

Every Child Matters: Change for Children

In 2003, the Government published a green paper called **Every Child Matters**. The paper built on existing plans to strengthen preventative services by focusing on four key themes:

- increasing the focus on supporting families and their carers – the most critical influence on children's lives
- ensuring necessary intervention takes place before children reach crisis point and protecting children from falling through the net
- addressing the underlying problems identified in the report into the death of Victoria Climbié – weak accountability and poor integration
- ensuring that the people working with children are valued, regarded and trained.

After the green paper was published, there was a wide consultation with people working in children's services, and with parents, children and young people.

Following the consultation, the Government published Every Child Matters: The Next Steps and passed the Children Act 2004.

Every Child Matters: Change for Children was published in November 2004.

Aims and outcomes

The Government's aim is for every child aged from birth to 19 years, whatever their background or circumstance is 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.

This means that the organisations involved with providing services to children including hospitals, schools, police and voluntary groups will be teaming up in new ways, sharing information and working together to protect children and young people from harm and to help them to achieve in life. Children and young people will have a greater say about issues that affect them as individuals and as a group.

The Government recognises the crucial role of parents, carers and families in improving outcomes for children and young people, and the need to provide support for parents, carers and families in order for them to do so. The Government also recognises the important role of the local community.

Sure Start

Many families receive support in the early years of children's lives through Sure Start family centres, which provide early education integrated with health and family support services and childcare. The combination of services that centres provide for young children and families contributes to Every Child Matters by:

- improving health outcomes for children and families
- reducing crime rates
- reducing child poverty
- enabling parents to study and work
- helping lone parents to access work and training opportunities.

The centres also contribute to strategic objectives of the Every Child Matters: Change for Children programme. Local authorities lead in planning and implementing centres, which allows services to join up and work in partnership with statutory and voluntary agencies. This brings benefits in improved planning and commissioning of services to make the best use of resources.