

Tomorrow's Future

Building a Strategy for Children and Young People



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children and young people's unit



Every young person deserves the best possible start in life and the opportunity to achieve their full potential. Our job across Government is to do all that we can to make this possible.

Tomorrow's Future sets out our progress so far in developing services to address the pressing needs identified by the Policy Action Team on young people in their report last year¹, and demonstrates our commitment to continue to make progress in meeting our pledge to eradicate child poverty.

Gordon Brown, David Blunkett and Paul Boateng with members of NCH at the Children and Young People's Unit launch conference, November 2000



Our approach

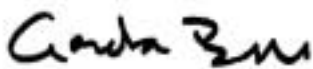
In November we launched the new Children and Young People's Unit to drive forward our investment in services for children and young people. At the heart of the Unit's approach is a recognition that we should have high expectations for every child and should work to ensure that provision for children and young people is designed to give every one of them an equal opportunity to develop.

Though Government has a key role to play in leading this agenda, the voluntary and community sectors' contribution to our work, and the relevance of locally-led services has been undervalued for far too long. We are determined to put this right. The new £450m Children's Fund is a leading example of how we are committed to invest in new preventive services for children by supporting innovative local solutions which recognise the value of true partnership working between the voluntary, community and statutory sectors.

The Children's Fund is a central part of the Government's agenda for children and families, but it is only one part. This approach document sets out how much the Government has already invested in improving its services for children and young people and how these changes have been designed to ensure that even those children facing the greatest challenges can grow up to play a full and vigorous role in society. Our commitment to improve services to children and young people goes hand in hand with the continuing advances we made in the Budget earlier this month to support families and children.

There is still much more to do, as this document recognises. So we are asking the Children and Young People's Unit to look at how best to improve service provision further and to work closely with the voluntary, community, faith and statutory sectors to develop a new forward strategy later this year. Central to the Unit's work will be their commitment to engage children and young people themselves, learning from what works and from each other, to develop services that are better designed and delivered to meet young people's needs.

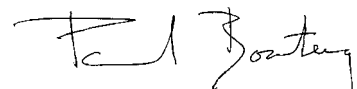
1 Report of Policy Action Team 12: Young People, National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal, Social Exclusion Unit, March 2000



Rt. Hon. Gordon Brown MP
Chancellor of the Exchequer



Rt. Hon. David Blunkett MP
Secretary of State for
Education and Employment



Rt. Hon. Paul Boateng MP
Minister for Young People
and for the Family

Children and young people today

- 1.1 Over 12 million children and young people, up to nineteen years of age, live in England today.² The great majority of them can look forward to being better educated, wealthier, physically healthier, and living longer than their parents.³ However, a significant minority face a combination of problems, which limit their prospects and make any child vulnerable to social exclusion.

Context

- 1.2 The challenge for Government, and the voluntary and statutory sector partners with which it works, is to maximise the help and support which these children and young people can be offered. To do this we need to appreciate how multi-dimensional inequalities – like the ones shown on the next page – can affect any child's ability to develop.
- 1.3 Changes in the labour market, in family relationships and in social structures mean some young people face these difficulties without recourse to the family support that most children can take for granted.



- By the time they reach 16, one in four children is likely to have experienced the divorce of his or her parents.⁴
- One in five children live in lone parent families.⁵
- Between 1977 and 1997 the proportion of no-earner households, and the proportion of children in workless households more than doubled.⁶
- Three out of five children in every classroom are estimated to have witnessed domestic violence of some kind.⁷
- Over 58,000 children currently live in care.⁸

While many parents and young people are able to cope with these pressures, some find family life is characterised by instability, poverty and conflict. These in turn can lead to young people having behavioural problems, to ill health and to youth offending. Indeed, young people who are exposed to family breakdowns are also more likely to become parents who experience breakdown in their own relationships.⁹

2 Office for National Statistics, 2001

3 *Social Trends 31*, Office for National Statistics, The Stationery Office 2001

4 K Kiernan *The Legacy of Parental Divorce: social, economic and demographic experiences of adulthood*, Case Paper 1, London School of Economics, 1997 (Divorce used to mean all parental separations)

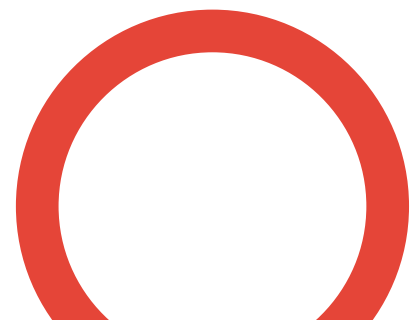
5 J Graham, comment on J Bynner contribution to *Comprehensive Spending Review of Provision for Young Children – supporting papers*, volume 2, HMT, 1998

6 *Welfare Reform Focus File No.7*, Department for Social Security, 1997

7 *British Crime Survey 1992* quoted in *A Review of Children's Service Development (1995-98) at Refuge*, written for The King's Fund, Refuge, 1998

8 *Children Looked After by Local Authorities*, Year Ending 31 March 2000, Dept of Health, 2001

9 *Teenage Pregnancy*, Social Exclusion Unit, The Stationery Office, 1999



Limited Educational Opportunities	One in four 19 year olds fails to achieve a post-GCSE qualification. ¹⁰
Poor Housing	Almost one in four children in England lives in housing that fails to meet the set standard of decency. ¹¹
Racial Inequality	African Caribbean pupils are over five times more likely to be excluded from school, though they are no more likely to be persistent truants. ¹²
Infant mortality	Infants born to fathers in unskilled or semi-skilled occupations have an infant mortality rate over 70% higher than those in professional or managerial positions. ¹³
Teenage Pregnancy	In 1998 there were 41,089 conceptions to girls under the age 18, 42% of which resulted in abortions.
Drugs	11% of 11-15 year olds use drugs. ¹⁴
Mental Health	Around 10% of children aged 5 to 15 in 1998 had a mental disorder of sufficient severity to cause them distress or have a considerable effect on the way they live. ¹⁵
Victims of Crime	More than one in three 12-15 year olds are assaulted each year. ¹⁶

Child poverty

- 1.4 A substantial body of evidence shows that children who grow up in poverty experience disadvantage and lack of opportunity that affects not only their own current and future experience as adults, but also their life chances as children. In 1999 the Prime Minister committed the Government to eradicating child poverty in twenty years and halving it in ten.
- 1.5 We have introduced a series of reforms to support all families with children. This reflects our belief that while parents are responsible for the upbringing of their children, Government should contribute towards the costs. These reforms have provided extra financial support for all families with record increases in universal Child Benefit, while targeting most help on those who need it most, when they need it most – with reforms including the Working Families Tax Credit and increases in Income Support and other income-related benefits.

¹⁰ *Opportunity for All, One year on: Making a Difference*, Second Annual Report 2000, The Stationery Office, 2000

¹¹ *ibid*

¹² D. Gillborn *Exclusion from School*, Viewpoint no. 5, London, University of London Institute of Education 1996

¹³ *Social Trends 30*, Office for National Statistics, The Stationery Office, 2000
(The figures relate to a comparison between the rates of infant mortality for children with fathers in Managerial and Technical occupations (4.0 per 1,000 live births) and of infant mortality for children with fathers in unskilled occupations (6.8 per 1,000 live births)

¹⁴ *Statistics on Young people and Drug Misuse: England 1998*, Office for National Statistics

¹⁵ *Mental Health of Children & Adolescents*, Office for National Statistics, 1999, reported in *Social Inequalities*, Office for National Statistics, 2000

¹⁶ *Young People, victimisation and the police; British Crime Survey findings on experiences and attitudes of 12 to 15 year olds*, Home Office Research Study 140, The Stationery Office



Budget 2001

- 1.6 This year's Budget commits an extra £1.1 billion in direct financial support to families. This includes a new Children's Tax Credit, which will help around 5 million families by up to £10 a week – with additional help in the year of a child's birth and a rise in the basic credit in the Working Families' Tax Credit, Income Support and Jobseeker's Allowance tax credits, together with a series of measures to extend help with childcare costs. This secures and builds on previous Budget measures. Together with previous Budget measures, tax and benefit reforms announced in this Parliament will lift over 1.2 million children out of poverty.
- 1.7 The Government has also started to make significant progress in tackling the causes of poverty and persistent poverty. Since Spring 1997, the number of children in workless households has fallen by over 300,000, and the lone parent employment rate has risen above 50 per cent for the first time in over 20 years. At the same time, the number of children in families claiming out-of-work benefits for two or more years consecutively has fallen by over 200,000 – over 10 per cent.
- 1.8 Budget 2001 also announced a £0.5 billion package for maternity and paternity provision, to be introduced in full from 2003. This includes a rise in maternity pay to £100 a week, an extension of the period of paid maternity leave from 18 to 26 weeks, the extension of these benefits to adoptive parents, and the introduction of two weeks paid paternity leave.

Our approach

- 1.9 We recognise that if we are to improve the quality of all children and young people's lives we must marry substantial improvements in family incomes with increased investment in services. Our approach is rooted in our conviction to listen and learn from children and young people themselves, and to engage with partners outside Government, crucially including the voluntary sector and community groups. As the next chapter demonstrates, we are already making this happen.

Making things better

- 2.1 All children and young people need a framework of services in which they can flourish. Services need to be of sufficiently high quality and breadth to recognise individual need. Some children face a long-lasting combination of problems and require particular support if they are to achieve their potential. But many more children simply go through vulnerable periods and circumstances. A failure to address the risk factors for children as they move in and out of vulnerable stages can also put them at risk of social exclusion.
- 2.2 So a response to children's needs requires action on two levels. Targeted support services need to be strengthened so that vulnerable children are better supported. And mainstream services need to be improved so that all children are better served. This Government has been fundamentally reshaping public services since it took office. Its drive to raise educational standards in schools is a commitment for all children. The reform of mainstream health services in the NHS Plan similarly must lead to better outcomes for children. We are now making a difference to services across each of the age ranges in a child's development.

0-4 year olds

- 2.3 The early years of any child's life should be a time for them to have fun and gain the confidence to learn through play, through exploration and through a developing sense of their own selves in relation to others. Yet differences in achievement between advantaged and disadvantaged children often appear well before they start school. Across Government we are:
 - **increasing maternity pay** to £100 a week, **extending the period of paid maternity leave** from 18 to 26 weeks, **introducing two weeks paid paternity leave** and extending all these benefits to adoptive parents from 2003
 - funding a sustained expansion of accessible, affordable, high quality childcare and early education provision, planned and supported locally, through **Early Years Development and Childcare Partnerships**





- expanding the **National Childcare Strategy** so it will create childcare places for 1.6 million children by 2004 with a threefold increase in its budget. Much of this funding will be directed to disadvantaged areas by 2004 by establishing:
 - up to 900 **Neighbourhood Nurseries**
 - 50,000 **out-of-school hours childcare places**, and
 - 25,000 **childminders**
 and investing a further £16 million of investment to support children with special educational needs, and disabilities
- guaranteeing a **free Early Education Place** for all children aged 4 and a steadily increasing number for 3 year olds. Every 3 year old will have a guaranteed free place by September 2004
- building a **Foundation Stage** into the national curriculum, explicitly recognising this critical period in children's development, together with Early Learning Goals which set out what the majority of children should achieve by the end of their reception year
- supporting the development of integrated early years services. The **Early Excellence Centre** programme provides and disseminates good practice in the delivery of high quality early education, care and family support services. We are aiming to expand the programme from the present 35 Centres to up to 100 by 2004
- funding 150 **new Toy Libraries** to provide high quality play and learning for young children living in deprived neighbourhoods.

Sure Start

- 2.4 Central to our policies for this age group in disadvantaged communities is the **Sure Start** programme, which is built around the wants and needs of local people living in deprived areas across the country. Sure Start will support 400,000 under 4s living in poverty by 2004. Through Sure Start we are aiming to transform the life chances of younger children through better access to family support, health services and early education, providing pathways out of poverty to ensure they are ready to thrive when they get to school.

As part of the Sure Start programme we are also committed to providing more antenatal support for parents through up to £60 million of extra investment in support services for mums and partners from the time of conception. This new money will enhance existing services and aim to directly tackle poor nutrition, low birth weight and smoking, in addition to improving the quality of childcare and early learning provision in Sure Start areas.



Sure Start Building bridges in the community

Barkerend *Sure Start*, Bradford

The *Sure Start* project in Barkerend has shown that it is possible to overcome scepticism about local services and facilities by allowing local people to lead the development of new services in their community.

Barkerend's new *Sure Start* programme actively aims to listen to local parents, involving them in planning the services they need. The project serves a community within Bradford with a culturally diverse population, which faces high levels of crime, drug use and social disadvantage. Parents like Natasha, who were at the forefront of designing the services, put their project's success down to a new sense of ownership and responsibility in local policy making across the community.



Nasrina Malik

Community Safety & Health Worker

"Sure Start is all about making a difference on the ground. We're creating local solutions to local problems."



Kal Nawaz

Project Manager

"We're determined that the funding will actually touch people's lives, and go beyond superficial changes. We want to be really pro-active in regenerating this community."

Natasha Mahmood

"When I heard about Sure Start, I signed up straight away. I mean, it's about our children's future, isn't it? It makes a nice change to be asked for your opinion – that makes you feel good about yourself. I've learnt loads of new skills and have lots more confidence now too."

5-13 year olds

- 2.5 As the Policy Action Team on Young People¹⁷ recognised, education reform represents the cornerstone of the Government's policies for helping vulnerable children. Low achievement and non-attendance at school often contribute to problems in a child's development. Conversely, high expectations from teachers and parents are key factors in childrens' success.

Standards

- 2.6 The Government has given the highest possible priority to raising standards of achievement in the basics for all primary school pupils. The investment of £182m each year for the next three years on the national literacy and numeracy strategies, on top of other increases in resources for primary schools, shows how great a priority this remains.

¹⁷ op cit, Report of Policy Action Team 12

- By 2002 we want 80% of 11 year olds to meet the English standards for their age and 75% to do the same for mathematics and we are on track to make sure they do:
 - the percentage of 11 years olds meeting the required standards in English has risen from 57% in 1996 to 75% in 2000
 - the percentage of 11 year olds meeting the required standards in Mathematics has risen from 54% in 1996 to 72% in 2000.

Class sizes

- 2.7 In 1998 half a million children were in classes of more than 30. By last September this had dropped to 30,000. The Government expects no 5-7 year olds to be in a class of more than 30 by this autumn, one year ahead of schedule.



Truancy and exclusion

- 2.8 Four years ago truancy and exclusions had reached crisis point. No one knew precisely how many children were out of school. Since then we have set challenging targets to reduce permanent exclusions and truancies by one third. So far, exclusions are down from a peak of nearly 13,000 to 10,400. We are moving rapidly to fulfil our commitment that all permanently excluded children will receive a full-time education by 2002, instead of barely 2 or 3 hours tuition, as they could expect previously. Many education authorities are already providing a full-time education for some excluded pupils, and all will meet the target. Pupil Referral Units, where excluded pupils are usually placed, already have 1100 more places and 600 more teaching and support staff.
- 2.9 We are investing over £600m over the next three years to tackle truancy and exclusion across all school ages, through grants to schools, through learning mentors in inner city schools, and through the Connexions service for every 13-19 year old. Absences from school are slowly falling, but we want to see a faster fall in unauthorised absence, and are encouraging more joint action between the police and education authorities, better follow-up with parents, and stiffer penalties for those who condone truancy.

Children's Fund

- 2.10 Beyond school, a range of social problems can contribute to children failing to achieve their potential. The **Children's Fund** is a key part of a new range of measures to ensure that children and young people at risk of social exclusion get the best start in life, and remain on track. £380 million of the Fund will be targeted at preventive work for 5-13 year olds, and will seek to:



- encourage inter-agency work, based within the neighbourhood community, through stimulating, imaginative and innovative work, as well as reinforcing local co-operation
- provide support for children showing early signs of difficulties
- secure long-term improvement through building capacity within the community
- actively involve children, young people, their parents and their families as service users, in planning and delivering services to create individual packages of support.

2.11 The Children's Fund will renew and enhance leading voluntary sector action, which is already of demonstrable benefit to local communities. We will be looking to achieve better outcomes for local children, including more use of services better designed to meet the needs of commonly excluded groups, black and minority ethnic families and young people with disabilities. Complementing the preventive work, the Children's Fund also includes a £70 million **Local Network** that will channel money directly to local community groups working to improve the lives of vulnerable children and young people across the age range from 0-19. The Local Network's funds are designed to empower communities, families and children to help themselves, giving them support to implement their own solutions.

13 to 19 year olds

2.12 Our new Education Green Paper *Schools* Building on Success*¹⁸ published last month sets out the Government's plans for modernising secondary education so that we can build on the growing success of measures in primary school education rather than, as now, losing momentum. The Green Paper sets out our commitment to:

- significantly enhance the **diversity** of secondary education, with every school having a distinctive mission and ethos to contribute to the community and to the wider education system
- ensure a step change in **performance** in the early secondary years, including demanding targets for achievement in national tests at age 14
- focus far more than in the past on the individual talents and aspirations of pupils, with **much greater choice of vocational and work-based routes**
- significantly increase the **support** available to schools in the most challenging circumstances

18 *Schools* Building on Success. Raising standards, promoting diversity, achieving results*, DfEE, The Stationery Office, 2001

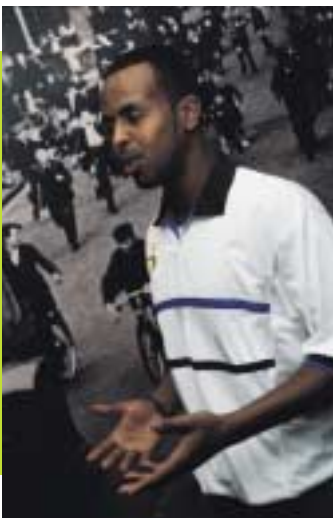




- significantly narrow the achievement gaps that exist by ethnic group, geographical area and gender, so that the education system delivers real **equality of opportunity**
- promote '**education with character**' that enhances opportunities for pupils to become active citizens of their school and community, and to develop all their talents, including in sports and the arts, building on the introduction of **citizenship education** into the secondary curriculum from September 2002.

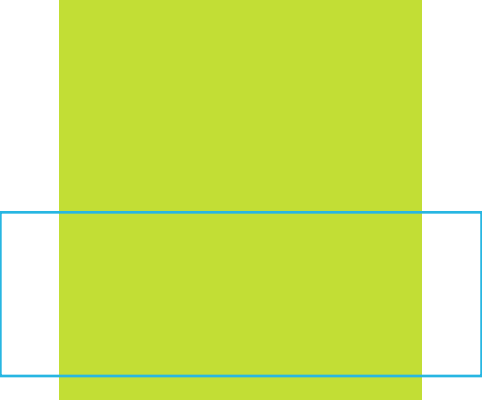
2.13 Many secondary schools are already improving the education they provide to vulnerable young people. More young people are achieving high standards at the age of 16 and 18 than ever before, and the number of young people leaving school without qualifications has fallen significantly.

- In 1989, 30% of 16 year olds achieved 5 or more GCSEs at grades A-C. This rose to 49% in 2000.
- Young People whose parents were in unskilled manual occupations achieved the largest rise in attainment between 1998 and 2000 with 30 per cent of this group achieving 5 or more GCSEs at A*-C grades in 2000, compared with 20 per cent of this group in 1998.
- In 2000, 33,000 young people left school without a qualification, down from 45,000 in 1997.



2.14 As part of the drive to raise standards across secondary schools, and to narrow the gap between the disadvantaged and the advantaged, the Government is investing heavily in **Excellence in Cities** (EiC) – a programme which recognises that in many of our core urban areas, school standards have been too low for too long. In the current financial year we are making available some £120 million – excluding capital – to fund EiC. As the programme comes on stream across all the new EiC authority areas and across all strands, this figure is expected to rise to over £300 million by 2003-04. By September 2001 it will cover nearly one third of all secondary schools.

2.15 The EiC programme is implemented through local partnerships crossing traditional local education authority boundaries, focusing on the needs and aspirations of individual pupils and their parents. It currently involves 58 authorities with a further 11 involved in **Excellence Clusters**, where small groups of disadvantaged schools benefit from the core strands of Excellence in Cities, including:

- 
- learning mentors for all pupils who need them
 - Learning Support Units
 - extended opportunities for gifted and talented pupils
 - a network of new City Learning Centres
 - more Beacon and Specialist schools
 - small Education Action Zones.

Excellence in Cities has only been running for just over a full year in the first 25 areas, but early indications of success are encouraging, as standards are rising in the first EiC areas faster than in schools nationally.

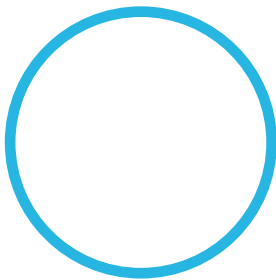
- The increase in those getting five good GCSEs or their equivalent last year was 2.3 percentage points compared with 1.3 percentage points for other areas.
- The biggest increases have been made in the most deprived schools – where with over half their pupils are entitled to free school meals.
- EiC approaches – and particularly Learning Mentors – are now being piloted in around 1,000 primary schools in EiC areas.

Real equality of opportunity

2.16 We are targeting extra funding to individual pupils whose own social circumstances are exceptionally challenging, by:

- continuing to invest in **Educational Maintenance Allowances** to allow young people who would otherwise leave school at 16 for financial reasons, to stay on at school or college. Over 66,000 young people have already benefited from these allowances since they were launched in September 1999
- piloting new **Pupil Learning Credits** to target young people from disadvantaged backgrounds and offering up to £75,000 to the most challenged schools to improve in-school support and out-of-school activities.

2.17 We are also keen to tackle the poor outcomes for young people leaving local authority care, to make sure that they are encouraged and enabled to make the most of their life chances. The Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 which is to be implemented from October places new duties on councils to provide continuing support and help to young people whom they have looked after, until they are at least 18.



Connexions

- 2.18 By 2004 every young person aged 13 to 19 will have access to the **Connexions** service, either through a Connexions Personal Adviser, drop-in centre, telephone, or internet-enabled support. **Connexions** will provide young people with advice, guidance, support and personal development, differentiated according to their individual needs, to help them overcome

Connexions Personal Adviser tackling truancy Lewisham

The Connexions Service is currently being piloted in a number of areas, including Lewisham in South-East London. Lewisham's service aims to improve and enhance a range of services, including modernising the way that young people receive the help and support they need to reach their full potential. Personal advisers are a key part of the pilot and will assess individual needs, and also broker access to specialist services on behalf of the young person.

In the Lewisham pilot there is a special emphasis on those young people like Hayley, who feel excluded and find it difficult to use the usual sources of advice open to young people. The longer Hayley was out of school the more difficult it was for her to return, out of fear that she was so behind in her school work. The combined efforts of Ruth, Hayley's Personal Adviser, and Hayley herself have increased her confidence, allowing her to return to school and empowered her to choose the subjects that she is really interested in. Hayley likes computers and is now taking an IT course for which she has a particular flair and which she hopes will lead to a well-paid job.



Ruth Taylor

Hayley's Personal Adviser

"I am based either in the school or working with pupils that aren't actually attending school. I get referrals through social workers and educational welfare officers.

Hayley's name was brought to me because she had been absent from school for a long time. So I contacted her mother and we set up meetings to get her back in school. As Personal Advisers, we can play a part in drawing together all the different support for the young person and hopefully get them back into school or college".



Hayley Cawley

"Ruth has given me some good advice. I only started back at school this week. It's alright. I'm doing coursework for Maths and English at the moment."



Alison Colwell

Hayley's Teacher

"I work with children that are the most disaffected and at risk of being excluded from school. I work with colleagues across schools, with parents, with any other agency that's involved, to try and keep them in school. Ruth and I work closely together. She's been a tremendous help – for example, with Hayley. Connexions will benefit young people. I think it's excellent."

barriers to participation in learning and work, and to help them achieve a successful transition from their teenage years into adult life. The first 12 Connexions Partnerships will begin to deliver full services from April.

- 2.19 The remainder will roll out before the end of 2003. By the end of 2002-03 we will have made a cash injection of £420 million, which is the biggest ever investment in advice and guidance for young people. The new **Connexions card** will also offer a range of discounts and services for young people. We hope both will encourage participation and achievement in learning.
- 2.20 The creation of the Connexions Service, through the 47 Partnerships across England, will pull together the key organisations working with young people aged 13-19, including statutory services such as local authorities (including social services, education authorities and youth services) schools, colleges, employers, health authorities, police authorities, youth offending teams, voluntary sector organisations and young people themselves. The Partnerships must include the full range of providers to ensure that the cross-cutting targets on reducing crime, reducing teenage conception rates, reducing drug abuse and raising achievement are met.

Teenage pregnancy



- 2.21 Our **Teenage Pregnancy Strategy** has two clear goals: to halve the rate of conceptions among under 18s in England by 2010, including a firmly established downward trend in the conception rates for under 16s, and to help more teenage parents to return to education and employment so we can reduce the risk of long-term social exclusion for teenage parents and their children.
- 2.22 The national campaign¹⁹ we launched last year targets young people, crucially including young men, and is supported by measures to improve sex and relationship education and youth contraception services. We have also set up a £3m pilot project to fund childminders in 4 areas to help teenage mothers stay in full-time education and training. The project will be established in Barking and Dagenham, Blackpool, Greenwich and North East Lincolnshire. In addition, **Sure Start Plus** is pioneering special initiatives to help teenage parents with education, childcare, healthcare, and housing. The scheme in Solihull below is a good example of a supported housing project, which promotes re-integration of teenage parents back into education through joint national, local and voluntary led funding.
- 2.23 Although we have the highest rate of teenage pregnancies in Europe there are some promising early signs already: conception rates for each of the first three quarters of 1999 for under 18s and under 16s are at the lowest point for the last three years, and the percentage of teenage parents in education, training or employment rose from 16% in 1997 to 31% in 2000.

¹⁹ National Teenage Pregnancy Campaign, Department of Health, 2000

Teenage pregnancy scheme

Bromford Carinthia Housing Association, Solihull

Open since 1998, Geraldine Court in Solihull, is a supported housing scheme that caters for teenage mothers. Whilst living there, the young mothers are able to access a variety of services and facilities including structured education, provided by the local college on site. The mothers can study a varying degree of subjects, ranging from basic literacy and numeracy to more specialised topics. College staff also supply crèche workers to ensure that children are properly looked after while their mothers attend their classes. The project has proved invaluable in developing the young mothers' confidence and in encouraging them back into education.



Philippa Jones

Head of supporting housing,
Solihull council

"We were keen to support a scheme which puts the needs of young mothers and their babies first whilst actively encouraging young fathers' involvement, where appropriate. This mutual support between young parents, combined with the quality care and accommodation provided by Geraldine Court, empowers young mothers to gain the confidence and skills they need to live independent lives, and to reduce the high incidence of tenancy failures among teenage mothers."



Danielle Brady

with son
Jacob (3 weeks)

"I love it here. There's always someone around to ask advice or to help out. Since I've been here, I feel more confident in myself. I'm re-taking my GCSE Maths, as well as doing a course on nutritional cooking on a budget. I can do both now! and know that Jacob is safe with the college child minders in the next room."



Karen Ovens

Project Manager

"When the girls first arrive, they're always very timid and shy. It's great to see their confidence grow while they're here, and I think the peer support we can encourage and support amongst the girls really contributes to that."

Preventing youth crime

- 2.24 Almost every adult persistent offender has had an earlier career as a juvenile offender. Nearly three quarters of persistent offenders start offending between 13 and 15 years old. Powerful links have also now been proved between high rates of criminality and a range of very specific risk factors. These include school exclusion and truancy; having criminal or delinquent parents, siblings or peers; low levels of parental supervision; high rates of experimentation with illegal drugs; and growing up in local authority care.²⁰
- 2.25 Since 1997 persistent offending by children and young people has been a key focus for the Government. We are committed to halving the time from arrest to sentence for persistent young offenders, from an average of 142 days in 1996 to 71 days by March 2002, and we are making good progress. The latest figures show that the average time has reduced to 96 days.

²⁰ Criminal Justice: The Way Ahead, Home Office, The Stationery Office, 2001



We are also determined to reduce the seriousness and frequency of offending by children and young people and the need for custodial sentences. A central thrust to the youth justice reforms has been to intervene earlier, and more effectively, to prevent young offenders settling into lives of crime. Good progress has been made in tackling the risk factors which we know lead to persistent criminality:

- we have undertaken a radical **overhaul of the whole youth justice system** with new interventions and new structures including the Youth Justice Board and new Youth Offending Teams
- **new Parenting Orders** can now require parents of young offenders to undergo regular classes in parenting skills and are already proving a popular choice for the courts with over 400 orders being made between April and September last year
- seventy **Youth Inclusion Projects** have been established on some of the highest crime estates in the country, each of them targeted at the fifty most high-risk 13-16 year olds locally who receive at least ten hours a week additional support.

Improving services for vulnerable children

2.26 While it is sometimes important to focus services on a particular age group of children we must avoid creating artificial distinctions between those age groups. So we are also working to improve the most vulnerable children's quality of life through a variety of non-age-related policy initiatives to improve the neighbourhoods in which they live, inform the choices they make, and improve their housing, education and health opportunities across the broad spectrum of their life experiences.

21 *Modernising Social Services: promoting independence, improving protection, raising standards*, Department of Health, The Stationery Office, 1998



Local authority support for children in need

2.27 The £885 million **Quality Protects Programme** is our main vehicle for delivering the aims in *Modernising Social Services*²¹ to provide more effective protection, better quality care and improved life chances for children in local authority care, for those in need of protection, and those with disabilities. Key elements of the programme include emphasising the role of local councillors as the corporate parents of looked after children, and encouraging effective cross-agency working.

2.28 The Quality Protects Programme began in 1999, and there are already good signs that improved outcomes for children in care are beginning to be delivered, including:

- an increase of 23% in the number of children adopted from care
- children in care experiencing fewer moves
- more support being given to care leavers
- less young people inappropriately discharged from care when they reach 16
- more councils demonstrating the positive results of listening to children and young people in their care, through subsequent service improvements.



Children with disabilities

2.29 As our new *Learning Disability White Paper* will make clear, children with disabilities are a priority area in the programme. From 2001-02 to 2003-04 an additional £60 million has been earmarked for services for children with disabilities and their families to target:

- increased provision of family support services, including short-term breaks
- better integration of disabled children into mainstream leisure and out-of-school services
- better information for families and the increased availability of key workers and other measures to improve co-ordination.

Adoption

2.30 Children do best when they grow up in a stable loving family. Adoption can provide just such an environment for looked after children who cannot be raised by their birth parents. In December, we published a white paper: *Adoption – a new approach*²² which builds on the early improvements under *Quality Protects*, and aims to put the needs of children at the heart of the adoption process. The White Paper is the culmination of the fundamental adoption review instigated by the Prime Minister last year and sets out a plan to transform adoption services for looked after children and to secure permanent, safe and supportive homes for adopted children. Budget 2001 also announced further help with the introduction of paid adoptive leave from 2003, for the same period and at the same flat rate as statutory maternity pay, starting when the child is first placed with the family.

²² *Adoption – a new approach*, Department of Health, The Stationery Office, 2000





Drugs

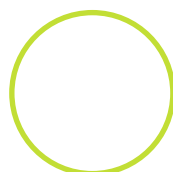
- 2.31 One of the key aims of the Government's ten-year anti-drugs strategy *Tackling Drugs to Build a Better Britain*²³ is to help people resist drug misuse in order to achieve their full potential. This includes a target of reducing the number of young people under the age of 25 reporting the use of Class A drugs and to reduce the proportion of young people using the drugs that cause the most harm – heroin and cocaine – by 25% by 2005, and by 50% by 2008. In 1997 we allocated £63m for spending on drug education and prevention services for young people. These include targeted prevention programmes through *Health Action Zones* and the *Healthy Schools Programme*. In addition the Confiscated Assets Fund has been used to set up 24 *Positive Futures* projects, specifically using sport to divert young people from drug misuse and anti-social behaviour. We have now allocated a further £152m over three years on education, prevention and treatment services which will contribute towards implementing a fully-integrated approach to drugs services to incorporate these services within existing children's services. This war against drugs will never be won by the Government alone but can be won neighbourhood by neighbourhood across the country, so further resources will be announced to support a new anti-drugs campaign, involving prominent figures from the world of business and sport to mobilise communities against drugs.
- 2.32 The foundation for this joined up approach will be the proposed **Young Persons Substance Misuse Plan**, which will help integrate service provision with other existing children's services and ensure that by 2004, in every Drug Action Team area, there will be substance misuse education for all young people. Most importantly, all agencies will ensure that young people, identified as having problems with substance misuse, receive an appropriate intervention or care package and those in need will be referred to appropriate treatment facilities.

²³ *Tackling Drugs to Build a Better Britain*, Cabinet Office, The Stationery Office, 1998



Mental health

- 2.33 We are committed to improving the mental health of children and young people and improving services and support for those who develop mental health problems. The most important priority we face is to reduce the factors which increase the risk of poor mental health. That means reducing child poverty, increasing family stability, and increasing access to good advice and support. We are also taking specific measures to:
- invest an additional £5m each year in the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) for the next 3 years



- ensure that, by May, all local authorities must have an agreed CAMHS Development Strategy which sets out how they will meet local and national priorities, including 24 hour cover and outreach services and improved early intervention and prevention programmes for children
- evaluate and monitor the results of the 24 CAMHS Innovation Projects we began in 1998, which were designed to develop and stimulate good, innovative partnerships between health and social care.

Health inequalities

2.34 We are committed to tackling health inequalities and giving children the best possible start in life. Since 1997, we have made considerable progress towards both these aims through a range of initiatives, including:

- the **Healthy Schools Programme**, which aims to make schools a healthy environment for children and places a particular emphasis on how good health and social behaviours underpin effective learning and academic achievement
- the **National Healthy School Standard** which provides guidance and sets standards for local education and health partnerships developing Healthy School Programmes linking into Personal, Social and Health Education and Citizenship teaching in schools
- the **Health Visitor and School Nurse Development Programme**, which involves new ways of working towards a family-centred public health role for health visitors and school nurses
- the **National School Fruit Scheme** which will provide every 4-6 year old in infant school with free fruit every day
- the **Welfare Foods Scheme**, which is working to ensure that vulnerable children have access to a healthy diet, and to promote increased support for breast feeding and parenting
- our new **Personal, Social and Health Education** framework, to give children the knowledge they need to live confident, healthy and independent lives
- **Health Action Zones**; which adopt a holistic approach to tackling health inequalities, with two of the Zones focusing solely on young people's needs.

2.35 The **NHS Plan** published last July reiterates our aims to reduce health



inequalities and sets out a radical programme of reform for the NHS backed by sustained new investment, which over five years will lead to a real-terms increase in funding of one third. The Plan's central aim is to design a seamless service around the patient. For children it sets out key commitments to:

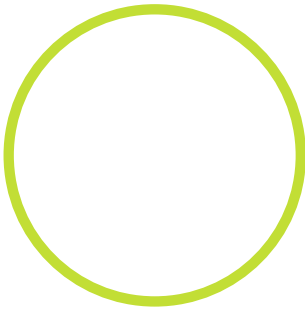
- provide 6,500 more therapists and other professionals to benefit children with disabilities in particular. We have also set a target to provide support services to an additional 6,000 severely disabled children by 2002
- set a target to narrow the longstanding gap in infant and early childhood mortality and morbidity between socio-economic groups. In February we announced that, starting with children under one year old, we will target a 10 per cent reduction in the gap in mortality rates between manual groups and the population as a whole
- set challenging targets for health and social care services to improve the life chances of children and young people in, and leaving, care
- establish effective screening programmes for children and women including a new national linked antenatal and neonatal screening programme for haemoglobinopathy and sickle-cell disease.

In Autumn 2000, we set up a **Children's Taskforce** to drive forward implementation of all aspects of the NHS Plan as they relate to children, ensuring that reforms take account of the particular requirements of children of all ages and their families and carers. At the heart of our plans to reduce unacceptable variations in health and social care, and ensure that children have fair access to high standards of care wherever they live, is the **new National Service Framework for Children's Services**, which we will begin to develop later this year.

Housing

- 2.36 The availability of a decent home is a key factor in determining young people's quality of life and their future opportunities. In 1996, 23% of children lived in a home that did not meet the agreed standard of decency. In July we set ourselves a target to bring all social housing up to set standards of decency and tackle a £19 billion backlog of repairs and modernisation work. The resources announced in July set us on course to meet that target. Together with the **New Home Efficiency Scheme**, which provides up to £2,000 to help insulate and warm houses for families in receipt of income-related benefits and tax credits, we hope to create more healthy homes for our younger generation. As part of the strategy to reduce rough sleeping, the **Rough Sleepers Unit** is also funding projects specifically targeted to help vulnerable young people.





Transport

2.37 In 1999 nearly 5,000 children were killed or seriously injured in road accidents. We need to improve road safety for our children and have set a 50% target to reduce this level of death and injury by 2010²⁴ by:

- improving driver training, testing and retesting
- encouraging car makers to improve the design of bonnets and bumpers so that they are less harmful to pedestrians, especially children, when knocked down in the street
- creating a new database of road safety education materials for parents and teachers
- **Safer Routes to School** programmes encouraging local initiatives to make the areas around their schools safer, including more self-enforcing 20mph zones
- investing in our £10 million annual road safety publicity programmes
- incorporating road safety education components within the **Personal Health and Social Education** curriculum.



Paper Maché figures from the Q Arts Programme in Derby run in association with NCB

Sport, culture and play

2.38 Beyond the classroom, we know what a very positive role sport and culture can play in addressing social problems, to increase young people's self-esteem and respect for their communities. Too often in the past not every child has had equal access to sporting and cultural activities, and so we are committed to promoting greater overall participation in sport, across gender and all ethnic communities and social classes. We have made key investments through:

- the Prime Minister's announcement in January to give children an entitlement to a minimum of two hours, high quality, school sport and physical education per week, through the appointment of **1,000 new specialist sports co-ordinators** by 2004
- the **Space for Sport and Arts** initiative which offers up to £130m to local authorities to improve arts and sporting facilities in 65 of the most deprived areas of England
- **12 Creative Partnerships** in some of the most deprived areas in England, to offer children a range of opportunities to work directly with artists and enjoy a range of cultural experiences through £40m of new investment

²⁴ 50% target to reduce the number of child road deaths and serious injuries in Britain by 2010 (based on an average of 6,860 a year between 1994 to 1998) featured in Road Safety strategy, launched by the Prime Minister, March 2000

- **Positive Futures**, which focuses on areas where children are at particular risk of falling into criminal behaviour and uses sport to encourage more positive lifestyles and discourage anti-social behaviour; crime and drug misuse
- **Playing for Success**, which is an initiative to establish out-of-school hours study support centres at football clubs and other sporting venues. The centres focus on improving literacy, numeracy and ICT skills amongst 10-14 year olds who need extra support and a boost to their motivation to learn. 35 centres have opened so far benefiting 20,000 children

Charlton Athletic Race Equality Partnership (CARE) Charlton

When Charlton Athletic Football Club moved back to their rebuilt stadium in South East London in 1992, relations between the police and local residents, especially minority ethnic residents, were very poor. In 1993, Stephen Lawrence was murdered two miles away.

CARE was born out of the desire on all sides to make things better.

The Partnership involves Charlton FC and its Supporters Club with over 60 other local organisations and businesses, including the Metropolitan Police, the University of Greenwich, Greenwich Council, Greenwich Multi-Faith Forum, Victim Support Greenwich and Greenwich Community College.

Two particularly impressive projects are 'Face Value' which works with 10-16 year olds in schools exploring issues like exclusion, peer pressure, prejudice, racist violence and mixed-heritage relationships, and the PATH summer project which is aimed at 14-21 year olds and offers four weeks theatre, play work and equality training.



Michelle Moore

Sports Development
Co-ordinator

"This partnership is making a real difference to young people's lives. My job is about empowering young people. Several of the young people I have worked with have gone to become coaches themselves."



Ozgul Resat

Actively
Involved in drama project

"I love the drama workshops that I gone to here. I get to know about other people's beliefs."

By being here I believe I influence people. I'm Turkish, and not a lot of people know about Turkish people and their ways.

We all learn more about our cultures and ways here."

Harcourt Alleyne

Head of Social Inclusion & Justice,
Greenwich Council and Joint Chair
of CARE

"We have had three racist murders of our young people in the early 90s. Our mainstream work was not making a difference then – it is now. We have found different ways of working and have connected out with our young people, through a better profile for the club, at the heart of our local communities."



Martin Simons

Chairman, Charlton Athletic Football
Club and Joint Chair of CARE

"15% of the local population are from an ethnic minority and this was not reflected in our support when we started four years ago. As joint chairs of CARE, Harcourt and I have been able to target local youth organisations and actively encourage them to play a leading role in the life of our football club and our community."



- the **Summer Activities for 16 Year Olds Programme**, which intends using £50m from the National Lottery **New Opportunities Fund**, which focuses on outdoor adventure and team-building for disengaged young people who are on the brink of leaving school with few qualifications, or have little sense of future direction.

Diversity

Ethnic minority communities

2.39 Many children from ethnic minority communities have benefited from the recent rise in school standards but there is still an attainment gap that we must close. To better reflect the diversity of pupils' backgrounds and communities, we will:

- bring Muslim and Sikh schools inside the state system for the first time and increase the number of Jewish schools
- continue to tackle inequalities of attainment through the **Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant**, which is now worth over £150m a year
- ensure better induction of children who come as **refugees or asylum seekers** to England, through intensive courses and support.

Children with Special Needs

2.40 Our **Special Education Needs** strategy, an integral part of our overall educational strategy, aims to develop skills for key workers in education to help deliver a service which focuses on inclusivity for pupils of all ages. This includes supporting parents and carers, developing the knowledge and skills of key workers, and placing duties on schools to increase physical accessibility to school premises. The Special Educational Needs and Disability Bill, currently before Parliament, will place a statutory requirement on schools and colleges to ensure that pupils with disabilities and special needs are treated no less favourably than their peers. The £220m of increased funding for the **Schools Access Initiative** over the next three years reflects this principle. From April, £82 million from the Standards Fund is earmarked to improve provision for children with special educational needs.

Families

2.41 In addition to services targeted on children and financial initiatives to tackle poverty, we are committed to help and support parents so they can better support their children.

Coram Family Parents' Centre

Thomas Coram Community Campus, London

As part of the Coram Family, a children's charity, their Parents' Centre shows how it is possible for the statutory and voluntary sectors to work together to offer parents and their children a more coherent form of support. By working in partnership with Camden Local Authority, the Centre is able to act as a base for social workers, speech therapists and clinical psychologists.

The centre serves the Kings Cross neighbourhood of Camden which is characterised by high levels of social disadvantage. Funded by DfEE's Early Excellence Centre initiative, over 400 parents use the campus each week. It aims to further parents' understanding of their children's development, help them to access employment, and provide the necessary childcare to make this possible.



Cheryl Pursey

with daughter Becky

"I've been coming here for three years now and have already done five courses. You've got somewhere safe for the kids to be while you learn. The staff are wonderful with the children – Becky loves it here."



Lucila Banol

"Investing in the programmes offered here helps to secure a better standard of life for people like me with children with special needs. More people should have access to places like this – it has helped improve my relationship with my children."



Lucy Draper

Head of Parents' Centre

"The Parents' Centre provides play facilities, support and education for the very diverse range of parents and their children living in the area. We're all about relieving their isolation."

We are determined to bring about a change in the culture around parenting support so that parents see asking for help as a positive step taken by a responsible parent for the good of their family, and not as a sign of weakness or an admission of failure.

2.42 It is critical that every parent is encouraged to take as active a parenting role as they can. Across Government we are committed to improve the support we can offer by:

- increasing the flat rate of **statutory maternity pay** from £60 to £100 a week, extending the period of maternity pay from 18 to 26 weeks, and ensuring the right to two weeks paid **paternity leave** for working fathers from 2003
- investing in the development of **Child Contact Centres** to provide a neutral meeting place where children, who might otherwise be deprived of a chance to meet an estranged parent, can meet in a safe and comfortable environment

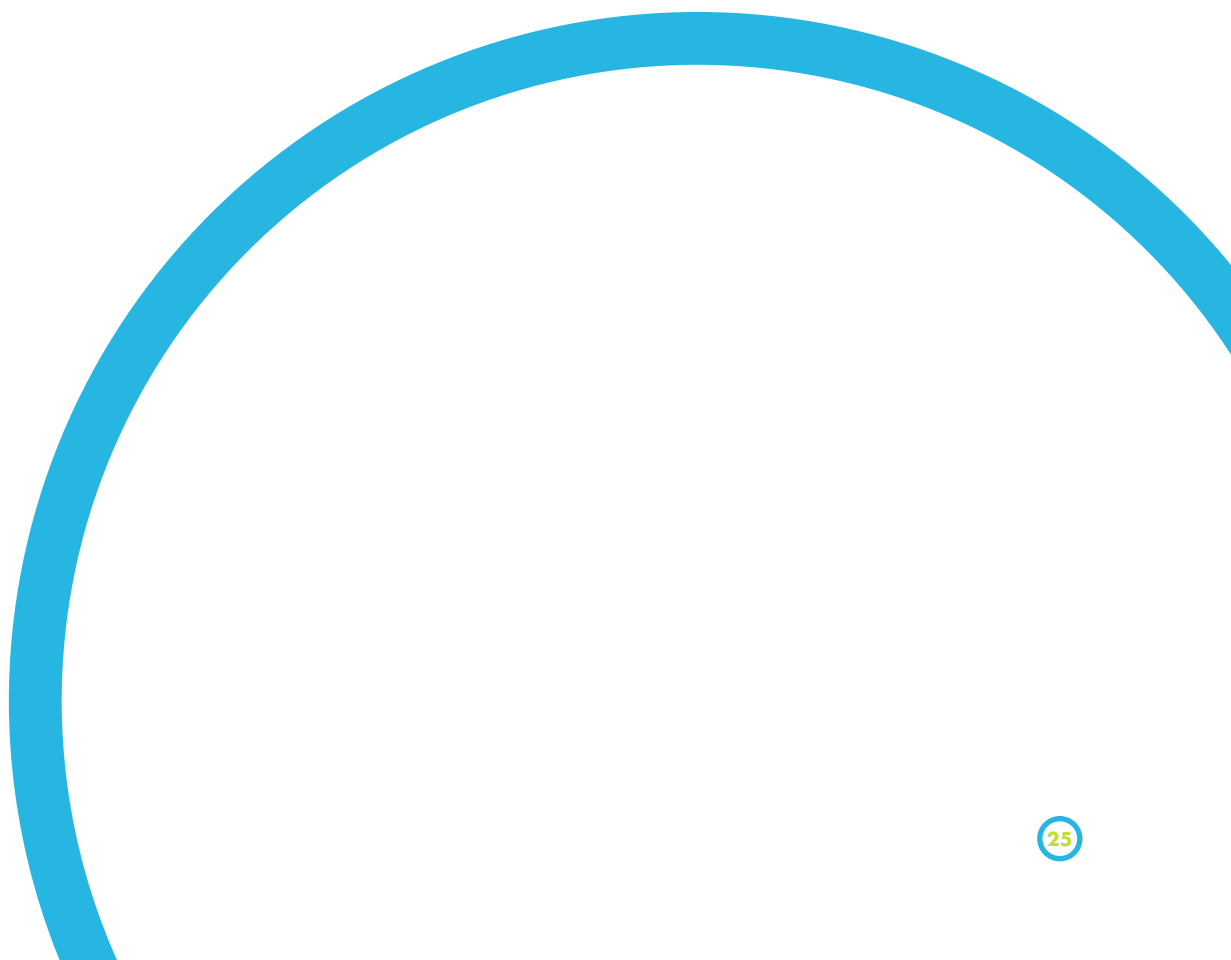
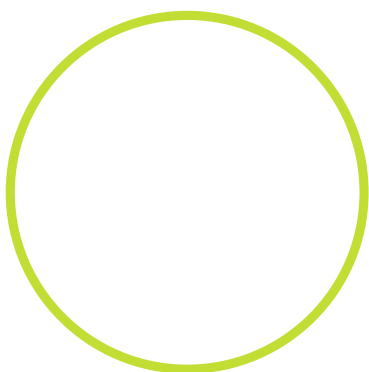


- supporting the future development of the **National Family and Parenting Institute**, which is raising the profile of parenting and family relationship issues
- piloting **Family Advice and Information Networks**, to facilitate access to advice and support for parents who experience acrimonious separations which may result in children losing contact with one parent
- increasing marriage support funding for organisations which provide information, advice and support to couples experiencing marriage or relationship difficulties, worth £9.5 million over the next two financial years
- supporting the development of **ParentLine Plus**, a national freephone helpline for parents providing a confidential service to anyone in a parenting role
- establishing the **Family Support Grant programme**. Worth £7 million over three years, the programme funds work undertaken by the voluntary sector to develop and improve services which support parenting and family relationships, particularly where there are gaps in provision such as support for fathers, for disabled parents and for parents with disabled children
- increasing funding to the **Family Fund Trust**, which provides individual grants to specific families, including grants to pay for a range of goods and services that help reduce the pressures on families with severely disabled children
- developing the **Work-Life Balance Campaign** which encourages employers to recognise and publicise the business benefits of work-life balance and introduce flexible working practices in their organisations. A Challenge Fund of £10.5m over 3 years has been established to encourage business to participate in the campaign. Combined with the new parental leave and part-time entitlements for working parents to take time off work to have and care for their children, the campaign establishes the foundation for a workplace culture that recognises the importance of balancing work and family responsibilities
- the **New Deal For Lone Parents** that helps lone parents on Income Support who want to find work, and provides personal adviser services backed up with advice and training, work experience and support in funding childcare. So far we have helped 80,000 lone parents into work since 1997.



Summary

2.43 So there is a great deal going on and much for us to build on. To make sure we make progress we are listening to the people who know: voluntary and community organisations, parents and young people themselves; as we prepare our new strategy. We want to send a message to children and young people that they have a right to expect and access high standard services, tailored to their own circumstances, to help them overcome the poverty of expectations that has held some of them back in the past. There is a lot more to do and the final part of this document sets out our thoughts on how we develop, share and build on good practice in response to the Policy Action Team's proposals.



Moving forward

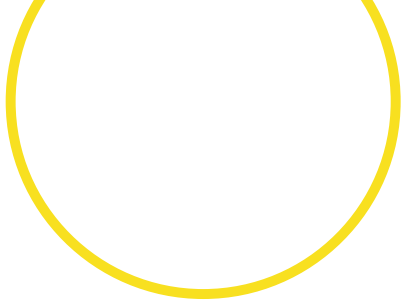


3.1 The Policy Action Team's report on young people recognised that many of the policies we set out in the last chapter are already having a positive impact on children and young people's lives. Central to the action team's proposals was the creation of new structures to ensure new and improved arrangements for children's issues across Government. In July the Prime Minister set up a dedicated Cabinet Committee for Children and Young People, together with the Children and Young People's Unit setting out its remit to:

- take forward the recommendations of the Policy Action Team report on young people
- support Ministers in developing, refining and communicating the Government's overarching strategy for children and young people, promoting dialogue with the voluntary sector on these issues
- join up policy-making across Departments by removing barriers to effective working
- assemble knowledge on children and young people, policies and services for them, good practice, risk and prevention, the implications of gender, ethnicity and disability, and likely future trends in their lives
- develop the Children's Fund
- support the Minister for Young People in speaking and listening on behalf of Government on youth issues that cut across departmental boundaries
- contribute to the delivery of departmental PSA targets on services for children and young people
- encourage local co-ordination through developing new and rationalising existing plans and partnerships.

Children and Young People's Unit

3.2 The presence of the Children and Young People's Unit is a visible symbol of this Government's continued commitment to improving the life chances of our children and young people. We want to see the elimination of child poverty, child deprivation, and youth social exclusion. We want to see excellent joined-up services, at both local and national level, with the interests of children and young people right at their heart. We want to hear the voices



of young people, influencing and shaping local services; contributing to their local communities; feeling heard; feeling valued; being treated as responsible citizens. We want our children to be safe, healthy, confident and fully equipped to deal with the future challenges of this century. The Children and Young People's Unit will provide a focal point for ensuring that our policies, across Government, are in accordance with this vision.

- 3.3 The Policy Action Team identified four core strategic issues, set out below which the Government have asked the Children and Young People's Unit to take forward. The rest of this chapter will look at each of these four issues, setting out how the unit intends to implement them.

The four key strategic issues as identified by the Policy Action Team on Young People

Designing Policies around the Needs and Priorities of Young People	Developing effective mechanisms for listening to children and young people in order to develop high quality, child-centred policies and services
Prevention	Continuing to shift the balance of effort and resources over time into preventing young people from encountering the worst problems rather than fire-fighting when they are in deep trouble
Co-ordination and Leadership	Ensuring effective structures are in place at all levels of Government to take forward the agenda, including new structures in Whitehall and improved planning systems and partnerships locally
Continually Improving Services	Assembling and sharing knowledge of 'what works' in services for children and young people and work with families, including the spread of established good practice, new research and evaluation

Designing policies around the *needs* and *priorities* of young people

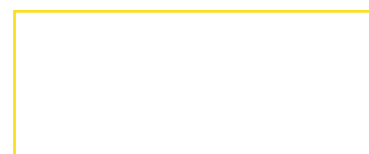
- 3.4 The best services for children and young people are already actively engaging with them and their families, so that policies and services are designed around their individual needs. We want this to be the norm. We want services actively to seek out the voices of children and young people. We are committed to support and encourage new mechanisms and approaches to allow for meaningful input from children and young people themselves.

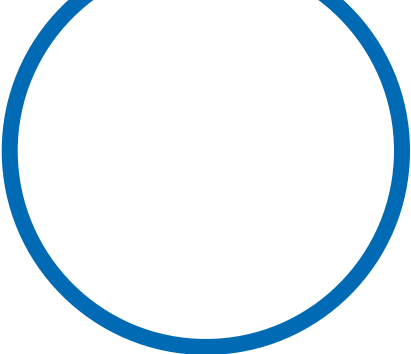


- 3.5 Effective dialogue and involvement is already a key principle in a number of new Government initiatives including *Quality Protects* and *Connexions*. Our ambition is to embed that approach into the work of those planning and delivering public services for children and young people at every level. In doing so, we will need to learn from, and build on, existing effective approaches which parts of the voluntary sector and many local authorities are employing already, in enabling innovative and dynamic opportunities for children and young people to contribute to policies and services in their communities.
- 3.6 Working closely with colleagues across Government and the voluntary and statutory sector, the new Children and Young People's Unit will promote the engagement of children in their services and communities by:
- actively seeking and publicising a range of good examples of involving children and young people for incorporation through a **new database of good practice**
 - developing a **Young People's Advisory Forum** to advise the Minister for Young People and ensure that we involve young people in our plans to improve policies and services
 - setting up a new **internet** site that will offer children and young people the chance to offer their ideas about how policies and services should be improved across Government
 - establishing core **principles for the involvement of young people in planning, developing and evaluating services**
 - engaging children and young people in the development of services under every partnership supported by the **Children's Fund**.

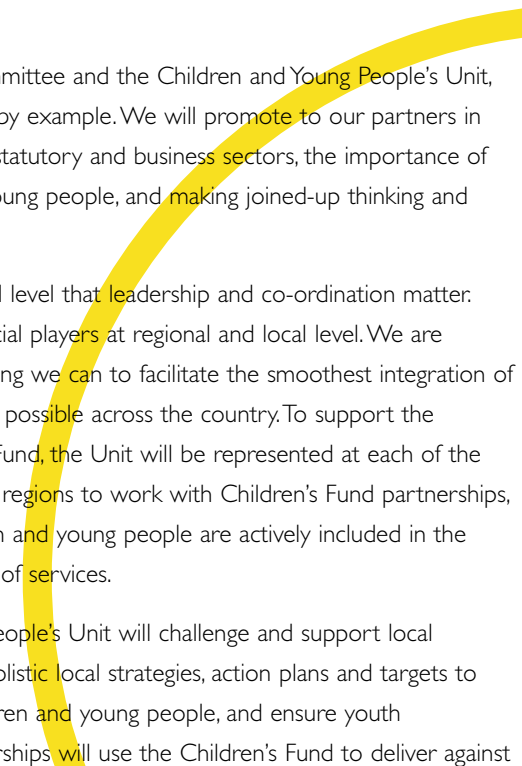
Prevention

- 3.7 Crisis situations in the lives of children and young people have been met too often and for too long with un-coordinated responses from a multiplicity of agencies. This array of people and services can add to any child's vulnerability if it is not offered in a co-ordinated and child-centred way. Through the Children's Fund we are determined to ensure that the Unit's work will forge real local partnerships of voluntary and statutory sector groups, community groups and local people, including young people themselves. The Unit, through the Fund, will enable professionals to pull back the frontiers, to take action that supports and assists young people before the difficulties they face become a crisis for them or their family.



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- 3.8 Early identification of problems, and the effective marshalling of a range of support services in a co-ordinated way is critical and must feature centrally in our long-term strategy to improve the effectiveness of services to individual children and young people. We will be looking at the variety of arrangements in place to support children, as well as those designed to support parents and families directly. It is especially in this area of positive prevention that the voluntary and community sectors, with their freedom to innovate, ability to gain trust, and their support for solutions that come from families and children themselves, can play such a vital and enhancing role.

Co-ordination and Leadership

- 3.9 We have already made significant improvements in the machinery of Government to give a central focus to the needs of children and young people. The Prime Minister has set up a new Cabinet Committee on Children and Young People's Services with the Chancellor of the Exchequer as its Chair, and the Secretary of State for Education and Employment as its Vice-Chair, together with Cabinet ministers from every Government Department whose services affect children's lives. In the Summer of 2000, the Deputy Home Secretary, Paul Boateng, was appointed as the first Minister for Young People, supported by officials drawn from across Government as well as the voluntary and statutory sectors in the new, inter-departmental Children and Young People's Unit.
- 3.10 Through the Cabinet Committee and the Children and Young People's Unit, the Government will lead by example. We will promote to our partners in the voluntary, community, statutory and business sectors, the importance of listening to children and young people, and making joined-up thinking and working a reality.
- 3.11 But it is not just at national level that leadership and co-ordination matter. There are a variety of crucial players at regional and local level. We are determined to do everything we can to facilitate the smoothest integration of policy and service delivery possible across the country. To support the delivery of the Children's Fund, the Unit will be represented at each of the Government offices in the regions to work with Children's Fund partnerships, and to ensure that children and young people are actively included in the development and delivery of services.
- 3.12 The Children and Young People's Unit will challenge and support local partnerships to develop holistic local strategies, action plans and targets to address the needs of children and young people, and ensure youth participation. Local partnerships will use the Children's Fund to deliver against
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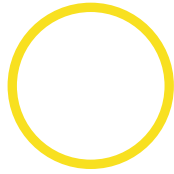
these strategies; but they will also wish to re-focus mainstream and other resource streams in the interests of children and young people.

- 3.13 The work of the Unit more broadly will be informed by the views and experiences of those local people who know best: practitioners, children and young people, voluntary and statutory groups outside of the Unit. It is vital that this happens to ensure that the Unit – although drawn from a wide range of backgrounds, and designed as truly inter-departmental – does not become just another piece of Whitehall furniture. Rather it must be alive to developments on the ground and raise issues of concern as and when these arise.
- 3.14 The Unit will ensure that issues of concern reach the Minister for Young People, who will act in these scenarios as an *advocate* for young people. He will himself be supported by a forum of young people from across England. In this role, he will bring these issues to the Ministers concerned, through the new mechanisms that we have put in place. If it becomes apparent that we need, as a Government, to go further we are prepared to. The Minister for Young People has already indicated his intention to monitor the developing role of the Children's Commissioner in Wales closely to see what lessons, if any, need to be learnt for England.



Continuously improving services

- 3.15 Children, young people and their parents will always access a huge range of public services and we will implement radical improvements in their delivery. We are committed to reforming the way we design and develop policy, ensuring the needs and perspectives of children and young people are central to our thinking. We know, however, that in addition to the statutory services with whom children and young people, as well as their families, will come into contact, they will often rely on the voluntary sector, and community and faith groups. Children and young people need the chance and the facilities within which to organise their own activities, be it anything from a game of hide-and-seek in the local park to discussing ways of influencing local policies. It is the services, opportunities and activities that young people want and use that we are determined to protect.
- 3.16 Statements of policy will not in themselves provide the necessary platform for a wholesale improvement in the way children and young people's services are designed and delivered. We are conscious that more needs to be done to both identify, and examine in more detail, a number of issues where we can lead further improvements in service provision for children and their families.



The Children and Young People's Unit will be looking initially at three strands of work:

- (i) monitoring the impact of the new cross-Government guidance on local planning for children, which aims to rationalise and improve the process for planning local services for children
- (ii) leading the development of unified over-arching objectives for the delivery of services to children, flowing from the first recommendation of the Policy Action Team on Young People (see below), and embedding these into policy making across all Government departments
- (iii) developing an over-arching Government strategy for Children and Young People, focusing on the vulnerable but with a commitment to ensure coherence of approach for all.

Recommendation 1 of the PAT on Young People

The Government should set over-arching youth inclusion objectives for its policies and ensure that they are reflected in departmental policies. These objectives might include:

- 1 ending child poverty in 20 years, and halving it in 10;
- 2 supporting parents and young people in making a success of family life, and providing decent alternatives for those who cannot live in a family structure, until they no longer require care and support;
- 3 helping young people acquire the skills they need for independence, work, citizenship and parenthood, through learning inside and outside school, access to leisure and volunteering opportunities, and support and advice when it is needed;
- 4 supporting young people in vulnerable groups at vulnerable times, paying particular attention to those in poverty and disadvantage, or those who face discrimination because of ethnic origin, disability or gender;
- 5 putting young people at the centre of policies that affect them, organising services around the needs of young people; and
- 6 using what we know to prevent problems if possible, to offer each young person meaningful opportunities to establish themselves in adult life, and not to write young people off.



How we will build on our approach

- 3.17 This document provides a foundation for our full strategic document for children which we will be developing through the rest of this year. Critical to the coherence and impact of the strategy will be the views of a full variety of partners, including, of course, children and young people themselves. The Children and Young People's Unit will be looking at the evidence of what we know works, both here and abroad, building on the important work that has already been done, casting a critical eye over the existing set-up and offering a challenging perspective on how we move things forward together, to make a real difference. This will include, of course, robust evaluation of the Children's Fund itself. We will not restrict ourselves to the perspectives from Government. Everything suggests that our focus must be on local reality, and that this is where we will identify both the most effective practice and the harshest evidence of what does not work. The challenge will be to capitalise on the expertise that already exists, to make a real difference to the quality of life experiences and chances for children and young people.





Copies of this document can be obtained from:

Children and Young People's Unit
Caxton House
6-12 Tothill Street
London
SW1H 9NA

Ref no CYPUTF

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