their individual needs.
- Clarified that children must have a care plan that is regularly reviewed. Reviews must be chaired by IRO who must be independent of case management. Significant changes to care plans – changes of placement or school – should only take place following a review. We have also made it clear that IROs are expected to challenge where care planning does not reflect children's needs or does not sufficiently take their views into account.
- Set out that children in care are entitled to support from an independent advocate whenever they wish to complain or make a representation about their care.

## MESSAGE FROM CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

*"Need to get social workers that respect us and aren't gonna be false to young people. If they trust us we'll trust them."*

## What have we achieved?

- The social worker recruitment campaign had by the end of October attracted over 30,000 requests for an information pack on how to become a social work.
- The Newly Qualified Social Worker programme has so far supported nearly 1,000 new social workers into the workforce and we expect the 09/10 cohort to be much bigger.
- Sponsored over 300 high quality graduates to undertake Masters-level social worker training.

## MESSAGE FROM CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

*"They're really slow at getting permission so my carers are allowed to sign any consent forms for trips etc, then you miss out on things that other young people went on, just because you were looked after by the council". Young person.*

## Care Matters in Action

- In Cambridgeshire a strongly motivated and experienced IRO group enables children and young people to participate in reviews through a variety of means, including being represented or accompanied by an advocate. IROs are also working with casework teams to ensure more consistent early planning.
- In North Yorkshire most children and young people have a sustained relationship with professionals who know them well and care about them. The children have reported to Ofsted that they had good relationships with foster carers, residential staff and their social workers. Younger children highly value their family social worker, with whom they undertake life story work.

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## KEY MESSAGES FOR LOCAL AUTHORITY – WHAT WORKS

- The DCS and LMCS ensure that there is a comprehensive approach to the retention and staff development and receive regular reports on key details such as vacancy rates and children and young people's views on the support they receive from social workers and carers.
- A module on children in care is included in the induction training for all staff.
- There is a strong focus on training for foster carers to develop their skills and competencies to look after and support children in their care. Foster carers have a named supervising social worker.
- Children and young people in care involved in the training and development of carers.
- Every child having a named Independent Reviewing officer who has the skills and authority to challenge decisions on their behalf.
- There is rigorous monitoring of training take up and feedback on how training could be improved.

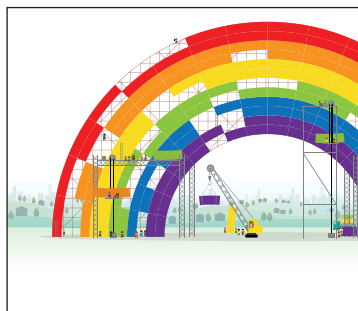
### Care Matters Priorities for 2010

- To work with local authorities and LGA and ADCS to strengthen the role and skills of practitioners and, in relation to social workers, to do so in light of the Social Work Task Force's forthcoming recommendations.
- To finalise and issue care planning, placements and review regulations and guidance, which strengthens the role of the IRO and sets out explicitly that children are entitled to the support of an independent advocate whenever they wish to make their views heard.
- To continue to fund the Social Work Practices pilots and to carry out a robust evaluation.
- From next Autumn to support 200 people to train to be social workers on our new employment-based training route.









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