Children's Plan 8–13 Expert Group Report

**department for
children, schools and families**

Contents

Introduction

1. Between the ages of 8 and 13, most children move from the security of close attachments with parents and extended family members towards greater independence and autonomy. Self awareness develops and young people experience greater choices over their future. Not all children, however, will necessarily have the same opportunities and support to achieve, and go beyond, the five Every Child Matters outcomes[1] as their peers. This report explores the issues that affect children aged between 8 and 13, and offers recommendations for consideration in the development of a Children's Plan for England.

Background

2. This report is submitted to the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families from the Expert Group that was established in summer 2007 to look at services and policies that affect children and young people aged 8-13, and their families.

3. The group was chaired by Sir Alan Steer, Head Teacher of Seven Kings High School in the London Borough of Redbridge, and the Parliamentary Under Secretaries of State from the Department for Children, Schools and Families – Lord Andrew Adonis and Kevin Brennan MP. Membership of the group was drawn from a range of settings including existing school heads, school staff, health professionals and national organisations covering disciplines such as literacy, crime, families and parents. A full list of members is available at the end of this report in Annex A.

4. The 8-13 group was one of three expert groups, the others looking at services and policies for 0-7-year-olds and 14-19-year-olds. Reports from these other groups have been published concurrently. The groups met at the same time as a national consultation – 'Time to Talk' – which informed the development of the Children's Plan through a series of events engaging practitioners and parents. Written evidence from children and young people was made available to the group. Members attended 'Time to Talk' events and considered the evidence coming out of the consultation in their discussions.

The group's remit

5. The group's remit was to consider how the Government should best deliver its long-term objectives to:

- secure the well-being and health of children and young people;
- safeguard the young and vulnerable;
- achieve world-class standards in education;

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1 Be Healthy, Stay Safe, Enjoy and Achieve, Make a Positive Contribution, and Achieve Economic Well-Being

- close the gap in educational achievement for children from disadvantaged backgrounds;

- ensure young people are participating and achieving their potential to 18 and beyond; and

- keep children and young people on the path to success.

6. The group's discussions, and the recommendations laid out in this report, were set in the context of the Comprehensive Spending Review 2007. The full terms of reference are available at Annex B.

7. The 8-13 Expert Group met four times between September and November 2007. They used the first meeting to prioritise issues for debate; the second meeting to explore the issues identified, informed by early feedback from the wider consultation; and the third meeting to set out the main points for their report. Members of all three expert groups met again to review collectively the points they wished to emphasise.

8. The group considered ways of improving the life chances and outcomes of every child, and renewing efforts to support those – typically from more vulnerable backgrounds – not achieving their potential. The group recognised the distinct characteristics of the 8-13 age range (as outlined in Chapter 1) and the role of peers, families, schools and the wider community in supporting children and young people in this phase of their lives. At this age, children and young people do not spend all of their time in school but schools are the main service which has regular, public contact with these children. Many of the recommendations in this report address expectations for schools. There will, however, be different implications for primary and secondary schools.

9. The group agreed that under the Every Child Matters reforms, good progress is being made. Members cited examples of initiatives that are having a positive impact on improving outcomes for children and young people. In order to concentrate on developing ideas for improvement, the group did not spend time revisiting existing policy. The examples helped group members to identify principles which guided the recommendations in this report:

- the importance of casting children and young people in a positive light and of avoiding a 'deficit model' where the focus moves too quickly to managing poor performance and negative behaviour;

- the importance of valuing what is already happening – what is often needed is time and support to ensure greater consistency, nationally, and joining up, locally;

- the value of understanding children and young people's outcomes both in academic achievement and in terms of wider social and emotional well-being – this is to recognise the importance of developing the life skills and personal awareness to enjoy childhood and to grow as successful and happy adults; and

- the importance of improving understanding of child development and of putting the improvement of life chances for children and young people at the centre of policy and of implementation.

Key themes

10.   Guided by the approach taken to the national 'Time to Talk' consultation, the group discussed issues under four themes – enabling a positive childhood; the personalisation of services; moving towards a more preventative culture of intervening early and addressing problems before they escalate; and supporting parents and families. Given the breadth of these themes, the group used their first meeting to identify key questions they wished to focus on. It would not have been possible for the group to consider the entire range of issues facing young children and their families.

11.   For a **positive childhood**, the group agreed the most important question was how to build resilience and confidence in children and their families, Discussion focused on the means to provide rich opportunities, empower young people and put children centre stage. Account needed to be taken of the different contexts that children and young people live in, with additional effort made to carry opportunities to the most disadvantaged and vulnerable. These issues are discussed further in Chapter 2.

12.   The group agreed that the key question on **personalisation** was how to ensure an approach to managing services so that they are far more responsive to the needs of individual children and young people. This is important so that all children and young people are able to progress, achieve and be excited by learning. These issues are discussed further in Chapter 3.

13.   Under the heading of **prevention** the group focused on how to develop a partnership with parents which would keep vulnerable groups engaged and combat underachievement. These issues are discussed further in Chapter 4.

14.   Discussion of **parents and families** concentrated on how to raise aspirations and ensure that all parents have access to good services. The emerging recommendations concentrated on increasing parental expertise and enabling parents to support their children to learn and develop. These issues are discussed further in Chapter 5.

The structure of this report

15.   The first chapter of the report sets out the headlines of what is known about the 8-13 age range and the issues that the group believes public policy should be addressing. It draws on *Children and Young People Today: Evidence to support the development of the Children's Plan* published by the Department for Children, Schools and Families. The substantive policy chapters then follow and provide a review of the discussion that took place in the expert group meetings. A summary of the group's recommendations is set out at Annex C. Chapter 6 pulls together the group's thinking on what change looks like and on the mechanisms necessary to achieve that change.

16.   Through the group's discussions a number of common issues emerged. These were reiterated in the plenary meeting of all three expert groups looking across the whole 0-19 range. These include the role of Government with its national and local partners, the role of the school as the main universal service for children within the 8-13 range, the role of the local workforce in day-to-day contact with children and families, and the role of parents. This report addresses these questions in the concluding chapter.

17.   The report reflects the collective view of the expert group rather than the views of particular individuals. It was not possible to reflect all the points made in the group's discussions in this report. The group believes that a focus on the issues set out will contribute significantly to improving outcomes for children and families, and recommends that the Secretary of State consider these in the development of the national Children's Plan.

Chapter 1: The evidence

1.1 Middle childhood – typically characterised as the 8-13 range – is a crucial phase. Whilst the early years establish the foundations for a young person's development, evidence suggests that experiences in middle childhood are crucial in sustaining, magnifying or reversing the advantages or disadvantages that children take forward from the early years. Middle childhood behaviour and performance have repeatedly been found to predict adolescent and adult status, as reliably as early childhood indicators. It is during this time that children will continue to look to the security of their family attachments but, increasingly, gain in independence from their parents, move schools and peer groups, and undergo significant physiological change.

1.2 In 10 years from now, there will be more young children and fewer older children (because of changes in birth rates) and families will come from increasingly diverse ethnic backgrounds (due to immigration patterns). Opportunities for children through travel, the media, new technologies and higher family income will be greater than ever before. In many ways the transition to adulthood will become more complex.

1.3 There have been improvements in school standards over the past 10 years. The figures below show the proportion of children achieving the expected levels. Although this is high, there is clearly scope for further improvement. Looking at Key Stage 1 (as an indicator of achievement at age 7 so just before entry into the 8-13 range), Key Stage 2 (the middle point of the range at age 11) and Key Stage 3 (after the end of the range at 14) we see achievement at level 2, 4 and 5 respectively as:

	KS1 1997	KS1 2007	KS2 1997	KS2 2007	KS3 1997	KS3 2007
Reading	80%	84%	English	English	English	English
Writing	80%	80%	63%	80%	57%	74%
Maths	84%	90%	62%	77%	60%	76%
Science	85%	89%	69%	88%	60%	73%

1.4 In broader terms a range of indicators highlight the vulnerability of children in the 8-13 range. In comparison to their peers aged between 14 and 17 they are:

- more likely to be victims of crime and less likely to have developed personal and physical resilience; and

- more likely to be excluded from school (the rate starts to rise sharply at 10 and peaks at children aged between 13 and 14).

1.5   This is also the age when some children make choices which put themselves and their health at risk, for example by starting to smoke or take drugs.

1.6   Research into the views and attitudes of children and young people tells us that the majority are reported as happy with their lives. The overwhelming majority view doing well at school as important and have ambitious plans for their future. Most are confident about getting on the educational path to do well.

Child development and transition

1.7   Children and young people aged between 8 and 13 are in transition. The physiological change that young people experience through puberty takes place roughly at the same time as moving schools, bringing shifts in their peer groups and social relationships.

1.8   Biological changes in puberty are linked to a range of characteristic behaviours and risks, including: increases in sensation seeking; emotional intensity; mental health disturbances (such as depression, eating disorders and substance abuse); sexual interest; changes in sleep patterns; and increased appetite. The rate and timing of sexual maturity are particularly influential. Children undergoing sexual maturation at the same time as their peers are likely to continue to develop 'competently and confidently'[2]. However, boys developing earlier or later than their peers have been found to be more likely to abuse alcohol or struggle academically. For girls, early onset of puberty can bring the risk of poor outcomes such as depression and eating disorders, while late onset can serve a protective function and has been positively linked to higher academic achievement[3].

1.9   Effective transition between and within schools, and other settings, requires professionals to share information and pay attention to curriculum and pedagogical continuity. Typically, poor transition between primary and secondary school can lead to feelings of frustration and disengagement from learning. The effect is to slow progress during the first few years of secondary school. The provision of extended schools, and activities available during the summer holidays between primary and secondary school, can help ensure better continuity and familiarity in approach for children and young people.

1.10   Evaluation evidence from a range of initiatives and programmes that support effective transition highlights examples of good practice. These include teacher exchanges, curriculum alignment and shared activities between schools. Some schools have developed bridging units between feeder primaries and into secondaries.

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2   Asmussen et al, 2007
3   Blakemore, S-J. and Choudhury, S., 2006

Chapter 2: Positive childhood

2.1   Most children enjoy a good childhood. Ensuring that the middle years are happy and successful ones for all means building resilience. Resilience is fostered where young people gain the confidence to take managed risks. Resilience emerges from strong personal attachments, from achievement (including but not exclusively educational attainment) and from the development of the individual's social and emotional skills.

2.2   There are challenges, however. 2.8 million children are brought up in poverty and a quarter of a million require help from children's social care each week. Nearly a third of children will experience family breakdown and the most common time for divorce is when children are aged 5-9. More mothers are working and 'cash-rich, time-poor' dual-earning couples are increasingly the norm. However, contrary to popular opinion, it seems parents on average spend more time with their children than in the past – one major study estimates it is an average of 99 minutes per day compared with 25 minutes in 1975. There are also signs that joint family activity and contact with extended family has increased, although it is the quality of that interaction that is most important.

2.3   Research has identified a number of key issues that affect the experience of childhood. The media and technologies are bringing major changes to the way young people communicate, learn about the world, and keep in touch with their friends and families. More and more children and young people have a mobile phone and three-quarters have the internet at home. There is evidence that internet use now means this group of children are watching less television for the first time in a generation. Equally significant is a trend towards more unsupervised use of technology at younger ages, driven in part by the greater amount of technology children have personal access to. These changes bring new opportunities, and risks.

2.4   By the age of 12, children are spending a significant amount of leisure time outside. Yet it is becoming much harder for younger children to convince their parents to let them go out, unsupervised, in public space. Fewer children these days play outside without an adult.

2.5   The group acknowledged the range of existing policies which have concentrated on securing a positive childhood for all:

● supporting positive relationships through the well received Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL) programme which is now being followed by many primary and secondary schools;

● national-, local- and school-level anti-bullying strategies which encourage recognition and reward good behaviour, and promote the importance of personal resilience and confidence (while not tolerating poor behaviour); and

- a tiered approach to children's safety – ensuring the promotion of children's welfare and well-being, action targeted at vulnerable groups and responsive safeguarding for children who have been harmed, in order to minimise lifelong impact and learn lessons.

2.6 The group also noted the complex interplay between the role of the family and the role of the state. The family has the first responsibility. In trying to change behaviours affecting children playing outside, for example, there is a prime need to engage parents in this debate while the state can help, say, by addressing issues such as the lighting and supervision of public places. Group members noted that for children to develop confidence and resilience, quick attention should be given to instances of poor behaviour or protracted and intentional bullying.

Providing opportunities for young people

2.7 Between the ages of 8 and 13, children gain in independence from their families and begin to have more opportunities to explore the world around them. This makes it important for children's services to support children and young people in developing a stronger sense of self-confidence and self-esteem. Members noted the importance of **having access to activities and opportunities within and outside of school**. The group was also keen to see greater **local authority investment in parks and public spaces**, and effort to ensure that they are safe and welcoming.

2.8 The group emphasised the value of grounding perceptions of risk in reality. Members cited examples of how the media exaggerate the dangers that young people face. This can encourage overly protective behaviour from parents that results in them denying their children the opportunity to develop the resilience they need. Members emphasised the importance of enabling children to manage risk and not simply to avoid it.

2.9 Some members thought that families which feel uncomfortable in schools may use community provision, such as sports facilities. Local authorities, the group recommends, should work with voluntary sector community organisations to provide events that bring people together. This could equip children and young people with knowledge and skills to help them stay safe on the streets. Members underlined that play space is important in ensuring children are kept active, which is likely to lead to positive health outcomes and combat obesity.

Empowering young people

2.10 The group recognised the importance of parents and young people having high aspirations. Role models were seen as a very powerful way of engaging with children and young people on their own terms and helping them to develop aspirations for a positive future. It would be valuable to engage more **teenagers in acting as role models for their younger peers**. The group noted evidence that **mentoring is particularly beneficial for some groups**, including boys from black and minority ethnic backgrounds. There are very good examples where business provides mentoring schemes too.

2.11 By engaging teenagers as role models, children's services would be **encouraging volunteering** and members suggested that such volunteering should be acknowledged on a national basis.

2.12 Underpinning the development of mentoring and volunteering opportunities is the need for high quality information, advice and guidance. This should not only support children to achieve but also cover their behaviour and emotional development. **Effective information, advice and guidance needs to start in the 8-13 range** in order to equip children as they progress through puberty.

Involving children and young people

2.13 Group members were keen that the views of children and young people themselves were listened to and acted upon. Opportunities now exist to build children's views into the design and delivery of services. The development of school councils was cited as one of many good ways in which young people have been empowered to take an active interest and develop themselves. Initiatives to extend the influence of the pupil's voice in school should be encouraged.

2.14 The group endorses the views of the Children's Commissioner that those providing services should **make arrangements to listen to children and young people when planning community provision**.

Towards a 'national responsibility' for childhood

2.15 Group members considered the role of the media and business. It is important for business to engage in its community and to support family life. Many companies do this already and some excel through their corporate responsibility programmes and family friendly outlook. There is scope to introduce, with business, a recognition or hallmark which encourages more **business to develop and celebrate worthy practices which contribute to a positive childhood**. The scheme might recognise how companies support parents (such as through work-life flexibilities) and the opportunities that businesses offer to young people themselves, such as through mentoring and work experience.

2.16 The group also discussed the influential role of the media. The media shape public consciousness regarding how young people behave. **The media must accept a responsibility to promote accurate and positive images of children and young people**. The Government should engage media owners and producers in discussion about how children and young people can be more accurately represented in news, drama, entertainment and documentary.

Recommendations

i) The group recommends work with every local authority to ensure that all children and young people have access to safe public places and community provision which support leisure and play. Local authorities, community organisations, and schools should listen to and involve children and young people in planning and delivering services.

ii) The group recommends the use of role models and mentoring so that teenagers can help younger children stay on the right path. This should serve to encourage young people to get involved in volunteering in their communities.

iii)   The group recommends the development of consistently high quality information, advice and guidance for children aged 8-13 to support them through the transitions that characterise this period of their childhood. The group recognises the recommendation from the 14-19 group and is keen that sources of, and approaches to, information, advice and guidance are seamless across the whole age range.

iv)   The group recommends that Government engage with business and the media to promote their responsibilities for contributing to a positive childhood. Due attention should be given to a recognition scheme for business, and discussions with the media should encourage them to do better in promoting positive images of young people.

Chapter 3: Personalisation

3.1   Children's services cannot be built on a principle of one size fits all. Children's services are at their best when those providing them know the children well, listen to them, show them respect and adapt their services to the individual needs of the child. Between the ages of 8 and 13, most children quickly develop a sense of those people and organisations that recognise their individual worth.

3.2   As they begin to develop more independence, children and young people should be encouraged to take part in a wider range of experiences and to exercise greater personal choice. Personalisation should be a guiding principle in how learning is organised. All children and young people should be able to progress at a good pace suited to their abilities. Schools should unlock the potential in every pupil, enabling everyone to achieve where they can and to be excited by learning.

3.3   This means:

- giving more attention to children who are 'stuck', or making slow progress – the group welcomed the new focus on tracking the progress of every child, so that difficulties can be identified early and support brought to bear quickly;

- increased sensitivity to differences linked to ethnic minority groups and to gender – research is showing that achievement levels of certain black and minority ethnic (BME) groups can be raised where local authorities focus on attendance and providing mentoring support for pupils[4]; while the performance of boys has been shown to be improved without adversely affecting that of girls by being more assertive about praise[5];

- addressing the needs of pupils with English as an additional language – the group underlined the importance of providing teachers with the skills to meet the needs of refugee, asylum seeking and mobile populations;

- providing support to pupils with special educational needs – effective teaching approaches are needed, based on careful assessment; attention has to be given to emotional and personal development as well as attainment; mainstreaming requires additional support and a more carefully differentiated approach to teaching;

- giving greater attention to children in care – here there is a particular need for stability, for well-structured integration programmes when stability is not achieved, for a consistency of messages, and designated teachers acting as advocate as well as for consistently high quality learning experiences.

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4   Institute of Education, 2004
5   DfES/University of Cambridge, 2005

3.4 The group acknowledged a number of existing initiatives for change that are positively contributing towards personalisation:

- once fully implemented the range of universal, targeted and specialist services being developed locally to respond to child and family need delivered through the Every Child Matters reforms;

- the rising number of schools developing extended services that target support at learning and attainment, while also personalising the range of other services that are important to child well-being;

- the materials available to teachers through the Primary and Secondary National Strategies (guidance, training and 'framework' documents) and the new secondary curriculum which allows for greater flexibility in teaching and learning;

- the new funding for one-to-one tuition for those that need it and intervention programmes such as Every Child Counts and Every Child a Reader in primary schools;

- leadership training within schools at all levels through the National College for School Leadership (NCSL); and

- the support available to the whole children's workforce to encourage integrated working and information sharing, with the aim of supporting greater personalisation in service delivery.

3.5 There are significant challenges that everyone working in the children's services environment will need to face. Embedding a personalised ethos in all aspects of the system without excessive regulation, prescription or reporting is going to be demanding. In schools there may at first be variation in the quality of the personalised learning experience. There is a specific risk that weaker schools – where there is potentially most benefit from taking a personalised approach – will find it hardest to adapt. These schools will require the greatest support.

Personalising services to engage and motivate every child and young person

3.6 Universal services aim to help all families, and should endeavour to offer those children and young people who need most help swift and easy access to targeted services. In turn, universal and targeted services may need to point young people to specialist services which are even more focused on needs. In the best of circumstances, these targeted and specialist services can concentrate on supporting the return of children and young people into mainstream provision with renewed resilience and support to achieve. It is crucial that access is given to the vulnerable and the disadvantaged who have most to benefit from targeted and specialist services. For 8-13-year-olds this means a particular role for schools at the centre of their communities, providing links into other services. At this age, the different agencies can then coordinate a range of statutory and non-statutory services in support, ranging from education welfare to parenting support, as well as help for specific health and special needs.

3.7 The group discussed how the workforce should be developed to best effect and to reflect the aims underpinning Every Child Matters. They emphasised the principle that the workforce should form around the needs of the child and not be constrained by professional

or organisational structures. The group suggests there should be **wider use of support staff as part of the pastoral team**. Members suggested there were lessons to learn from the Excellence in Cities initiative that sought to extend the range of skills of the workforce through, for example, learning mentors. This could include providing counselling, guidance and support for families.

3.8 Following on from these discussions the group recognised the need for school governance and **training for school governing bodies to develop expertise in the whole range of Every Child Matters responsibilities**. The group was also keen that in reflecting the breadth of children's trusts arrangements **schools are encouraged to work collaboratively across clusters of primary and secondaries**. This could be a valuable way of encouraging partnerships and build on existing work, including activities such as the School Sports Partnerships or work on modern foreign languages. Sharing staff between primary and secondary schools was deemed an effective and efficient way of encouraging modern foreign languages, for example.

Personalising learning to ensure every child makes good progress

3.9 Personalised learning at its core relies upon guaranteeing sound levels of competence in numeracy, literacy as well as personal, social and learning skills. It should also ensure children have the experiences and opportunities to develop their individual talents. Personalising teaching and learning helps to manage dips in performance and disengagement from learning at points of transition. The group was keen to emphasise that attainment in school was not only important for a working future but vital for developing self-worth as young people grow up.

3.10 The group identified a number of important areas for action. In welcoming the current extended schools programme, members were keen to see more consistent use of school facilities outside of traditional hours and in school holidays. Schools should continue to be encouraged to provide opportunities for children and young people to develop their skills in areas that motivate them. This should not preclude support activities for extra tuition, catch-up and mentoring. Members noted this is an important way of building self-esteem.

3.11 The group would like to **see the further development of a 'schools offer' in the creative arts and sport**. The group suggested that all secondary schools, large primaries and clusters of small primaries should develop these opportunities by having a nominated specialist co-ordinator. There was a suggestion that community funding available for specialist schools in the secondary sector could helpfully be directed towards expanding these opportunities. The group suggests that these developments be taken forward within the medium term of the next three to five years.

3.12 Ensuring greater personalisation relies on institutional leaders to drive forward progress within their schools and settings. The group noted the importance of **training and support in personalisation for all headteachers and other school leaders**. The group recognised that this was already underway and was keen to see greater consistency across NCSL programmes.

3.13 Attention should be given to wider workforce development with a renewed focus on **initial teacher training and continuing professional development with dedicated INSET time on personalising learning**. This would ensure a common language between the range of professionals working in schools. There would be value from in-school training for the whole workforce. The group felt there was a role here for the Training and Development Agency, and schools should examine how best to manage staff locally, if necessary through brokering arrangements with complementary services.

3.14 Discussion around classroom practice, and how to personalise teaching to the needs of every child, touched on a number of areas. The group started from the premise that the work of the National Strategies was helpful and so now there was a need for greater consistency in every classroom in the country. The group reiterated the importance of **each institution or professional team identifying a baseline of good practice and ensuring that that is replicated consistently**.

3.15 It is crucial for personalised learning that **classroom practice is informed by the continual and effective use of Assessment for Learning techniques**. There was agreement within the group that intelligent and pupil-focused methods of assessment had the potential to transform the ways in which teachers interact with pupils, track their performance and intervene when they are not progressing. Fundamentally, this emphasises the importance of consistently good teaching practice in implementing change.

3.16 Members noted the importance of listening to children (also explored in Chapter 2) and **on integrating pupil voice into lesson design and planning**. Other members noted the importance of children having the space and opportunities to speak and be listened to. The group welcomed the Primary Capital and Building Schools for the Future programmes and emphasised the importance of **providing spaces in school buildings for medical facilities and student counselling**.

3.17 Assessment arrangements must be sufficiently sensitive to the strengths of different children while also ensuring their social and emotional well-being. The importance of continuous and consistent assessment is discussed further in Chapter 4. The group acknowledged the recent Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning programme and was keen that **curriculum reforms ensure greater recognition of 'soft skills'**. In primary schools this would mean continuing to embed creativity in the curriculum as well as in Personal Social Health Education. In secondary schools it means continuing existing work on integrating personal and social skills into subject frameworks. The group recognised that this would require a programme of change across the medium term.

3.18 The group was keen to continue to support the effective use of ICT to engage learners. The group suggested building on new initiatives to ensure that all children have access to learning materials at home. The group was keen to reiterate the importance of ensuring training is available to teachers in the effective use of technology.

3.19 The group noted how ICT can ensure that personalised data travels with the pupil between key stages and that assessment data are used in target setting. Good quality and personalised assessment data enable effective guidance to be offered to individual children. This is known to be successful in effecting change. Using ICT as a means of providing parents with regular updates on their child's progress is explored further in Chapter 5.

3.20 The final issue that emerged during discussion was the relative achievement of children born at different times of the year. Recent research had suggested that those born in summer months do less well in national tests than their peers born earlier in the year. The group welcomed the benefits that should emerge from 'progress testing', rather than holding tests as now on a fixed date at the end of each key stage.

Recommendations

v) The group recommends that schools, as the main universal service, are encouraged to see themselves at the very centre of their communities working in collaboration with each other and with partner agencies. This has far-reaching implications for example in how school governors are trained and how pastoral teams are configured and deployed to cover the range of skills and areas of expertise needed.

vi) The group recommends the development of a 'schools offer' in the creative arts and sport to release the potential of every child, underpinned by securing sound academic achievement through consistent application of existing personalised learning reforms and assessment for learning techniques.

vii) The group recommends a renewed focus on ensuring the right support structures are in place through training for school leaders and the wider workforce, on continuing curriculum reform which recognises 'soft skills', and work to ensure spaces are properly established to allow both community use and more personalised support.

Chapter 4: Prevention

4.1   Prevention of poor outcomes, and preventing problems from escalation that may then lead to poor outcomes, is vital to ensuring children and young people are able to fulfil their potential. Working with children and developing a partnership with parents is a means of moving towards a preventative system. It allows for quicker identification of issues and enables preventative action to be tailored and delivered based on individual circumstances. When public services work in partnership with families the solutions will be more effective and sustainable.

4.2   Studies have identified groups at greatest risk of suffering from poor outcomes, principally the 550,000 children with complex needs (accounting for 5 per cent of the 0-15 population). This includes the 70,000 children in care and the 26,000 on the child protection register. Risk of poor outcomes can come in many forms and includes factors at the family level such as depression, disability, substance misuse, domestic violence, stress, unemployment, and lack of basic skills[6].

4.3   Some children and young people themselves will display a separate yet overlapping set of characteristics – such as child abuse, mental health issues, being excluded (or playing truant) from school, delinquency and beginning to become involved in criminal activity, smoking, drug taking as well as bullying. As children grow up there is a risk that these behaviours can lead to running away from home, becoming pregnant or even committing suicide[7].

4.4   Support through external intervention can be vital and a multi-agency response can especially help those at risk of decline in a number of areas. Mentoring and peer mentoring between young people within a structured framework has had some success[8]. Helplines and online information, advice and guidance can be effective and are a well-used route to reach out to young people[9].

4.5   Children have a range of needs and for those with special educational needs (SEN) or disabilities it is vital that the system offers sufficient support. However, most children will have little or no interaction with the targeted and specialist services. Their needs will typically be met through schools, GPs and school-based health services. Together these can weave together support for promoting good health and a positive attitude towards learning. It is, of course, important parents access the services available and the group makes some recommendations in Chapter 5 about how this might be achieved.

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6   Institute of Education, 2007
7   NCB, 9-13 – the Forgotten Years
8   NFER, Excellence in Cities evaluation
9   NCB, 9-13 – the Forgotten Years

4.6 The group recognised that there has already been significant policy activity aimed at securing a more preventative approach:

- the Every Child Matters framework which has invested in, and aims to develop, universal services (such as children's centres and extended schools) to reach the families who are most challenged;

- local Change for Children programmes that have sought to enable better integrated working between targeted and specialist agencies and the universal services, and establish protocols on information sharing;

- the continued investment through the Children's Fund which is predicated on enabling local authorities and their partners to invest in local preventative services;

- support for parents through Parenting Early Intervention Pathfinders and Family Intervention Projects which co-ordinate packages for families and training for practitioners; and

- the commitment to increasing the number of school nurses so every cluster of schools will have a nurse.

4.7 The group noted the significant challenges in embedding Every Child Matters reforms further to turn the aspirations for a wholly preventative system into a reality. In particular this means ensuring a continuity of service when people move local areas, particularly where children or parents have additional needs. Equally important is improving the capacity of the workforce to engage with parents who have not previously enjoyed a positive relationship with schools. Generally this workforce capacity will be found in schools as the universal service but may need to be supplemented from elsewhere.

4.8 Ensuring a common language and behaviour within professional teams is also vital if services are going to be successful in joining up and reaching those that most need them.

4.9 Members identified a number of priority areas where a greater focus on prevention was likely to improve outcomes. These reiterate the importance of consistency of good practice and cover some of the similar issues that emerged from the 0-7 Expert Group around intervening early and the use of health visitors. These link closely to issues of extending the skills of the workforce, explored in Chapter 5.

Preventing disengagement from learning

4.10 Keeping children and young people engaged in learning meant providing opportunities for them. This should build on the extended school offer and positive activities for young people and link closely to notions of a school offer. The group suggests **an entitlement of activities for young people to develop self confidence, self worth and positive attitudes towards the future**. In addition to engaging learners through good quality teaching, discussion touched on the role of sports facilities and play. Members thought it was important to expect local authorities to capitalise on the growing numbers of extended schools and provide safe public spaces for community use. Group members noted this was a good example of where greater national consistency of existing good practice was now needed.

4.11   Some members suggested that Government should consider how to capitalise on the opportunities of technologies and social networking (through websites such as Bebo – though not unfettered access to the internet). The group noted that social networking was already being used by children and young people demonstrating their creativity.

4.12   The group recognised the key risks that can trigger underperformance or disengagement from learning outlined in Chapter 1. These highlight the importance of transition between schools and at other moments of their childhood. The group wanted to see **greater focus on ensuring seamless transition**. Some group members noted how single campus schools (across the age range) and shared governance arrangements between schools could help to secure a more child-centred approach.

4.13   The group suggests more consistent and continual use of whole school assessment strategies to measure progress in learning. This is particularly significant during the initial year of admission into a new institution. It identifies those children who are not making the transition successfully. The group suggested that schools needed to know more about the children joining them and so be able to use flexibilities within curriculum structures to respond to the needs of different cohorts of children. The group supports the recommendation from the 14-19 Expert Group on **providing excellent information, advice and guidance from as early a stage as possible**, as noted in Chapter 2.

4.14   The group was keen to emphasise the wider role of the family in supporting effective transition between schools. There was general agreement that continuity in children's lives could be secured by parents and carers. For some, however, this could be particularly difficult or traumatic when their own experience of schooling was negative. Members also noted the role of voluntary sector organisations in working with all types of families through providing advocacy and support at times of transition.

4.15   The group noted the vital role that schools, in working with local partners, have in supporting communities to work together and achieving social harmony. The group welcomed existing guidance on ensuring schools (especially those being built through the Primary Capital and Building Schools for the Future programmes) are appropriate for community use and **would encourage further consideration of how to use capital investment programmes to promote positive community relations**.

Preventing underachievement by vulnerable groups

4.16   Ensuring effective support for children, young people and their parents is a vital element of preventing underachievement. This links closely into the Parent Support Adviser role discussed in Chapter 5 and the focus that needs to be placed both on providing the services and enabling access to them.

4.17   Throughout the group's debates, concerns were raised about addressing the needs of vulnerable children and young people. The group discussed SEN and disability and the evidence of impact that these can have on life chances, which is particularly stark. This includes how these groups of children are more likely to experience poorer outcomes throughout their adult lives, and therefore highlights the need to ensure SEN provision is as effective as possible.

4.18   The group noted a previous report from the Audit Commission on SEN in 2002 and examples of good practice (such as in Leeds and Wandsworth for instance on youth inclusion) that has taken place in improving the quality of provision since then. The group was keen to see these examples become typical nationally and to **focus on improving the outcomes of children with SEN and not the detail of process**.

4.19   Some group members were keen to ensure that the statementing process targets, and therefore secures support for, genuine need and disadvantage. This highlights, the group argues, the need for **schools to have the freedoms and resources to improve SEN practice locally**. Coupled with this, and associated to recommendation vii, was ensuring that teachers receive sufficient training in working with children with SEN. Members also noted the importance of allowing sufficient time for SEN Co-ordinators in primary schools in fulfilling these responsibilities. There was a sense that rapid progress was needed on these issues.

4.20   The group discussed how some local authorities are linking children in care with senior employees and councillors. This was seen as an innovative way of **ensuring greater visibility of children in care**. Group members noted that older children are required to self-declare their care status, and so some choose not to do so and hence fade from people's consciousness. The group agreed with recent policies that have highlighted the issue of children in care as requiring urgent attention.

Intervening early through a co-ordinated system

4.21   Universal services, particularly schools for the 8-13 age range, should be playing a greater role in providing universal support. Schools should be in the centre of their communities not doing everything themselves but linking in with the targeted and specialist services available locally. The crux of this was about ensuring **clearer roles and responsibilities for schools and community partners** in fulfilling the Every Child Matters ethos.

4.22   At one level this means professionals sharing information and consistently using the common assessment framework. This again emphasised the importance of ensuring a common language between professionals to encourage collaboration. The group felt that there was a clear role here both for central and local government to support changing practice as has already been happening.

4.23   Equally important is how to ensure the consistent use of effective practice across the country. Based on the premise that funding should be targeted where it is likely to have greatest effect (such as on health visitors in the early years or in tackling obesity issues as early as possible) the group emphasised the importance of **better targeting of resources towards programmes of early intervention, especially in terms of preventative health measures**.

4.24   Group members suggested that funding and performance management arrangements were key parts of the established frameworks for this and could helpfully bring health partners centre stage in local children's trusts. The group noted the apparent lack of focus on the young in existing health performance management frameworks and the importance of ensuring sufficient attention on children's issues within Strategic Health Authorities and

Primary Care Trusts. The group supports recommendations coming from the 0-7 expert group concerning the role of health visitors as the universal service in the early years of a child's life.

4.25   The group discussed child and adolescent mental health, and its particular relevance during the period of physiological and emotional change experienced by 8-13-year-olds. The group was keen to see action to ensure consistent application of existing good practice in **child and adolescent mental health provision**. They suggested that this looks holistically at the needs of the young person and how best they can be supported. This includes how schools work with Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) in identifying and treating mental health needs. This would also cover an expectation of supporting children and young people in times of parental relationship breakdown (which the evidence has outlined is most likely to take place during the 5-9 age range).

4.26   Services also need to bear in mind the family unit and how issues affecting parents are likely to impact on their children. It is on this basis that the group suggests **a standard expectation for adult social care providers to ask "Are you a parent?"** and tailor their action appropriately with children's services from then on. The group recognised that taking this action would transcend existing professional and institutional boundaries and so require consistent attention over the medium to long term.

Recommendations

viii)   The group recommends the development of an entitlement of activities for young people so that they can be engaged in their communities and develop self-confidence and self-esteem. The group suggests this can be explored through a variety of existing means such as extended schools and through new technologies.

ix)   The group recommends concentrating on supporting children through transitions – school to school, between key stages within school, shifts in peer groups, and the physiological change of puberty. The group emphasises the importance of consistently high quality advice and guidance for children and their families.

x)   The group recommends better targeting of resources towards prevention based on clear roles and responsibilities for the range of universal, targeted and specialist services. The group highlighted the importance of early intervention to prevent problems becoming crises, especially with regard to children's health.

xi)   The group recommends learning from the research available on how the Building Schools for the Future and Primary Capital programmes can best ensure that school environments promote social cohesion and are welcoming to children, young people and families alike.

xii)   The group recommends greater focus and effort on improving the life chances of the most vulnerable. In particular the group would like to focus on improving special educational needs practice, the visibility of children in care, child and adolescent mental health provision, and the interaction between adult social care and children's services. The group emphasised the importance of the system consistently concentrating on outcomes and not process.

Chapter 5: Parents and families

5.1   The role that mothers, fathers and the whole family play in supporting children make the transition through the 8-13 range is vital. Parental involvement in schooling has been shown to be a more powerful force than family background, size of family or level of parental education. Where services are successful in engaging particularly vulnerable groups the positive effect can be seen in terms of improved attendance, behaviour and educational achievement.

5.2   Parents have a significant impact on their child's outcomes, both through direct involvement in learning and in providing wider enrichment opportunities, as well as in other ways. Parental involvement between the ages of 7 and 16 is a more powerful force than family background, size of the family and the level of parental education[10]. Parental aspirations vary greatly by social class and while all parents wish for the best for their child, actual expectations are often lower. There is also strong socio-economic variation in parents' ability and inclination to pass on essential skills and capabilities for their children.

5.3   Key barriers to engaging parents more consistently in their child's education have been identified[11] as the competing demands in their lives such as work commitments, demands of other children, childcare difficulties, and lack of time generally. Other potential barriers were discussed including practical basic skills such as literacy and being able to understand and negotiate the schools system.

5.4   The group noted the existing policy approach and some of the main programmes that have been developed in recent years to support parents and families. These include:

● extended schools and the expectation that mothers and fathers are engaged at every stage of developing and delivering services. Schools are required to make particular effort to ensure they are consulting with all local parents;

● the duty on local authorities to appoint a single commissioner to champion services for parents. They are expected to assess local need for parenting support, identify gaps in services, and develop a parenting strategy that responds effectively;

● pilot activity testing out new arrangements for providing information at times of transition; and

● the new National Academy for Parenting Practitioners and existing funding which is aimed at supporting voluntary and community sector organisations work with the most vulnerable families.

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10 Feinstein and Symons, *Attainment in secondary school*, 1999
11 Williams, B et el (2002) *Parental Involvement in Education*

5.5   The group also noted, however, the significant challenges in how to raise aspirations for all children and young people across all social backgrounds. The existing market for family support is considered fragmented, patchy and complex. While a range of support is provided at a local level it is rarely underpinned by a coherent strategy. Furthermore, there is little monitoring of the quality of much of the support services available. One of the central concerns is how not to stigmatise those that use services and provide support for all while recognising that ultimately families are responsible for raising children and not the state.

5.6   The group discussed a number of areas where they would like to see greater focus in the future and these are outlined below.

Enabling parents to support their children

5.7   The group was keen to see **expansion of parent support advisers** to reach every local authority. The group suggested parent support advisers are a key part of making a reality of the Every Child Matters vision for schools. The role picks up on a range of different areas of professional expertise and skills. It could be carried out by a range of school-based professionals. Some members suggested there might be a case to have community-based advisers when the notion of the school itself hindered engagement.

5.8   The group was convinced that the parent support adviser role was vital in identifying the support that families need and helping to broker access to the range of services. Helping parents to navigate their way through the range of school, and wider, systems would also mean that support would reach the most vulnerable. In bringing together a package of support parents would be better able to recognise signs of risk (academic, emotional, behavioural, etc).

5.9   The group suggested parent support advisers should also be seen as part of a wider re-configuring of the workforce to support parents, for instance the use of education welfare officers and family conferencing that brings everyone together to look at issues facing children in the round. All members recognised the vital importance of these professionals working with children and young people directly. As such there was acknowledgement that the Practitioners Group on School Behaviour[12] had used the term Pupil Parent Support Workers in recognition of working with the whole family.

5.10   The group suggested that effective implementation in this area would require a partnership between central and local government, delivery agencies and schools themselves. The group would hope that emphasis is placed in this area in the short to medium term with an expectation of significant and rapid progress.

5.11   The group was keen that Government and local organisations together explore **additional means of engaging with parents that do not rely on schools** for those who do not feel comfortable in that environment. Members noted that sometimes it was the non-statutory agencies that would have greater success in engaging particular local groups. This could be because they appeared less stigmatising or threatening or because they were more likely to be made up of a cross section of people that reflect the communities they operate within.

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12 DfES, *Learning Behaviour*, 2005

Members were keen to see greater involvement of parents in planning, designing and implementing interventions so that change can be owned by families (and not appear imposed on them). The group accepted that these proposals would require effort over the long term.

5.12   While discussing how best to enable mothers and fathers to support children, proposals emerged based around **extending the existing 'red book'** (Personal Child Health Record) – that is given out by health visitors to support the first few years of a child's life – up the age range. This is owned by parents and documents key staging posts in the child's development and could link to starting school sessions. This clearly connects to the group's support for health visitors outlined in Chapter 4.

5.13   The extent to which the goal of enabling parents to support their children will be achieved will be determined how successful professionals are in reaching out to those families that need them most. Group members cited examples of how longstanding issues can sometimes be tackled in very simple terms. So the group was keen to see **services focus on resolving the practical issues of getting children and parents to the support they need**. This might include providing transport between home and other locations and laying on extra childcare provision for parents who have other children that would need looking after if they are going to be able to keep appointments.

5.14   The group also suggested that it should be possible to **explore how to use interactive televisions and new technologies** in reaching out to different families. This would be a way to get information out to families in efficient and effective ways, and in particular help target groups who might not otherwise access support from the public services. The group thought that the former could be achieved in the relatively short term, the latter a longer-term idea to be developed over time.

Parents supporting their children to learn and develop

5.15   The recommendations above to enable parents to support their children are designed ultimately to improve outcomes. This means parents should be encouraged firstly in their role as co-educators of their children and secondly, and equally importantly, as modelling a positive attitude towards learning. This could potentially be through their own personal involvement in adult education. In addition to mothers and fathers, the extended family and siblings play an important role in supporting children. Making a reality of this is, of course, not easy and the group suggested a number of areas where existing policy activity is beginning to make progress but further focus would be greatly beneficial.

5.16   The first of these was the provision of formative feedback on children's achievements, development and needs. The traditional approach of bi-yearly school reports was considered insufficiently frequent to engage parents and too slow to respond to issues as and when they arise. Therefore the group would like to see **more regular reporting to parents on their children's progress**, enabled by ICT. The group recognised previous commitments in this area and was keen to see demonstrable progress in the short term.

5.17 The group also urged **local services to be accessible around the working patterns of parents**, especially recognising that not all parents will work a traditional 9 to 5 day, and that it is likely that some of the most vulnerable families will have non-traditional working patterns. Building on the existing development of extended schools, this would not mean a new role for the school, nor an expectation that children stay in schools for long periods of time, but would require the recognition by local authorities that different parents will have different capacities depending on their circumstances.

Recommendations

xiii)   The group recommends a range of support for mothers, fathers, carers and the extended family building on existing good practice. Securing advice and guidance for children and parents was central to this – in particular through expanding parent support advisers. The group also recommends the extension of the health 'red book' to older age children to signpost parents to key stages in child development.

xiv)   The group recommends that local services provide flexible and innovative support for families. This includes, for instance, practical solutions to transport and childcare problems so appointments with specialist services can be met. The group also suggests that Government explores with industry how to use new technologies to communicate with families.

xv)   The group recommends that parents are supported to engage in their child's learning through more regular reporting (using ICT). The group also emphasised the importance of ensuring access to services around the requirements and working patterns of the parents themselves, and not the service provider.

Chapter 6: Making change happen

6.1   This report has outlined the discussions and recommendations of the 8-13 Expert Group for services and policies that affect children and young people aged 8-13 and their families. These have covered the four areas of personalisation, prevention, positive childhood, and parents and families. However, during the group's meetings, and subsequently in the plenary meeting, some common themes emerged – issues that are central to the effective delivery of the Government's long-term objectives outlined in the Introduction.

6.2   This concluding chapter of the report will explore those common themes, with the aim of building up a picture of what change looks like for children, young people and their families, for services (especially schools as the main universal service for children of this age group), for local children's trust arrangements and the local workforce, as well as for national government policy and strategy. Taken together they show how children's services need to identify existing good practice and ensure it is replicated nationwide in a consistent manner. For some this may be a radical and significant shift, for others it will be more incremental. For all, however, the group was convinced that the next stage of the Every Child Matters reforms should signal a clear and important role for schools as the centre of their communities, providing opportunities for all and linking into targeted and specialist support for those that need it.

6.3   To achieve these aims, and the recommendations outlined in the previous chapters, this final chapter will also include some suggested mechanisms that currently exist and could be used to influence local delivery and organisational behaviour. The group noted that it is these 'levers for change' that will make the real difference in fulfilling the wide range of recommendations.

Children, young people and families

6.4   Discussions within the group concentrated on how they wanted the system of schools and other services to provide opportunities for children and young people, and what that might look like in 10 years' time. Each individual has their own talents and so schools should ensure sound levels of competency in academic and social skills. Children and young people should also have the opportunities to develop their self-confidence and have high aspirations for the future through participation in positive activities, volunteering, as well as by having access to role models and mentors.

6.5   As Chapter 5 outlined, the group developed a range of proposals around how to engage both mothers and fathers in having high aspirations and expectations for their children's development and progress at school. Central to this are parent support advisers who can help children, young people and parents navigate through the range of services available.

Schools and other services

6.6   Group members were sure that their vision of a personalised and preventative system had schools at its centre. The school itself would be at the centre of the community, encouraging family learning and high aspirations for the future and opening up its facilities for use throughout the year. By working in partnership with the range of local statutory agencies and non-statutory community-based organisations the school would be making the best possible provision for all while also focusing, in particular, on the vulnerable. The group noted close ties into the departmental objective of narrowing the gap in educational achievement. Schools would, by definition, be referring less to the targeted and specialist services and so freeing up resources for more early intervention-based work.

Local authorities, their partners and the local workforce

6.7   The group's discussions emphasised the importance of translating the national strategy into local delivery. This means building on local Children's Trust arrangements and existing Children and Young People's Plans that all local authorities have in place. Members noted the new system of local area agreements, a framework of approximately 200 indicators set by national government and less budget ring-fencing. The role of the local authority, therefore, is to assess need and secure the provision of services, across the universal, targeted and specialist range, that children and families require.

6.8   Voluntary and community sector organisations play an important part in providing services and support to children and young people. As outlined previously in this report, the group strongly agreed that it is these non-statutory agencies that are sometimes most effective in working with the most vulnerable families. These organisations can develop creative and effective collaborations with local partners to broaden the range of provision available and engage parents whose own experience of schooling or service use has been negative.

6.9   The third element of delivering on this degree of change is enabling a change in culture. Group members acknowledged that structural reform will only go so far and is unlikely to lead to sustained change. Instead discussion focused on the local workforce and how culture change will depend upon workforce change. This demands a fully trained workforce which consistently puts the needs of the child at the centre and drives up the quality of the experience they provide for children and families. This links explicitly to strategies to break down barriers between professionals and develop teams around the child within and outside of schools.

Government policy and strategy

6.10   The changes described in the preceding paragraphs will all depend upon national strategy and policy. Members of the group saw the development of the Children's Plan as a significant opportunity for the Government to signal its intentions for children and children's services. Based on the principles established in the Introduction, group members were keen to reiterate their view that on the whole existing policy was heading in the right direction and that what was needed now was consistency of practice in every classroom, school and service, and greater coherence between schools and services. Furthermore the launch of a national Children's Plan was, some members suggested, the occasion to celebrate the talents of children and young people and initiate greater public awareness in the role that individuals play in promoting a positive childhood.

Levers for change

6.11 The group identified a number of ways in which government – national and local – can influence change. These included:

- effective leadership is vital in enabling change and supporting everyone within an institution to work towards delivering that coupled with an expectation that all the workforce undergo similar training;

- engagement of headteachers so they lead their schools to achieve the very best outcomes for their children and link in effectively with other agencies. Training for headteachers can be delivered through national professional qualifications;

- engagement of others in schools as the universal service for the 8-13 age group, principally through organisational arrangements and flexibilities now available to schools to respond to communities and parents;

- engagement of children, young people and families themselves so they are listened to when services are designed, and the subsequent development of services is based on what they require;

- sharing of good practice between institutions and organisations so that effective approaches are more consistently applied;

- performance management arrangements for local authorities (such as Joint Area Reviews) and the new National Indicator Set which encourages authorities to take a strategic view of priorities, targets and allocate funding accordingly, and similar arrangements for health services, to encourage preventative activity;

- inspection of schools and other settings by Ofsted to ensure that they are keeping to prescribed requirements and delivering a quality experience for all children and young people;

- commissioning frameworks and locality-based working which brings together schools and agencies (including health bodies) with organisations from the voluntary and community sector to respond with different levels of intervention and support;

- funding formulae and allocations which operate on the basis of a thorough analysis of need and targeting preventative action. This could include a review of community funding available to specialist schools in the secondary sector; and

- social/cultural levers such as the power of the media and documentary television that explores issues around childhood and provides parents with advice and support.

6.12 The group saw all as the three dimensions of change – strategic levers (such as performance assessments of local authorities), organisational cultures, and social change. The combined effect of the three, members suggest, could be hugely beneficial. Above all though the group reiterated the importance of remembering the focus on 8-13-year-olds, the transitions that these children and young people go through, and their specific needs and aspirations for a happy childhood and positive future.

Annex A: Terms of reference

Remit

There will be three Expert Groups (ages 0-7, 8-13, and 14-19) whose remit will be to look at services and policies affecting children, young people and families and to make recommendations to the Secretary of State on how best to deliver his long-term objectives[13] to:

- improve the health and well-being of children and young people;
- safeguard the young and vulnerable;
- close the gap in educational achievement between those from disadvantaged backgrounds and their peers;
- 'raise our game' on raising standards;
- increase post-16 participation and attainment; and
- increase the number of children and young people on the path to success.

The focus will be on Every Child Matters and schools standards, renewing our determination to reach those children and young people who are still not achieving better outcomes and intervening early to prevent problems developing. Each group will also need to work within the constraints of the Department's spending review settlement, and should focus on how available resources can be most effectively deployed using our policy levers and breaking down barriers to effective co-ordination and co-operation.

Each group will draw on evidence, research and views from delivery partners, children, parents and families to provide recommendations to the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families on the development of the Children's Plan. The groups will generate and agree the key issues on which to engage using four central themes:

- Positive childhood
- Parents and families
- Personalisation
- Prevention

13 Please note that this wording has now been updated.

Membership

The groups will be chaired jointly by leading professionals and Ministers as follows:

0-7 group:

- Jo Davidson, Group Director of Children and Young People's Services for Gloucestershire County Council
- Rt Hon Beverley Hughes MP, Minister of State for Children, Young People and Families

8-13 group:

- Sir Alan Steer, Headteacher, Seven Kings High School, London Borough of Redbridge
- Lord Andrew Adonis, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Schools and Learners
- Kevin Brennan MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Children, Young People and Families

14-19 group:

- Jackie Fisher, Chief Executive and Principal, Newcastle College
- Jim Knight MP, Minister of State for Schools and Learners

Wider membership is at the discretion of the Secretary of State and selection is based on professional experience, expertise, status and personal qualities. Members have been invited in their personal capacity to join the groups and it is not appropriate for deputies to attend meetings. We have sought to ensure that there is ethnic, gender and geographical balance, and also to achieve a mix of professions across the groups.

Working arrangements

The group and its members will:

- consider the evidence, research and consultation findings;
- collect views of peers and users through regional, local and sector-based consultation;
- act as champions in generating a national debate;
- give particular regard to hearing the views of young people e.g. through the Youth Parliament, the DCSF Children's Board, the Office of the Children's Commissioner;
- report and make recommendations on the delivery of services to children and families to the Secretary of State in autumn 2007; and
- act as ambassadors for the recommendations and promote the delivery of the Children's Plan

The groups will meet at least three times to:

1. Consider the range of issues relating to their age band and prioritise them to feed into the wider public consultation; commission any initial research analysis.

2. Review any research commissioned at the first meeting; receive any feedback on the consultation questions from the public events; start shaping their reports.

3.   Focus on the results of the consultation and commission the secretariat to draft their final report drawing on the emerging consultation responses.

DCSF will provide the secretariat and analytical support to each group. The secretariats will work closely together to ensure cross-fertilisation of ideas and that cross-cutting ideas are picked up so that we have a full picture of how the world should work for children and young people.

The groups will want to contribute to, and draw on, the work of the National Council for Educational Excellence.

Confidentiality

Minutes, papers and advice may be covered by Freedom of Information (FOI) exemptions as they relate to formulation and development of government policy and/or free and frank provision of advice and exchange of views for the purposes of deliberation. However, we may wish to provide a public forum via the DCSF website on which to publish factual papers and the final group reports (which will be in the public domain).

To maintain trust between members, members are expected to treat group discussions in confidence and not report externally. Members are asked to clear lines with the Secretariat before talking to the media about the group and its business.

Annex B: Expert Group members

Co-chairs

Sir Alan Steer, Headteacher, Seven Kings High School, Ilford, and member of the National Council for Educational Excellence

Lord Andrew Adonis, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Schools and Learners, at the Department for Children, Schools and Families.

Kevin Brennan MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Children, Young People and Families, at the Department for Children, Schools and Families

Members

Sir Keith Ajegbo, former Headteacher and has recently led the Citizenship and Diversity Curriculum Review for Government

Graham Badman, Director of Children's Services, Kent local authority

Sue Campbell, Chair of the Youth Sport Trust, which aims to use the power of sport to improve the lives of young people

Rosie Chadwick, Head of Prevention Services at Crime Concern, an independent, non-profit registered charity working to reduce crime

Jonathan Douglas, Director of the National Literacy Trust, a non-profit making organisation devoted to promoting literacy and literacy educators

Fiona Edwards, teacher, Stebon Primary School, Tower Hamlets, London

John Guy, Principal, Farnborough Sixth Form College, Hampshire

Fiona Hammans, Headteacher, Banbury School, Oxfordshire

Barbara Hearn, deputy Chief Executive of the National Children's Bureau, the multi-agency membership network for children's services and studies

Ron Jenkinson, Headteacher St Osmund Middle School, Dorchester, Dorset

Carol Lake, Managing Director JP Morgan, with experience in the mentoring of young people

Brian Lamb, Chair of the Special Educational Needs Consortium, an umbrella group which represents a range of SEN and disability organisations

Denise Lynch, Attendance Leader in Education Welfare, Children's Services, Salford

Mary MacLeod, Chief Executive of the Families and Parenting Institute, a charity aiming to improve the well-being of children and families in the UK.

Dame Mary Marsh, Chief Executive of the NSPCC, whose primary purpose is to end cruelty to children

Kris Murrin, who has a background in child psychology and now presents the BBC programme Honey We're Killing the Kids

Penny Rogers, Consultant, North Essex Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service

Caroline Ryder, Headteacher, Carr Junior School, York

Vicky Scott, Joint Commissioning Manager, Lewisham Primary Care Trust and local authority, London

Sheila White, Headteacher, Wyborne Primary School, Greenwich, London

Sir Michael Wilshaw, Principal, Mossbourne Community Academy, Hackney, London

Annex C: Summary of recommendations

The 8-13 Expert Group makes the following recommendations to the Secretary of State:

Positive childhood

i) The group recommends work with every local authority to ensure that all children and young people have access to safe public places and community provision which support leisure and play. Local authorities, community organisations, and schools should listen to and involve children and young people in planning and delivering services.

ii) The group recommends the use of role models and mentoring so that teenagers can help younger children stay on the right path. This should serve to encourage young people to get involved in volunteering in their communities.

iii) The group recommends the development of consistently high quality information, advice and guidance for children aged 8-13 to support them through the transitions that characterise this period of their childhood. The group recognises the recommendation from the 14-19 group and is keen that sources of, and approaches to, information, advice and guidance are seamless across the whole age range.

iv) The group recommends that Government engage with business and the media to promote their responsibilities for contributing to a positive childhood. Due attention should be given to a recognition scheme for business, and discussions with the media should encourage them to do better in promoting positive images of young people.

Personalisation

v) The group recommends that schools, as the main universal service, are encouraged to see themselves at the very centre of their communities working in collaboration with each other and with partner agencies. This has far-reaching implications for example in how school governors are trained and how pastoral teams are configured.

vi) The group recommends the development of a 'schools offer' in the creative arts and sport to release the potential of every child, underpinned by securing sound academic achievement through consistent application of existing personalised learning reforms and assessment for learning techniques.

vii)   The group recommends a renewed focus on ensuring the right support structures are in place through training for school leaders and the wider workforce, on continuing curriculum reform which recognises 'soft skills', and work to ensure spaces are properly established to allow both community use and more personalised support.

Prevention

viii)   The group recommends the development of an entitlement of activities for young people so that they can be engaged in their communities and develop self-confidence and self-esteem. The group suggests this can be explored through a variety of existing means such as extended schools and through new technologies.

ix)   The group recommends concentrating on supporting children through transitions – school to school, between key stages within school, shifts in peer groups, and the physiological change of puberty. The group emphasises the importance of consistently high quality advice and guidance for children and their families.

x)   The group recommends better targeting of resources towards prevention based on clear roles and responsibilities for the range of universal, targeted and specialist services. The group highlighted the importance of early intervention to prevent problems becoming crises, especially with regard to children's health.

xi)   The group recommends learning from the research available on how the Building Schools for the Future and Primary Capital programmes can best ensure that school environments promote social cohesion and are welcoming to children, young people and families alike.

xii)   The group recommends greater focus and effort on improving the life chances of the most vulnerable. In particular the group would like to focus on improving in special educational needs practice, the visibility of children in care, child and adolescent mental health provision, and the interaction between adult social care and children's services. The group emphasised the importance of the system consistently concentrating on outcomes and not process.

Parents and families

xiii)   The group recommends a range of support for mothers, fathers, carers and the extended family building on existing good practice. Securing advice and guidance for children and parents was central to this -in particular through expanding parent support advisers. The group also recommends the extension of the health 'red book' to older age children to signpost parents to key stages in child development.

xiv)   The group recommends that local services provide flexible and innovative support for families. This includes, for instance, practical solutions to transport and childcare problems so appointments with specialist services can be met. The group also suggests that government explores with industry how to use new technologies to communicate with families.

xv)   The group recommends that parents are supported to engage in their child's learning through more regular reporting (using ICT). The group also emphasised the importance of ensuring access to services around the requirements and working patterns of the parents themselves, and not the service provider.

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