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ISSUES

Every child matters

summary

Foreword by the Prime Minister



For most parents, our children are everything to us: our hopes, our ambitions, our future. Our children are cherished and loved.

But sadly, some children are not so fortunate. Some children's lives are different. Dreadfully different. Instead of the joy, warmth and security of normal family life, these children's lives are filled with risk, fear, and danger: and from what most of us would regard as the worst

possible source – from the people closest to them.

Victoria Climbié was one of those children. At the hands of those entrusted with her care, she suffered appallingly and eventually died. Her case was a shocking example from a list of children terribly abused and mistreated. The names of the children involved, echoing down the years, are a standing shame to us all.

Every inquiry has brought forward proposals for change and improvement to the child protection system. There have been reforms. Things have got better for many. But the fact that a child like Victoria Climbié can still suffer almost unimaginable cruelty to the point of eventually losing her young life shows that things are still very far from right. More can and must be done.

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Responding to the inquiry headed by Lord Laming into Victoria's death, we are proposing here a range of measures to reform and improve children's care – crucially, for the first time ever requiring local authorities to bring together in one place under one person services for children, and at the same time suggesting real changes in the way those we ask to do this work carry out their tasks on our and our children's behalf.

For children for whom action by the authorities has reduced the risk they face, we want to go further: we want to maximise the opportunities open to them – to improve their life chances, to change the odds in their favour. So in addition, this Green Paper puts forward ideas on a number of related issues, including parenting, fostering, young people's activities and youth justice. All these proposals are important to children's health and security.

Sadly, nothing can ever absolutely guarantee that no child will ever be at risk again from abuse and violence from within their own family. But we all desperately want to see people, practices and policies in place to make sure that the risk is as small as is humanly possible. I believe that the proposals we are putting forward here constitute a significant step towards that goal.

Tom Blair

Introduction

This is a summary of the Green Paper, *Every Child Matters*, which sets out the Government's proposals for reforming the delivery of services for children, young people and families. It builds on existing measures to ensure that we protect children at risk of harm and neglect from negative outcomes and support all children to develop their full potential. The Green Paper is available from The Stationery Office. Copies can be ordered by mail, telephone and fax from:

The Stationery Office
PO Box 29
Norwich
NR3 1GN

General enquiries: 0870 600 5522
Parliamentary Hotline 0845 7023474
Fax 0870 600 5533

It can be downloaded online at www.dfes.gov.uk/everychildmatters

A children and young people's version of *Every Child Matters* is also available on the above website.

If you have any comments about the Green Paper please e-mail them to: Consultation1.CHILDRENSGP@dfes.gsi.gov.uk . The closing date for consultation is 1st December 2003.

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Related publications

The Green Paper is published alongside *Keeping Children Safe*, a detailed response to the practice recommendations made by Lord Laming in his report of his inquiry into the death of Victoria Climbié. Copies of this can also be purchased from The Stationery Office.

Two further related documents are also published on the same date, *Raising the Educational Attainment of Children in Care* – a report by the Social Exclusion Unit and *Youth Justice – The Next Steps*, which sets out more detailed proposals to build on recent youth justice reforms.

Copies of *Educational Attainment of Children in Care* can be purchased at the following address:

Social Exclusion Unit
7th Floor, Eland House
Bressenden Place
London SW1E 5DU

Or by calling 0207 944 8133. It can be downloaded at www.socialexclusionunit.gov.uk.

Youth Justice – The Next Steps is available online at www.dfes.gov.uk/everychildmatters

Summary

Past failings

1. The death of Victoria Climbié exposed shameful failings in our ability to protect the most vulnerable children. On twelve occasions, over ten months, chances to save Victoria's life were not taken. Social services, the police and the NHS failed, as Lord Laming's report into Victoria's death made clear, to do the basic things well to protect her.

2. From past inquiries into the deaths of Maria Colwell and Jasmine Beckford to recent cases such as Lauren Wright and Ainlee Walker, there are striking similarities which show some of the problems are of long standing. The common threads which led in each case to a failure to intervene early enough were poor co-ordination; a failure to share information; the absence of anyone with a strong sense of accountability; and frontline workers trying to cope with staff vacancies, poor management and a lack of effective training.

3. The most tragic manifestation of these problems is when we fail to protect children at risk of harm or neglect. But the problem of children falling through the cracks between different services goes much further. Too often children experience difficulties at home or at school, but receive too little help too late, once problems have reached crisis point.

4. We need to ensure we properly protect children at risk within a framework of universal services which support every child to develop their full potential and which aim to prevent negative outcomes. That is why this Green Paper addresses the needs of children at risk in the context of services we provide for all children.

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5. As Lord Laming's recommendations made clear, child protection cannot be separated from policies to improve children's lives as a whole. We need to focus both on the universal services which every child uses, and on more targeted services for those with additional needs. The policies set out in the Green Paper are designed both to protect children and maximise their potential. It sets out a framework for services that cover children and young people from birth to 19 living in England¹. It aims to reduce the numbers of children who experience educational failure, engage in offending or anti-social behaviour, suffer from ill health, or become teenage parents.

Where we are now

6. Over the past few years, we have seen that progress is possible:

- in education, last year we saw our best ever results in all key stages
- there are 500,000 fewer children living in households with relative low income than in 1997
- since 1997 the reconviction rate for young offenders has reduced by 22 percent
- the Government's teenage pregnancy strategy has produced a ten percent reduction in conception rates among under 18 year olds since 1998
- many of the measures put in place now, including Sure Start and measures to tackle low income through welfare to work and tax credits, will only see their full dividends in years to come.

7. But there is still more to do. Truancy remains a persistent problem. There are still too many 16 to 18 year olds not in education or training, and the educational achievement of children in care remains far too low. On many fronts, including low income, the gap in achievement between different socio-economic classes, and the number of children who are the victims of crime, we need to do more to catch up with other countries.

8. Overall, this country is still one where life chances are unequal. This damages not only those children born into disadvantage, but our society as a whole. We all stand

to share the benefits of an economy and society with less educational failure, higher skills, less crime, and better health. We all share a duty to do everything we can to ensure every child has the chance to fulfil their potential.

Where we want to get to

9. Our aim is to ensure that every child has the chance to fulfil their potential by reducing levels of educational failure, ill health, substance misuse, teenage pregnancy, abuse and neglect, crime and anti-social behaviour among children and young people.

10. When we consulted children, young people and families, they wanted the Government to set out a positive vision of the outcomes we want to achieve. The five outcomes which mattered most to children and young people were:

- **being healthy:** enjoying good physical and mental health and living a healthy lifestyle
- **staying safe:** being protected from harm and neglect
- **enjoying and achieving:** getting the most out of life and developing the skills for adulthood
- **making a positive contribution:** being involved with the community and society and not engaging in anti-social or offending behaviour
- **economic well-being:** not being prevented by economic disadvantage from achieving their full potential in life.

11. The Government has built the foundations for improving these outcomes through Sure Start, raising school standards, and progress made towards eradicating child poverty. This Green Paper sets out our existing plans to build on these successes through:

- creating **Sure Start Children's Centres** in each of the 20 percent most deprived neighbourhoods. These combine nursery education, family support, employment advice, childcare and health services on one site

- promoting **full service extended schools** which are open beyond school hours to provide breakfast clubs and after-school clubs and childcare, and have health and social care support services on site
- increasing the focus on activities for children out of school through the creation of a **Young People's Fund with an initial budget of £200 million**
- increasing investment in **child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS)** to deliver a ten percent increase in CAMHS capacity each year for the next three years. All areas are expected to put in place a comprehensive CAMHS by 2006
- improving **speech and language therapy**. The forthcoming National Service Framework for Children will set out proposals to improve services, including training para-professionals, supported by specialist staff
- tackling **homelessness**. By March 2004, no homeless family with children should be placed in bed and breakfast accommodation, unless in a short term emergency
- **reforms to the youth justice system**. The Government intends to revise the Child Safety Order to make it more effective and build on the success of the Intensive Supervision and Surveillance Programme by using it more widely as an alternative to custody. We will also create a new range of community sentences and make greater use of a wider range of residential placements such as intensive fostering for young offenders, including for 10 and 11 year old persistent offenders.

Green Paper proposals

12. We are building on the progress already made by focusing action on four main areas:

- supporting parents and carers
- early intervention and effective protection
- accountability and integration – locally, regionally and nationally
- workforce reform.

Supporting parents and carers

13. The Government intends to put supporting parents and carers at the heart of its approach to improving children's lives, where support is needed or wanted. To build additional capacity in this area, the Government has announced the creation of a Parenting Fund of £25 million over the next three years. We are consulting on a long term vision to improve parenting and family support through:

- **universal services** such as schools, health and social services and childcare, providing information and advice and engaging parents to support their child's development
- **targeted and specialist support** to parents of children requiring additional support
- **compulsory action** through Parenting Orders as a last resort where parents are condoning a child's truancy, anti-social behaviour or offending.

14. All children deserve the chance to grow up in a loving, secure family. Through the adoption modernisation programme, local authorities are already delivering significant increases in adoption of looked after children. The Adoption and Children Act 2002 will further strengthen this programme of reform. This Green Paper consults on measures to tackle the recruitment and retention challenges in foster care, and to ensure that foster carers have the skills and support they need to care for vulnerable children. The Government is seeking suggestions for radical and imaginative ways of encouraging people to become foster carers and ensuring they are valued and recognised.

Early intervention and effective protection

15. Some children will always require extra help because of the disadvantages they face. The key is to ensure children receive services at the first onset of problems, and to prevent any children slipping through the net. We will do this by:

- **improving information sharing** between agencies to ensure all local authorities have a list of children in their area, the services each child has had contact with, and the contact details of the relevant professionals who work with them. The Government will remove the legislative barriers to better

information sharing, and the technical barriers to electronic information sharing through developing a single unique identity number, and common data standards on the recording of information. We will expect every local authority to identify a lead official with responsibility for ensuring information is collected and shared

- **developing a common assessment framework** across services for children, covering special educational needs, Connexions, Youth Offending Teams, health, and social services. The aim is for basic information to follow the child to reduce duplication
- **introducing a lead professional.** Children known to more than one specialist agency should have a single named professional to take the lead on their case and be responsible for ensuring a coherent package of services to meet the individual child's needs
- **developing on the spot service delivery.** Professionals will be encouraged to work in multi-disciplinary teams based in and around schools and Children's Centres. They will provide a rapid response to the concerns of frontline teachers, childcare workers and others in universal services.

Accountability and integration – locally, regionally and nationally

16. We want to put children at the heart of our policies, and to organise services around their needs. Radical reform is needed to break down organisational boundaries. The Government's aim is that there should be one person in charge locally and nationally with the responsibility for improving children's lives. Key services for children should be integrated within a single organisational focus at both levels. To achieve this the Government will:

- legislate to create the post of **Director of Children's Services** accountable for local authority education and children's social services
- legislate to create a **lead council member for children**
- in the long term, integrate key services for children and young people under the Director of Children's Services as part of **Children's Trusts**. These bring together local authority education and children's social services, some

children's health services, Connexions, and can include other services such as Youth Offending Teams. Children's Trusts will normally be part of the local authority and will report to local elected members

- require local authorities to work closely with public, private and voluntary organisations to improve outcomes for children. Local authorities will be given flexibility over how this partnership working is undertaken
- in relation to child protection, require the creation of **Local Safeguarding Children Boards** as the statutory successors to Area Child Protection Committees.

17. To support local integration, the Government has created a new **Minister for Children, Young People and Families** in the Department for Education and Skills to co-ordinate policies across Government. The Government has brought responsibility for children's social services, family policy, teenage pregnancy, family law, and the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (CAFCASS) into DfES.

18. The Government will encourage joining up locally by:

- ensuring children are a priority across services. Local bodies such as the police and health organisations will, subject to consultation, have a new duty to safeguard children, promote their well-being and work together through these partnership arrangements. We intend to give local authorities a duty to promote the educational achievement of children in care
- setting out clear practice standards expected of each agency in relation to children
- rationalising performance targets, plans, funding streams, financial accountability and indicators
- creating an integrated inspection framework for children's services. Ofsted will take the lead in bringing together joint inspection teams. This will ensure services are judged on how well they work together

- creating an improvement and intervention function to drive up performance by sharing effective practice, and intervening where services are failing.

19. Real service improvement is only attainable through involving children and young people and listening to their views. This Green Paper sets out proposals for a new **Children’s Commissioner** to act as an independent champion for children, particularly those suffering disadvantage. The Commissioner will report annually to Parliament through the Secretary of State.

Workforce reform

20. The people who work with children are central to keeping them safe and helping them get the most out of life. We owe a debt of gratitude for the difficult and challenging work that they perform. We want to value the specific skills that people from different professional backgrounds bring, and we also want to break down the professional barriers that inhibit joint working, and tackle recruitment and retention problems. Our goal must be to make working with children an attractive, high status career, and to develop a more skilled and flexible workforce. Over time, and subject to consultation and resources, the Government would like to develop a package of measures to deliver this:

- a workforce reform strategy to improve the skills and effectiveness of the children’s workforce developed in partnership with local employers and staff. This will review rewards, incentives and relativities across children’s practice with the aim of moving towards a framework that fairly rewards skills and responsibilities, and ensures effective incentives for good practitioners to stay on the front line
- a high profile recruitment campaign for entry into the children’s workforce
- a comprehensive workload survey to address bureaucracy, and identify ways of freeing up time for face to face work with children and families
- more flexible and attractive training routes into social work, including expanding work based training routes for graduates
- common occupational standards across children’s practice linked to modular qualifications which allow workers to move between jobs more easily

- a common core of training for those who work solely with children and families and those who have wider roles (such as GPs and the police) to help secure a consistent response to children's and families' needs and a better understanding of professional roles
- the Chief Nursing Officer will undertake a review of the contribution that health visitors and other nurses and midwives can make for children at risk
- a leadership development programme to foster high calibre leadership.

21. The development and delivery of workforce proposals will be taken forward through two new bodies. A **Children's Workforce Unit**, based in the Department for Education and Skills, will develop a pay and workforce strategy for those who work with children. The Children's Workforce Unit will work with the relevant employers, staff and Government Departments to establish a **Sector Skills Council (SSC) for Children and Young People's Services** to deliver key parts of the strategy.

Next steps

22. The Government would like to hear your views on the framework set out in the Green Paper. The paper contains specific questions on which views are sought – we have not reproduced these here as they need to be read within the context of the full paper. You can, however, view them online at <http://www.dfes.gov.uk/everychildmatters>

23. The consultation on *Every Child Matters* will run until 1st December 2003. A response form is available from the downloads section on the above website. Responses should be e-mailed to Consultation1.CHILDRENSGP@dfes.gsi.gov.uk

24. Subject to the outcome of this consultation, the Government intends to introduce legislation as soon as Parliamentary time allows.ⁱⁱ

i The Green Paper covers all children in England. The policies and proposals it contains apply to England only except where they relate to non-devolved responsibilities, such as Home Office services, where they apply equally to Wales. Both the Welsh Assembly Government and the Scottish Executive have expressed keen interest in and closely followed the development of the Green Paper and they will each consider which parts of the approach being adopted in England they will seek to adopt respectively.

ii A Regulatory Impact Assessment (RIA) to accompany the proposals contained in the Green Paper has been prepared and is available on the DfES website at www.dfes.gov.uk/everychildmatters In addition to commenting on the Green Paper proposals, you may wish to comment on the contents of the RIA, which will be revised during the course of the consultation to take account of up-to-date information.

Copies of this publication can be obtained from:

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