

Every Child Matters

Information Sheet

In 2003, the government published a green paper called **Every Child Matters**, alongside its response to Lord Laming's report into the death of Victoria Climbié.

The death of Victoria exposed shameful failings in our ability to protect the most vulnerable children. On twelve occasions, over ten months, chances to save Victoria were not taken. Social Services, Police and the National Health Service failed, as Lord Laming's report into Victoria's death made clear, to do the basic things to protect her.

From past inquiries into the cases involving deaths of other children, there are striking similarities which show some of the problems are 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
- front line workers trying to cope with staff vacancies
- poor management
- lack of effective training

The green paper sought to improve accountability and integration across services for children, young people and families, and ensure that the children's workforce was valued, rewarded and trained. Following consultation on the green paper, the government published **Every Child Matters: Next Steps**, see link <http://www.cwdcouncil.co.uk/resources/Every%20Child%20Matters%20-%20the%20Next%20Steps.pdf> and passed the **Children Act 2004**, providing the legislative spine for developing more effective and accessible services focused around the needs of children, young people and families.

Children Act 2004

The Act provides a legislative spine for the wider strategy for improving children's lives. This covers the universal services which every child accesses, and more targeted services for those with additional needs.

The overall aim is to encourage integrated planning, commissioning and delivery of services as well as improve multi-disciplinary working, remove duplication, increase accountability and improve the coordination of individual and joint inspections in local authorities. The legislation is enabling rather than prescriptive and provides local authorities with a considerable amount of flexibility in the way they implement its provisions.

The **Children Act 2004** places a new duty on local authorities to promote the educational achievement of looked after children. Details about the implementation of the Act and the wider reform programme are available in **Every Child Matters: Change for Children**, see link <http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/files/B434EAE08179B3F6C1ABC1CB0BB6B1D2.pdf>

Every Child Matters: Change for Children was published in November 2004 and the website was launched soon afterwards.

www.everychildmatters.gov.uk is the website for the cross-government Change for Children programme, supporting everyone working in services for children and young people, from frontline practitioners to those who shape local strategies.

The change programme

Children and Young People have been consulted and have informed the Government that five outcomes are key to well-being in school and later-life. It is the Government's ambition to improve those outcomes for all children and to narrow the gap between those who do well and those who do not.

Every Child Matters and **Every Child Matters: Next Steps** recognised that the realisation of the ambition for improved outcomes required radical change in the whole system of children's services including:

- improvement and integration of universal services in Early Years, School and Health Service
- more specialised help to promote opportunities, prevent problems and act early and effectively if and when problems arise
- the reconfiguration of services around the child and family, for example, Children's Centres, Extended Schools and the bringing together of professionals in multi-disciplinary teams dedicated and enterprising leadership at all levels

- the development of a shared source of resources across agencies for safeguarding children and protecting them from harm
- listening to Children, Young People and their Families when assessing and planning service provision as well as face to face delivery

NOTE

Childcare Act 2006

The Childcare Act 2006 introduces, for the first time, a duty on local authorities to improve all young children's outcomes aged from birth up to the August following their fifth birthday, and reduce inequalities between them, through integrated early childhood services. Primary Care Trusts, Strategic Health Authorities and Jobcentre Plus are under reciprocal duties to work with local authorities and the draft statutory guidance outlines what local authorities and their partners should do to fulfil the duties set out in sections 1-4 of the Childcare Act 2006. The new duty will commence on 1 April 2008 and in preparation for this, the Government will publish the final statutory guidance during autumn 2007.

This duty will ensure that effective, integrated early childhood services for young children are given a long-term and sustainable footing, with parents and children in every community able to access integrated, pro-active and outcomes-focused services.

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