



COT/ BAOT Briefings

Every child matters: Change for children

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Introduction

The *Every child matters: Change for children* (DfES 2004) programme is the government's framework for change that focuses on delivering effective, integrated services and on the well-being of all children and young people from birth to age 19 years to enable them to fulfil their potential.

This briefing gives a brief overview of the *Every child matters* programme that may be of particular interest to occupational therapy staff. More information can be found at: www.everychildmatters.gov.uk accessed 12 March 2007.

Background

Lord Laming's report into the death of Victoria Climbié highlighted a need for improved integration and accountability across children's services. In 2003, the green paper *Every Child Matters* (DfES 2003) was published and there was wide consultation with people working in children's services, and with parents, children and young people across England.

The Government published *Every child matters: The next steps* (DfES 2004a) and royal assent was given to the *Children Act 2004* to provide the legislative spine for developing more effective and accessible services focused around the needs of children, young people and families.

A Children's Commissioner for England was appointed in 2005 to ensure children and young people are firmly at the centre of all policies and approaches involving children's services.

Aims

The Government's aim is for every child, whatever their background or their circumstances, to have the support they need to:

1. Be healthy
2. Stay safe
3. Enjoy and achieve
4. Make a positive contribution
5. Achieve economic well-being.



Organisations involved in providing services to children and young people must work together and share information to protect children and young people from harm and to help them achieve what they want in life.

Eventually every local authority will work with its partners, through children's trusts, to find out what works best in their area and then act on what they find. They will need to involve children and young people in these processes, and when inspectors assess how local areas are doing, they will listen to the views of the children and young people themselves.

Overview

Improved outcomes for all children and young people depend on the action taken in the 150 local change programmes (DfES 2004). This will be driven by an analysis of local priorities, and secured through more integrated frontline delivery, processes, strategy and governance.

Inter-agency governance

The delivery of integrated frontline services to improve outcomes for children and young people requires robust governance arrangements for inter-agency cooperation. These set the framework of accountability for the delivery of effective services and are supported by:

- Local authority directors of children's services to lead cooperation arrangements with partners to create a shared vision and improve outcomes.
- Partners from a variety of sectors, including public, private, voluntary and community organisations.
- Local safeguarding children boards (LSCBs) which replaced area child protection committees (ACPCs) in 2006.

Integrated strategy

The development of children's trusts will involve a joint needs analysis and prioritisation involving children, young people and parents, leading to joint planning and commissioning of effective child-centred services from a range of providers and means that:

- From 2006 each local authority should have produced a single three year children and young peoples plan, shared between all children's services reflecting national and local priorities for improved outcomes.
- Pooled budgets are supporting the joint commissioning of services.
- Joint area reviews are inspecting local children's services.
- The delivery of integrated frontline services to improve outcomes for children and young people is being supported at a strategic level.

The annual improvement cycle for local areas brings together the assessment of needs, discussion of priorities with central government, development and agreement of the children and young people's plan, new arrangements for integrated inspection and assessment, and additional support with intervention where necessary.

Integrated processes

A range of integrated processes have been established to facilitate the delivery of multi agency services. These include:

- The Common Assessment Framework, which provides a national, common process for initial assessment. It helps identify the additional needs of children and young people at



risk of poor outcomes and reduces duplication of assessment, produces a shared language across agencies and improves referral between agencies.

- Better information sharing between professionals by using national standards across local children's services, which give clear guidance for practitioners in health, education, social care and youth offending, and database/index systems that facilitate information sharing.
- Children's trusts which support joint working and integrated delivery of services.

Integrated frontline delivery

Children's trusts aim to refocus delivery of children's services around the needs of children, young people and families, not around professional or service boundaries. Therefore, services delivered by these trusts should be more integrated, accessible and personalised. To support this there is:

- A shift to prevention and improved safeguarding of all children and young people.
- Co-locating different services, for example, in children's centres and extended schools. This helps professionals work closely together, identify risk factors earlier and provide easier access to specialist support for children with additional needs.
- Workforce reform to ensure there are sufficient, suitably trained staff. All staff working with children should have a common core of knowledge and understanding about children's needs.
- The development of multi-disciplinary teams and lead professionals.

Health care services continue to be in line with the standards and expectations of the *National Service Framework for Children, Young People and Maternity Services* (DH & DfES 2004) and encourage children and young people to develop healthy lifestyles. See COT / BAOT Briefing 61 *National service framework for children, young people and maternity services 2004* for more information.

Outcomes for children and young people

The five outcomes identified from the consultation for *Every child matters* became the aims for the programme (see above). Improving these outcomes for all children and young people underpins the development of and work within children's trusts.

The outcomes are intended to be mutually reinforcing and capable of narrowing the gap between disadvantaged children and their peers. The Government's focus is on looked-after children and children with special educational needs and disabilities, on reducing the incidence of teenage pregnancy and the number of young people not in education, employment or training.

The Government recognises the role of the local community and of parents, carers and families and their need for appropriate support. Local authorities and partners need to ensure there is a good level of participation of children and young people in the design and delivery of services.

An outcomes framework has been developed to act as a basis for agreeing local priorities and planning local change. The framework shows the relationships between outcomes, aims, targets, indicators and inspection criteria.

Children's trusts

Children's trusts bring together all services for children and young people in an area and are underpinned by the *Children Act 2004* duty to cooperate.



Children's trusts are supported by the above mentioned integrated processes, strategies and governance. To ensure the overall system is meeting needs appropriately and effectively will require cooperation at many levels and include making shared decisions about priorities, identifying resources and developing plans to meet these priorities.

To enable provision of the right services to meet the priorities, joint commissioning that is underpinned by pooled resources is required as well as governance arrangements that ensure everyone shares the vision while maintaining the necessary high-level accountability for meeting statutory duties.

Across the system some of the features which link the various elements are:

- Leadership at every level, not just the director of children's services, but also at the front line.
- Performance management that drives an outcomes focus at every level, from area inspection to rewards and incentives for individual staff.
- Listening to the views of children and young people about the priorities at a strategic level and about how day-to-day practice is affecting them personally.

Disabled children

Every child matters: Change for children (DfES 2004) aims to improve outcomes for all children and young people, including those with disabilities. Information relevant to disabled children and young people has been added to the *Every child matters* website and can be seen at: www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/socialcare/disabledchildren/ accessed 12 March 2007.

Every child matters is supported by a number of policies and strategies that should work together to improve outcomes for disabled children, young people and their families in some of the following ways:

- To improve support for families of disabled children and young people in line with the disabled children's standard of the *National service framework* (DH & DfES 2004).
- To ensure disabled children benefit from the development and expansion of early years services, for example through:
 - SureStart Services – for information see www.surestart.gov.uk accessed 14 March 2007, and the
 - Early Support Programme – for information see www.earllysupport.org.uk accessed 14 march 2007.
- To promote equality of opportunity for disabled children including through the *Disability Discrimination Act 1995* and improving schools access.
- To improve arrangements for transition from children's services into adult services ((DH 2006, CSCI 2007).
- To deliver fit-for-purpose services that improve outcomes for disabled children, so they are healthy, stay safe, enjoy and achieve, make a positive contribution and achieve economic well-being.

Key policies and strategies include:

- **Improving the life chances of disabled people**

The Office for Disability Issues, which reports to the Minister for Disabled People, is coordinating cross-government work to deliver the government's vision that:



'By 2025, disabled people in Britain should have full opportunities and choices to improve their quality of life and will be respected and included as equal members of society' (Cabinet Office 2005 p 53).

Improving the life chances of disabled people is a joint report between the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, the Department for Work and Pensions, the Department of Health and the Department for Education and Skills. One of the key recommendations in the report is to improve support for families with young disabled children by ensuring that:

- They benefit from the childcare and early education provided to all children.
- Their extra needs are met.
- Services are centred on disabled children and their families, not on processes and funding streams.

For more information see:

- www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/strategy/work_areas/disability/ accessed 12 March 2007 and
- COT / BAOT Briefing 53 *Improving the life chances of disabled people with relevance to children and young people*.

- **National service framework for children, young people and maternity Services**

Alongside the *National service framework's* (DH & DfES 2004) core standards, which are applicable to all children, the disabled children's standard specifically states:

'Children and young people who are disabled or who have complex health needs receive coordinated, high-quality and family-centred services which are based on assessed needs, which promote social inclusion and, where possible, which enable them and their families to live ordinary lives' (DH & DfES 2004a p 7).

For more information see COT / BAOT Briefing 61 *National service framework for children, young people and maternity services 2004*.

- **Choice for parents, the best start for children: A ten year strategy for childcare**

Choice for parents, the best start for children (HM Treasury 2004) sets out the Government's long-term vision to ensure that every child gets the best start in life and to give parents more choice about how to balance work and family life. It considers the particular needs of different groups including families with disabled children.

For more information see

www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/files/C7A546CB4579620B7381308E1C161A9D.pdf accessed 14th March 2007

- **Removing barriers to achievement: The government's strategy for SEN**

Removing barriers to achievement (DfES 2004b) is the government's vision for enabling children with special educational needs (SEN) to realise their potential. It is a programme of sustained action and review over a number of years to support early years settings, schools and local authorities in improving provision for children with SEN.

For more information see www.standards.dfes.gov.uk accessed 14 March 2007.

Implications for occupational therapy staff



Occupational therapy staff will need to be aware of past, present and future policy changes arising from Every child matters and in particular, the legislative requirements of the *Children Act 2004*. For more information see COT / BAOT Briefing 54 *The Children Act 2004*.

The impact may be felt through organisational changes such as service and organisational redesign, workforce planning, governance and inspections, and also through day to day working as new and different policies are implemented, for example the common assessment framework and integrated working.

Occupational therapists are and are likely to be members of integrated teams. They might be working in different service led teams from alternative local bases as services become more aligned to delivering the outcomes determined by the children and young people's plans. All staff working with children will be expected to have appropriate common core skills.



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