

## The Children Bill at a glance



The Children Bill provides the legal framework for the radical changes being proposed.

The purpose of the Bill, and the partnership working that is at its heart, is summarised in the five outcomes that children and young people have themselves said are important:

- Being healthy
- Staying safe
- Enjoying and achieving
- Making a positive contribution
- Economic well-being

### A Children's Commissioner

The Bill proposes a Children's Commissioner for England to act as an independent champion for children. The Commissioner, who must involve young people in his or her work, will have a wide remit to investigate and report on any issue that touches on the lives as children, as well as carrying out inquiries into cases of particular national importance.

### Establishing effective partnerships

The Bill requires authorities providing services to children, such as Norfolk County Council, to establish partnerships with other authorities and agencies, including the police, probation, health authorities and primary care trusts, learning and skills providers and the voluntary sector.

### Safeguarding children

The Bill replaces area child protection committees with a statutory Local Safeguarding Children Board. It also sets out a new requirement for all agencies to safeguard and promote the welfare of children as part of their normal duties.

### Children's Trusts

The primary purpose of Children's Trusts will be integrated commissioning. Trusts will be formed through the pooling of budgets and resources across education, children's health and social services, Connexions and, where agreed locally, Youth Offending Teams. Trusts must also engage a wide range of partners in deciding how best to spend pooled budgets.

### Director of Children's Services

The Bill requires local authorities to appoint a Director of Children's Services, with responsibilities that currently fall to the Directors of Education and Social Services in relation to children's services.

### Lead Council Member

To strengthen accountability at a political level, the Bill requires a Lead Council Member for Children's Services to be appointed.

### Sharing Information

Concern about confidentiality and data protection has been a barrier to effective sharing of information between agencies and early intervention. The Children Bill provides for new information sharing systems and databases and a common framework for assessment of needs.

### Inspection arrangements

Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools is charged with developing new integrated inspection arrangements for children's services.

### Timetable

The Bill is expected to become an Act in the autumn of 2004, and further guidance, funding arrangements, and a pay and workforce strategy will be published at this time. Subject to Parliamentary approval, the targets are for a Children's Commissioner to be appointed in February 2005, and for most local authorities to have a Director of Children's Services, Lead Council Member and Children's Trust in 2006.



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# Every Child Matters Norfolk



A special edition of Norfolk Matters



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## Better services for children

**Major changes in the way the County Council organises its services for children and young people, bringing education and children's social services under a single Director, have been agreed in principle by Members.**

The Council has been reviewing children's services in the light of the Government Green Paper 'Every Child Matters,' published last year and followed more recently by the 2004 Children Bill.

The changes aim to establish integrated services for children and young people, including the appointment of a Director of Children's Services.

This has been broadly welcomed by the County

Council, which has outlined the principles that must underlie the re-shaped services (see inside).

A project team is working with a multi-agency advisory board (see inside) to develop proposals for integrated children's services - those run by the County Council, and those provided by partners such as schools, the health service, district councils and the youth justice system.



The proposals will be presented to the June meeting of the County Council's Cabinet.

This special edition of Norfolk Matters aims to keep staff and stakeholders up to date with developments. We are also holding briefings and providing on-line information and opportunities to comment.



## The right approach for Norfolk

Alison King, Leader of the Council, said she welcomed the key principles within 'Every Child Matters' and the 2004 Children Bill.

"I am convinced that this is the right approach for Norfolk. It is in line with our own thinking. Of

course, re-organisation will not in itself provide all the answers. We need to break down the barriers between professionals and agencies in the interests of providing well co-ordinated multi-agency services, that are responsive to local needs and circumstances.

What is clear is that services must be centred on the needs of the child. Too often children and their parents have had to find their way through a maze of poorly co-ordinated services and agencies set up for administrative convenience.

There must be shared responsibility throughout. This is vital, especially in child protection. In the past it has been too easy for different organisations to say that a child was no longer their responsibility. The lessons of the Laming inquiry into the death of Victoria Climbié, and those from local agencies following the death of Lauren Wright here in Norfolk, are being taken to heart.

But the changes we are proposing, and which are within the Children Bill and the earlier Every Child Matters Green Paper, go much further than child protection. I believe that the time is right to make the fundamental changes in children's services outlined in this newsletter. There is strong professional support, across all agencies providing services for children, for change in this direction. As you will see from this newsletter, there is also clear evidence that multi-agency working makes a real difference to the lives of children and families."



## Where We are Now

The County Council has agreed that new integrated children's services should be developed in Norfolk, and that the new services must:

- **Be based upon collective responsibility for our children**
- **Have clear goals that we want to see achieved for every child**
- **Focus on children, their families and communities**
- **Help to keep children with their families, friends and in their home communities**
- **Ensure early identification of problems and timely action**
- **Take an all-round view of children's various needs**
- **Establish effective ways of sharing information**
- **Make sure that children and young people do not have to repeat their story to different agencies**
- **Appoint one person to take the lead when several professionals and services are involved**
- **Involve children and their families in choosing and evaluating services**
- **Ensure that services are affordable.**

The Council has committed itself to the appointment of a Director of Children's Services and is, through its Project Board, continuing to develop proposals, taking account of the Children Bill, Government guidance, and further evidence and views from all quarters.

Detailed proposals on the appointment of a Director, and on the stages of implementing other aspects of the project, will be brought to the Council's Cabinet in June.



## Is this good enough for my child?

**Tim Byles, Chief Executive and Chairman of the Children's Services Project Board.**



"The County Council's response to the 'Every Child Matters' Green Paper and the Children Bill is one of the most significant matters that has faced the authority in recent years.

A good deal of work is already underway to improve the services we provide to children, principally through education and children's social services. Considerable strides have been made in improving educational performance, and Ofsted has acknowledged the expertise in school improvement that exists within our Education Department. Even so, our children are still not reaching the same levels of attainment as in the best performing local education authorities.

Making progress in social services for children and families has been more difficult, and this was reflected in the one star rating this service received (out of a possible three) in the recent assessment of our corporate performance.

There is no doubt that the performance of children in school is directly related to their experiences at home. As services are now organised, that connection is not always made. Yet we know from various pilot projects that a multi-agency approach to supporting families and children can make a real difference.

We now have a unique opportunity to reshape our services for children and families in a way that will make integrated, multi-agency working the rule, rather than the exception.

The County Council is fully behind the main thrust of the Green Paper and the Children Bill. Our early soundings among professionals and stakeholders have revealed widespread recognition that services must improve - and a real desire to deliver services that can be described as excellent.

A number of people have said the real test should be to ask 'is this good enough for my child?' We want to make sure that the answer to this is 'Yes'."

## Multi-agency overview

To create truly integrated services for children, many different organisations must be involved. Changes within Norfolk County Council are only part of the process. To ensure a multi-agency approach to this integration, an Every Child Matters Advisory Board has been established. As well as senior officers of the County Council - including the Chief Executive, Directors of Education, Social Services and Corporate Resources and Head of Libraries - the Board comprises:

Two district council Chief Executives; Senior health representatives from three Primary Care Trusts; Three head teachers, representing primary, secondary and special schools; Senior representatives of the Police, Youth Offending Team and Family Court Advisory and Support Services, Connexions, Norwich & Norfolk Voluntary Services, Early Years and Childcare, Norwich & Norfolk Racial Equality Council.

## Information Sharing to Improve Services for Children

**Properly-established ways of sharing information on children and young people will be critical if the new approach to children's services is to succeed.**

Communication failures, with once agency unaware of the work of - or even the involvement of - another agency, have been a feature of some high-profile cases, such as Victoria Climbié, where things have gone badly wrong.

Many different professionals work with children and young people; for example teachers, health visitors and social workers. If children are to receive effective and timely care and support these professionals need to know of each other's involvement. It is only with the full picture that the right decisions about support services can be made at the right time.

The ultimate hi-tech solutions mentioned in the Children Bill, where information about every child is held on a common database, are still some way in the future. Nevertheless, it is important that improvements in information sharing are made as soon as possible, so work is already underway

Norfolk County Council, in common with authorities all over England, is working with Health, schools, police and other organisations to improve information sharing practices through Identification, Referral and Tracking systems (IRT). At this stage, the main focus of the project in Norfolk is to assess the current information collection and sharing practices across organisations in Norfolk.

Information about children and young people and their families is protected by law and has to be treated carefully. The Norfolk project is making sure that agencies and professionals working with children, young people and their families are clear about the rules.

A service directory is being developed listing links to organisations that deliver services for children in Norfolk and further afield:  
[www.norfolk.gov.uk/communities/childrensservices.htm](http://www.norfolk.gov.uk/communities/childrensservices.htm)



## How to express your views . . .

The County Council will be keeping its website ([www.norfolk.gov.uk](http://www.norfolk.gov.uk)) updated on progress.

There are also links to the County Council's Cabinet papers on the subject, and to national sites, including the Children Bill and explanatory notes.

Comments can be made by **writing** to Every Child Matters Project Team, Norfolk County Council, County Hall, Norwich NR1 2DH, by **e-mail** to [everychildmatterscomments@norfolk.gov.uk](mailto:everychildmatterscomments@norfolk.gov.uk), or by using the **on-line** questionnaire at [www.norfolk.gov.uk/council/everychildmatters](http://www.norfolk.gov.uk/council/everychildmatters). Free internet access is available at all Norfolk libraries to registered users.

## Facts&Figures

Out of the **180,500** children and young people (0-19) in Norfolk...

**97,750** are of school age

**2,400** are from a minority ethnic background

**1,200** are traveller children visiting or living in Norfolk

**22,225** are in households receiving income support.

**4,600** are defined as being 'in need.'

**750** are looked after by the County Council

**350** are on the child protection register



## Full Service Schools - Great Yarmouth takes the lead

The turn of the millennium saw Gt. Yarmouth featuring in the Index of Multiple Deprivation as one of the most deprived district council areas in the country, with education performance achieving a particularly low score.

But in 2004, Local Authorities from across the country are beating a path to the Borough to find out how Gt. Yarmouth has transformed the way agencies work together to make a real difference to hundreds of children's lives.

For the last 18 months, 25 schools (soon to be 33) within the Borough have been taking part in the Full Service Schools programme - an initiative that embodies all the principles of multi-agency working,

**"I must admit that at the start I didn't see this as my highest priority. My conversion came on a study tour to see what was being achieved in Scotland. I had a call about a lad who had been self-harming, and because all the right people were together on the bus, we were able to agree a plan of action then and there."**

**"An important spin-off of the Combined Assessment Team meetings is the way that different professionals get to know one another. Building up that sort of relationship and trust means that we can work together more quickly and effectively."**

**Andy Goff, Assessment Manager, Social Services**

information sharing and a child and family-centred approach that form the backbone of the Children Bill.

The developments have been led by Education Action Zone (EAZ), and the Gt. Yarmouth Children's Joint Strategy Group. The key to the programme is the way it is working both at strategic level - helping to change attitudes and establish new ways of working in different agencies - and at an operational level - getting on with the business of providing practical support to children and families.

Underlying the development of Full Service Schools in Gt. Yarmouth is the recognition that standards and levels of achievement in schools can be directly affected by the difficulties many young people experience at



home. The old ways of working were simply unable to reach the root of the problem, tending to focus upon the symptoms - poor school attendance, behavioural problems, offending - rather than the causes.

Key partners working with the EAZ and the schools themselves are Gt. Yarmouth Primary Care Trust; Norfolk County Council Social Services and Norfolk Schools' Psychological Service. Other partners include the Family Support Team, Surestart and voluntary organisations such as the Ormiston Centre and the YMCA.

The Full Service School programme is based on clusters of schools organised around the five high schools in the EAZ, and the middle and first schools that feed into them. This structure allows pupils to be supported throughout their school careers.

Every school in the EAZ has appointed a member of staff to the pivotal role of Full Service School Co-ordinator, with half a day a week set aside to identify and help pupils who might need support. Pupils experiencing problems are referred to a Combined Assessment Team (CAT), attended by the partner agencies, which draft an action plan for agreement with parents. Before the pupils are referred to the CAT, all the issues are discussed with parents who then give consent for the different professionals to share information.

Action plans do not just support the pupils. Problems often concern the whole family and siblings and parents are included in the action plan.

Less visible, but ultimately reaching more children, is the work in schools led by the Full Service School Coordinator and involving the whole school in supporting pupils and families. As coordinators develop professional relationships with members of outside agencies and knowledge of what support is available, so they become able to support pupils and families without reference to the CAT.

The EAZ is currently undertaking a review of the Full Service School programme to ensure that the proven benefits of this multi agency approach are available to as many pupils and families as need it. The programme is also being evaluated over three years by Cambridge University, with a report expected in March 2005.

## Making a real difference

### Early success for Full Service Schools

**A nine-year-old boy** was failing to attend school. A family support worker found there was a lack of morning routine. The worker went into the home at 7.30 in the morning to help the family establish routines that would lead to the boy attending school. Teachers were involved in strategies that helped his acceptance back into the classroom. This approach not only succeeded in getting the boy back into school regularly, it also encouraged his mother to become a classroom assistant.

**"It is astonishing what can be achieved once people drop the silo mentality and start to break down the barriers between professionals from different agencies. Once people share the vision they want to make it work. Winning the support of school heads was absolutely essential."**

Rosemary Linley, Gt Yarmouth  
EAZ Community Development Manager

**A 13 year old boy's education** was severely affected because he was the main carer for his disabled father, his mother suffered from depression and three siblings all had problems. He was only attending a third of lessons, and was constantly tired and worried. Once support packages were developed for his family things started to improve. He also received help from Young Carers and the school allowed him to carry a mobile phone so that he could be sure of being contacted if there were problems at home. As a result his overall attendance has improved and he is able to concentrate on his schoolwork.

**A family with a traveller background** and generations of minimal school attendance were only getting their children to school for about a third of all lessons. Family support is resulting in improving attendance, passing 60%.



## Earlham Full Service Extended School

**April 2004 sees fresh opportunities for young people, families and the wider community to benefit from services and activities delivered at and through Earlham High School in west Norwich.**

Existing out of school hours learning, adult education, mentoring, sports and arts activities and the breakfast club will be built upon to create a Full Service Extended School. This will provide services and activities that raise aspirations and potential, as well as those that prevent problems from developing.

In the summer term a Health Visiting Team will move into new on-site accommodation that will become part of a multi-agency team base.

The aim is to establish a welcoming, secure environment that gives the Earlham High community access to childcare, learning opportunities and a range of health and social care support services. Included in this will be plans for Family Group Conferencing.

The focus is on meeting the needs of people of all ages. The development of childcare facilities will not only support parents and school staff but will also open up learning opportunities to groups such as young mothers returning to education.

Piers Ranger, Deputy Head of Earlham High School, says "Earlham High School has strong links with its

communities. It has an understanding and belief in not only looking at what the community can do for the school but what the school can do for its community. It has recognised the impact that communities can have on a student's attitude to learning, behaviour and aspirations for the future."

The Earlham High Full Service Extended School will operate in collaboration with other community and Excellence Cluster initiatives.



## A lesson in co-operation

Matthew (not his real name), a young person whose chaotic lifestyle included drug misuse, a suicide attempt and indications of mental illness, was at serious risk of a custodial sentence after setting fire to a Social Services residential unit. When the court asked for pre-sentence reports the Youth Offending Team (YOT), Social Services and mental health professionals worked together to produce reports that persuaded the court that Matthew should receive treatment and assessment in a dedicated adolescent psychiatric unit.

For Matthew, the multi-agency approach has made a real difference. It became clear that his mental health problems had been a factor in recent offending. Close liaison between agencies, and the involvement of Matthew himself, ensured that a wholly unsuitable custodial sentence was avoided.

Beth Malone, Social Services Area Manager, said: "The YOT worker kept all those professionals involved with this young person informed and ensured that regular consultations were maintained between all agencies. A thorough multi-agency assessment incorporating all perspectives was vital to ensure that an informed decision could be made. This case has taken months of hard work but has also highlighted the conflict between punishment and welfare when children are involved in serious crimes."

Sue Massey, Head of the Youth Offending Team, said: "This was a highly complex and difficult case of a young person very much in trouble with himself and with the courts. Due to the excellent multi-agency approach this young person will now receive the help needed for a brighter future and protection for the public."

Gill Brown Legal Team Leader - Youth Court said "I believe that for most people concerned in Matthew's case, this has been an excellent learning exercise, and a lesson in co-operation."

## Starfish in action

A new Partnership Care scheme for young people is already making progress in West Norfolk.

The Starfish project is a service for young people with complex and challenging learning difficulties, and their families. Based at Whitefriars School in Lynn, it draws together professionals from health, education and social services.

The family of ten-year-old Justin (not his real name) has been one to receive support. Justin has Aspergers, but at quite a low level, so his family have managed by paying for additional help at a private school. It is when Justin is not at school that the family comes under pressure. He demands constant attention and needs to know that his day is planned out ahead of him.

Justin's mother feels that because she chose to send Justin to a private school, she has been excluded from other forms of support - yet there are times when she is desperate for someone to provide the stimulating company Justin needs. "What I really need is someone to help during the holidays so I can spend time with my other children before they grow up."

She has greatly appreciated the support from Starfish. "It's a new idea and a good one. Lets keep it going!" she said.



The Starfish team: (l to r) Gillian Gerrard (SALT), Jen Southall (headteacher of Whitefriars), Hannah Terry (psychology assistant), Elaine Mash (Starfish co-ordinator), Mike Simm (School Improvement Support Officer), Amelia Eleftheriades (clinical psychologist), Kim Neal (team secretary) and Tracey Hay (social worker)

## Family Support Team Success

Norfolk's award-winning Family Support Teams show just how effective multi-agency teams can be. Social Services, Education and Health have established five teams to work with children who are beginning to show signs of mental health problems. The idea is to provide short-term help at an early stage, building on the family's strengths to help them find a way forward. Many of the children seen by the teams are affected by issues like bereavement, divorce or separation. This may affect their mood or behaviour. Some may be very anxious and have problems sleeping or eating. Early help can prevent more serious problems that affect performance in school and lead to social exclusion later on.



The teams may work directly with the child, their parents or carers, individually or in groups. Parenting Support Groups have proved very popular. These comments from parents are typical:

"Feel as though I'm a new Mum...Everyone was very understanding and non-judgemental" "Thank you I have learnt a lot. I now feel I have children who I love a lot and feel in control, also I get a lot of love back from them"

"I really enjoyed the course, was pleased to get some help to be more positive, I now enjoy parenting much more"

"Thank you for giving me hope for the future and rebuilding my relationship with my child again" Family Support Teams are broadening their impact through a consultation service, and by developing partnerships with other professionals. They promote a wider understanding of children's mental health needs and what works to help families.

Peter Lacey Hastings, Head of Waveney First School, who runs a parenting group, said: "The groups are great! It really works well - parents gain, children gain and so does the school." Groups for children and young people have focused on supporting them with issues like the transition to high school, bullying and anger management.

"It (the group) helps me not to get upset"

"I feel confident, happier, easier to make friends" The teams have recruited experienced professionals from a range of backgrounds and it is this multi-agency mix which lies

at the core of the teams' success. Newly appointed service manager Helen Jackson said: "As I meet staff and learn more about the work of the teams, I am impressed by their commitment and enthusiasm. There is really creative use of materials such as personalised work sheets and certificates, art and craft materials, puppets and digital technology, to help children make sense of their problems and to help parents find new ways of helping their children."

In 2002 the Norfolk Family Support Teams won the Department of Health's Health and Social Care Award for Primary Care Access. For more details contact Helen Jackson, Service and Development Manager, tel 01603224338, [helen.jackson@norfolk.gov.uk](mailto:helen.jackson@norfolk.gov.uk)

## Learning Set Lessons

Bringing agencies together to create an integrated child protection service is the aim of a pilot project being established in West Norfolk by a 'Learning Set' involving Health, Social Services, Education and the Police.

The aim is to provide better services for children and families, and more support for professionals. Initially the focus will be on children most at risk, but the three-year project has the potential to expand so that all vulnerable children in the area come under its wing.

An integrated assessment service is a key aim. As it develops, the project also aims to:

**Provide advice and guidance to professionals who have concerns about a child**

**Carry out assessments**

**Act as the key database on children at risk and ensure information sharing between agencies**

**Develop an educational role to ensure that child protection remains a priority for all agencies.**

At the heart of the service will be a multi-agency core team, working together with a single telephone contact.

The service will begin work later this year, drawing upon the multi-agency work experience of Family Support Teams and the Youth Offending Team. The lesson learned in West Norfolk will help other multi-agency child protection teams to be established elsewhere in the county.