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A. INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

1. Most children and young people in England, most of the time, are healthy, do well at school and enjoy their lives. But despite investment and reform, too many still fall through the gaps between children’s services. This can have catastrophic consequences for some children, like Victoria Climbié, and lead to poor chances in life for many others.

2. The Government wants to help every child and young person achieve their potential, whatever their background or circumstances, and to support parents and families in helping their children develop. We want to maximise opportunity and minimise risk for every child.

3. The Children’s Green Paper *Every Child Matters*, published on 8 September 2003, recognised the improvements in educational and other outcomes that had already been achieved, and the positive impact that services such as Sure Start, Quality Protects and Youth Offending Teams are having. But it also recognised that not all services are available in every area. Services do not always join up as effectively as they could around the needs of children, young people and families. Too often, parents and young people have to chase the service they need.

4. *Every Child Matters* set out the Government’s proposals for improving services to achieve five outcomes that children and young people had said in consultation were important to their well-being in childhood and later life: being healthy; staying safe; enjoying and achieving; making a positive contribution to society; and achieving economic well-being.

5. The Green Paper also covered specific proposals for *Keeping Children Safe* - a response to the practice recommendations made by Lord Laming following his inquiry into the death of Victoria Climbié, and *Youth Justice – The Next Steps*, a consultation on proposals for improving the youth justice system.

6. The vision in *Every Child Matters* was widely welcomed. Extensive consultation\(^1\) captured the views of local authority managers, front line workers and children and young people. Respondents supported the focus on:

   - better outcomes for children and young people;
   - opportunities for all and narrowing the gap between disadvantaged children and their peers;
   - support for parents, carers and families;
   - earlier and more effective intervention where problems arise to ensure no child slips through the net; and

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\(^1\) Around 4,500 responses were received, of which over 3,000 were from children and young people. Voluntary organisations, out-of-school clubs and youth workers were used to help ensure that the views of younger children and those in hard to reach or 'at risk' groups were heard. Young people also gave their views on the Government’s proposals through a version of the Green Paper which was aimed at 13-16 year olds.
• services that work better together around the needs of individual children.

7. The Government’s response, Every Child Matters: Next Steps was published on 4 March 2004 at the same time as the Children Bill was introduced into Parliament. The Children Act 2004, as it now is, provides the legislative spine for the reforms:

• a Children’s Commissioner for England who will be a children’s champion independent of Government (Sections 1 – 9 of the Act) – see paragraphs 40 - 46;

• a duty on local authorities and key agencies (including, for example, health services and the police) to promote cooperation to improve outcomes for children, and enabling provisions to allow for easier pooling of resources to support this cooperation (Section 10) – see paragraphs 28 – 30;

• a new duty on health services, the police and other relevant local bodies to have regard to safeguarding children and promoting their welfare in the course of the bodies' normal functions (Section 11);

• indexes to support greater sharing of information between professionals for the purpose of providing early support to children, young people and their families, and to show whether children are receiving universal services (Section 12) - see paragraphs 53 – 64;

• local authorities to set up statutory Local Safeguarding Children Boards with representatives from partner agencies, including housing, health, police and probation services. The Boards will coordinate the functions of all partner agencies in relation to safeguarding (Sections 13 - 16);

• a single local authority children and young people’s plan (CYPP) to replace a range of current statutory planning requirements (Section 17);

• a new, clear focus for local accountability through the appointment of a single Director of Children’s Services, bringing together local authority education and children’s social services, and a Lead Member for children’s services for each local authority (Sections 18 and 19);

• integrated inspections across children’s services and any further powers that are needed for effective intervention (Sections 20 – 24 and 50) – see paragraphs 36 – 39;

• an enhanced notification scheme for private fostering arrangements and fall-back provisions to move to a formal registration scheme if necessary (Sections 44 - 47);

• a power to prescribe in regulations a national minimum allowance to cover the cost to foster carers of caring for a looked after child in England and Wales (Section 49);

• a specific new duty on local authorities to promote the educational achievement of looked after children (Section 52).
8. The legislation gives a clear focus and a new status to children’s services but for a reform programme of this degree of ambition and complexity, change will not be brought about by legislation alone. The transformation that we need can only be delivered through local leadership working within local communities on a local programme of change to deliver better local services. The Department’s *Five Year Strategy for Children and Learners* published in July 2004 explained more of how we saw services coming together around the needs of children and families through Sure Start Children’s Centres, Extended Schools and better services for young people. These proposals will be developed further in the 10-year strategy for childcare and the Youth Green Paper, both of which will be published shortly.

9. The Government has therefore been working with partners across Government and beyond on a wider programme of change, to be taken forward by 150 local change programmes within a national framework of expectations and accountability (see Section B). The policies that the Government has been developing to support this programme follow our principles of personalisation, diversity in provision, workforce reform, freedom and autonomy for the front-line, and effective partnership working. On 1 December we will publish *Every Child Matters: Change for Children* which explains for local partners what the Act means, and how it forms part of a national programme of change. Short supporting documents will explain what *Every Child Matters* means for specific settings such as schools, health, youth justice and social care.

10. The following sections of this Memorandum set out the Government’s thinking on the national framework for change and local change programmes, and give information on the specific issues identified by the Committee.

B. *Every Child Matters: Change for Children*

A national framework for local change

11. The last year has witnessed a process of dialogue on the reform programme, through the Parliamentary process and through dialogue with many national and local partners on the components of a reform programme.

12. We believe it is the role of central government to give clear and effective leadership to the reforms by:

- providing shape, coherence and consistency to the national framework for reform and the local change programmes by defining an Outcomes Framework as the context for local planning and assessment (see paragraph 14);
- developing the policies and programmes which are vital to change and where Government action can make a real difference – for example, in the development of Children’s Centres, childcare and Extended Schools, or developing a Common Core of skills and knowledge for professionals working with children and young people;
- providing support for local change and improvement, by communicating the components of the programme coherently to partners and listening to their reactions.
• helping local children’s trust arrangements to develop; sharing best practice; monitoring local performance; and intervening if local partnership arrangements are found to be failing children.

13. The five outcomes for children proposed in Every Child Matters have commanded broad assent and are now enshrined in the Children Act 2004 as the purpose of local cooperation arrangements. They put the emphasis on the child and young person, rather than on the providers of services. They provide a focus for consensus and cooperation on what needs to be achieved and form the basis for measuring progress both locally and nationally.

14. To develop a clear understanding of what the outcomes mean in practice we have developed an Outcomes Framework (see Annex A) so that:

• each of the five outcomes is broken down into specific meaningful aims, with an indication of how parents, carers and families support those aims;

• each outcome is associated with important measures of progress – the Public Service Agreements (PSAs) relevant to children and young people that have been agreed as part of the Spending Review 2004, and other key Performance Indicators.

• each outcome links to relevant services criteria and standards in the draft national inspection framework for the assessment of children’s services and which feeds into the Comprehensive Performance Assessment of local authorities.

The children’s services Inspectorates will be consulting shortly on draft inspection criteria and we will consider in the light of their conclusions whether the detailed aims in the framework need to be revised.

15. Performance indicators (PIs), relating to the five outcomes, will be one of the key sources of evidence for the Joint Area Reviews (JARs - see paragraphs 36-39). They will be collated into a dataset of the key PIs collected by inspectorates and departments, and this dataset will be made available to local authorities each year. The forthcoming consultation exercise on Children’s Services Inspection will set out the PIs which the Inspectorates are proposing (and it should be noted that these are significantly fewer than the number of PIs currently used for inspection activity). Inspectorates will measure local delivery of outcomes against this performance information data.

16. A subset of this data set (and the associated criteria) will be created for the Annual Performance Assessment (APA), which essentially covers those children’s services delivered by local authorities. The JAR dataset (and the smaller APA dataset) contains a range of indicators, including the PSA targets that we can disaggregate down to a local level. An example would be inspectorates assessing how well an authority is helping improve school attendance, including as evidence the PSA target relating to school attainment.

17. Putting together the measures derived from the PSAs which are available at local authority level and the measures which the Inspectorates use to judge progress,
we will be able to create a common dataset which will help define the system of children’s services that we want to achieve and the progress we are making towards that, while rationalising and reducing data demands on local authorities.

18. We will encourage local authorities and their partners to use the Outcomes Framework to audit the current state of children’s services and outcomes, drawing on the dataset to compare their success with that of their statistical neighbours. This audit will feed into the annual priorities conversations with national field forces, where a list of local priorities will be agreed and the opportunity to review the Children and Young People’s Plan will arise. Most priorities will cover local contributions to national PSAs but some will be more specific to the local area. This will provide the context for the local change programme described in the following section.

19. We will encourage local authorities and their partners to use the framework to audit the current state of children’s services and outcomes and to prioritise action, drawing on the common dataset to compare their success with that of their statistical neighbours. This will provide the context for the local change programme described in the following section.

Local Change Programmes - children’s trust arrangements

20. Improvements in outcomes for children and young people must be planned across a range of local partners in the context of local circumstances. That is why the Children Act 2004 puts a duty on each local authority in England to make arrangements to promote cooperation with other statutory agencies. Forthcoming draft guidance will make clear that authorities will also be expected to involve service providers such as schools and general practices, and the local voluntary and community sector. Children, young people and their families should also have a clear voice in assessing local needs, identifying local priorities and how services can best be configured to meet those needs.

21. Children’s trust arrangements will be the vehicles for whole system change across children’s services, working in the context of authorities’ broader Local Strategic Partnerships. We expect most areas to have trust arrangements by 2006 and all by 2008. Fully effective arrangements will need:

- professionals who are enabled and encouraged to work together in integrated front line services which are built around the needs of children, young people and families;

- to be supported by common processes which are designed to create and support joint working;

- to bring agencies and their resources together – for example, by pooling budgets. This will provide the financial mechanism for delivering a commissioning strategy which ensures that key priorities are identified and addressed. Section 10 of the Children Act allows the pooling of budgets and other resources, which can include staff, goods, services, accommodation.

- to be overseen by strong inter-agency governance arrangements in which shared ownership is coupled with clear accountability.
These features are explored below.

22. The most important changes we are trying to achieve are changes in the behaviour of those who work every day with children and families. Children and families should experience more integrated and responsive services than they currently do, with specialist support embedded in and accessed through universal services. So a key feature of children’s trusts is front-line staff working in effective multi-disciplinary teams, being trained jointly to tackle cultural and professional divides, and using a lead professional where many disciplines are involved in supporting a child. Better interaction between universal and specialist services will be made easier by co-location, for example, in Extended Schools or Sure Start Children’s Centres.

23. To deliver that sort of joined-up working, it is important that we help front-line staff by aligning the processes that surround them – the forms they have to fill in, the reports they have to write, and the procedures they have to follow. Some of these processes, like the Common Assessment Framework, will be centrally driven, but many will be local. One crucial area where the Government judges it appropriate to give a clear lead is the better sharing of information about vulnerable children. The Government will issue clear guidance for practitioners on the sharing of information. The Government has also taken power in the Children Act 2004 to require the establishment to national standards of databases (or ‘index systems’) to enable early identification of concerns (see paragraphs 53 - 64) and is now moving to the design stage for a network of local indexes.

24. While integrated delivery can be fostered in many ways, and at many levels, making sure the system overall is meeting the real needs of children in the right way needs a clear sense of strategic direction and planning. This means joint needs assessment, shared decisions on priorities, identification of all available resources including, where possible, pooling of resources, and joint plans to deploy them so that those best able to provide the right packages of services can do so. The new Director of Children’s Services and Lead Member in each local authority will be well-placed to lead this, developing the statutory plans for children and young people at the core of the process, and with new powers to pool budgets and resources – enabled in the Children Act 2004 to underpin the commissioning process. Joint planning is already happening in some areas, with greater or lesser degrees of formal joint commissioning and budget pooling.

25. To ensure all these developments amount to genuine whole-system change that delivers better outcomes, inter-agency governance is needed which ensures that everyone subscribes to the vision and which gives each partner the confidence to share day to day control of decisions and resources – while maintaining the necessary high level accountability for meeting their statutory duties in a new way. The legislation gives local partners the flexibility to formalise this organisationally in the way that makes most sense locally – for example, by building on the Children and Young People’s Strategic Partnerships that exist in 90% of areas.

26. The Government is committed to working with local authorities, Primary Care Trusts and other local partners to support local change programmes. This includes the appointment of ten Regional Change Advisers jointly by DfES and the Department of Health, based in Government Offices; networks and development programmes for local strategic managers; and support for local discussions and for disseminating emerging
practice. We are also working to simplify the arrangements for performance review, monitoring and assessment into a new improvement cycle for children’s services.

QUESTIONS FROM THE SELECT COMMITTEE

27. The Committee has asked a number of questions in its Press Notice. The Government sets out its response to those questions in the following paragraphs.

The practical implications of the duty to co-operate, including the effect on funding streams and location of staff and facilities

28. Section 10 of the Children Act places a statutory duty on local authorities and other key public agencies prescribed by the Act (including Strategic Health Authorities, Primary Care Trusts and the police) to co-operate to improve outcomes for children. The Government wants private and voluntary organisations to be involved at every level in local arrangements; the onus will be on the local partnership to involve private and voluntary organisations where it makes sense locally. The Government also wants local partnerships to actively listen to children, young people and their families in planning service provision and assessing how services are working in terms of face-to-face delivery (see paragraphs 40 and 50).

29. Section 10 also enables local partners to pool resources - and this need not be solely financial resources. As partners increasingly come together to assess local needs and find shared solutions to shared problems, they will be able to make use of this power in order to meet locally agreed objectives. Similarly, partners will want to consider whether services can be co-located as a way of improving delivery of the services that children, young people and their families need. The extent to which services can be co-located, and where they should be based, will need to be decided locally in the light of local aspirations and national expectations e.g. on the growth of childcare places.

30. Statutory guidance will make it clear that schools, GPs and other service delivery agents should be involved in cooperation arrangements in whatever way is appropriate locally. This involvement may be direct, for example through a local partnership body or through existing collaborative mechanisms. To support local cooperation arrangements the Government is committed to rationalising as far as possible the funding streams for children's services to local authorities. As a first step, the Secretary of State for Education and Skills announced on 20 October 2004 that four grants would, from 2006, be amalgamated into a single Children's Services Grant with the maximum discretion to target services at local need within clear national expectations.

Staff and management needs: team-building, leadership and training

31. The children’s workforce is made up of approximately 3.5m workers\(^2\), both paid and unpaid, working in the public, private and voluntary sectors. Some work exclusively with children, young people and families, others include this as part of their role. To ensure that children and young people achieve the five outcomes of *Every

\(^2\) This figure excludes those in the FE and HE workforces which together account for 0.9m bringing the total to 4.4m.
Child Matters we have to have a workforce that is skilled, well-led and supported by effective, shared systems and processes. We need people in different parts of the workforce to work well together across institutional and professional boundaries, focused around the needs of the child and young person.

32. The evidence of successful services such as Sure Start and Youth Offending Teams shows that multi-agency and multi-disciplinary working can bring significant benefits in providing improved, co-ordinated service delivery. But it also presents particular challenges in terms of the leadership of the team, the management of different terms and conditions, and the provision of appropriate professional supervision and support. The DfES is therefore working with partners to identify good practice with a view to developing guidance and toolkits to support new ways of working locally as part of the Every Child Matters: Change for Children programme. Such integrated working will take a variety of forms depending on the needs of children and families locally – from virtual teams brought together around the needs of particular children through to fully co-located multi-agency teams made up of professionals from different disciplines and organisations.

33. Reforming the children’s workforce so that it supports more effectively the five outcomes for children and young people, with a stronger focus on early identification and prevention, requires action at national and local level. The Government’s vision is of a workforce that is more integrated and coherent, while valuing individual skills and professionalisms; stable yet flexible and responsive; attractive and valued; skilled and trusted; and well led, well managed, and well supervised. A clear, supportive national framework needs to be put in place to underpin this vision. But it will only be realised if leaders and managers locally understand, embrace and drive change taking account of local needs.

Children’s Workforce Unit

34. The Government has established the Children’s Workforce Unit within DfES to provide support to enable change. Working with a range of partners and stakeholders, the Unit will:

- develop and publish (early in 2005) a Pay and Workforce Strategy which gives a clear analysis of supply and demand issues and sets out action to be taken nationally and locally to ensure that there are the skills, ways of working, and capacity in the children’s workforce to deliver change for children;

- make available to leaders and service managers practical guidance on multi-agency working which will supplement the statutory guidance on the duty to co-operate and on information-sharing;

- publish, and issue guidance, on a new Common Assessment Framework to promote better cross-sectoral working and the more effective, earlier identification of children’s additional needs;

- develop a Common Core of Skills and Knowledge for those working with children, young people and families. This will give professionals a basis for greater shared knowledge and understanding, not only in their individual roles, but also as they link with workers in other disciplines, and will ultimately provide
the basis for assessment of competence;

- building on the Common Core, create a ‘climbing frame’ of qualifications to support more coherent, flexible career pathways within and across the children’s workforce, thereby easing progression and supporting retention;

- introduce into this climbing frame a stronger and simpler set of qualifications attesting to improved skills and knowledge, to help the workforce gain additional skills and specialisms where needed;

- enhance the infrastructure for employer-led reform across the children’s workforce by establishing new Sector Skills Council arrangements (see below).

Sector Skills Council arrangements (SSC)

35. It is essential that employers play a key role in supporting the Children’s Workforce Development agenda. The emerging Children, Young People and Families Workforce Development Council, which will be part of the Social Care, Children and Young People’s SSC and the body acting as the SSC for children’s services in England, will be at the centre of these developments. We expect the new Council to be operational after April 2005. It will develop qualification and training frameworks for the workers who fall within its footprint in England, and collaborate closely via its own SSC channels with other SSCs and SSC-like bodies who have responsibility for those working in the children’s workforce in order to bring about systemic improvements. It will work with professional associations, training and educational providers to supply first-class initial and continuing training, with an eye to making learning opportunities more accessible. It will set standards for its own workers and work with other SSCs to advocate these for the wider children’s workforce.

Inspection

36. *Every Child Matters* proposed a unified approach to inspection to capture how well services work together to improve the lives of children and young people. The Government intends that inspections will capture how well services are delivered for children and young people and how well these services work together. Duties of cooperation between and across inspectorates will ensure effective coordination of all inspections of children’s services. This integration of children’s services inspectorates should both reduce the burden of inspection and improve its efficiency and effectiveness.

37. We plan to:

- develop a framework to guide inspection and assessment of all universal, targeted and specialist services in so far as they relate to children;

- establish joint area reviews that will provide a picture of what it is like to be a child within a local authority area;

- make arrangements for the effective co-ordination of inspection activity to
prevent duplication and to reduce burdens and pressures on those inspected.

38. The inspection framework will help the inspectorate:

- target inspection activity explicitly to assess how far areas are achieving the five outcomes for children and young people, unconstrained by service boundaries;
- guide inspection and assessment of all universal, targeted and specialist services in so far as they relate to children;
- make arrangements for the effective co-ordination of inspection activity to prevent duplication and to reduce burdens and pressures on those inspected;

39. These new arrangements will be introduced in September 2005. Ofsted, on behalf of other relevant inspectorates, will consult on a draft framework for inspection from early December 2004, based on the thinking generated from conferences in May 2004 at which Ofsted explored ideas for the inspection of children's services with local authorities and their partners.

Listening to children: the role of the Children’s Commissioner

40. The active participation of children and young people in the design and delivery of services underpins Every Child Matters: Change for Children and other Government's programmes. At local level, participation of children and young people in decision-making about their lives and in contributing to service design and development has taken huge steps forward and there are very many examples of good progress in involving children and young people:

- several local authorities are actively involving children and young people in the design of children’s trusts, extended schools and other developments;
- most local authorities have children’s participation officers in post and children’s rights officers who work with the most vulnerable children;
- the DfES has issued guidance on advocacy services for vulnerable children and young people wanting to make a complaint under the Children Act 1989. Revised social services complaints procedures have just been issued for consultation;
- DfES is also developing a performance indicator on children's participation in child care reviews for introduction into the 2005 Performance Assessment Framework set;
- last year DfES issued guidance to LEA’s - Working Together, Giving Children and Young People a say - to provide a platform for encouraging best practice on pupil involvement. The guidance sets out ways in which school governing bodies can appoint pupils as associate members and other ways in which children can be better involved in the life of the school.

41. To ensure that all children and young people have a voice, the Government has created the role of Children’s Commissioner for England. The Children’s Commissioner
will be a powerful champion for children and young people. Their main role will be to promote awareness of the views and best interests of children and young people. He or she will work according to the framework of the United Nations Commission on the Rights of the Child and to the *Every Child Matters: Change for Children* outcomes framework. We expect the Commissioner to be appointed by February 2005 and in post by April 2005.

42. The Children's Commissioner will be independent of Government and will:

- influence policy makers on children's issues;
- promote awareness and understanding of children's issues;
- undertake and consider research into children's issues;

43. He or she will pay particular attention to gathering and representing the views of the most vulnerable children and young people in society: for example, they will consider or research the operation of complaints procedures relating to vulnerable children.

44. The Children’s Commissioner will be able to initiate inquiries into individual cases that have a wider relevance to children and where no existing inquiry is taking place. The Secretary of State will also be able to direct the Commissioner to undertake such inquiries.

45. Children and young people will be directly involved in the recruitment of the Children's Commissioner. With the help of Children’s Express, a Children and Youth Board has been formed and, with other groups, will be involved in the selection of the Commissioner.

46. The Commissioner will consult and involve children and young people in his or her work and promote their involvement in the work of other organisations. For example, the Children’s Commissioner will represent children and young people and their issues across all areas of society from the media and private business to Government. The Commissioner will work with other organisations who have an interest in children's views, for example Ofsted and the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI).

**Working with parents**

47. An overwhelming body of evidence now exists to support the link between an individual child’s circumstances and their later life outcomes; family relationships and their experience of parenting are understood to be absolutely key in forming those outcomes. Parenting has an impact on a wide range of long-term outcomes for children and can be a risk factor or a protective factor, influencing the likelihood of offending and anti-social behaviour, extent of educational achievement, health outcomes, teenage pregnancy and drug misuse. It is therefore important that Government provides support to parents as parents.

48. The Green Paper *Every Child Matters* flagged up the Government’s aim to develop more and better universal support and services open to all families as and
when they need them. Within this universal offer of locally available information, advice and support, specialist services will be targeted to those families which need additional support. The voluntary and community sector will have a critical role in the design and delivery of services.

49. The Government recognises that some parents will be harder to engage and their difficulties more entrenched. It is often such parents who, for a variety of reasons, do not take up the support available or offered to them. Government will endeavour to reach those parents and encourage local services to find ways of engaging with those parents. However, as the well-being of children is our primary concern, compulsory action through Parenting Orders will be used as a last resort, for example when persistent anti-social behaviour or truancy is condoned by parents.

50. In *Every Child Matters: Next Steps* the Government recognised the need to shift the perception of parenting support away from an association with crisis interventions and towards a more consistent offer of parenting support throughout a child or young person’s life. Support should be universal and accessible from a range of locations and include a focus on key transition points in a child, young persons or parent’s life. Universal support in the form of information, advice and signposting to other services, should be available to all parents – both mothers and fathers. It is important that access to support can be found in places where, and ways in which, parents and carers feel comfortable, such as early years settings, schools, primary healthcare services, and through Childcare Information Services, telephone helplines and web based information. Targeted support will be provided for families and communities facing additional difficulties, and could include structured parenting education groups, couple support, home visiting, employment and training advice etc.

51. Children’s centres and extended schools will develop a coherent set of services both to support parents and to involve them properly at all stages of a child’s learning and development. Over time we would like to build on the success of the integrated early years settings, to see nursery and primary schools as venues for a variety of family support activities, and every secondary school become an extended school, offering a range of family learning opportunities, including parenting classes if they are wanted.

52. The role of parents in their children’s learning and development has been increasingly recognised across Government, particularly since publication of *Every Child Matters*. The Child Poverty Review recommends increased support for parents as an important part of the approach to eradicating child poverty. The Government has committed itself through the 2004 Spending Review to expanding the provision of support for parents with targeted help at key transition points in children’s lives, including moving into primary and secondary education.

The creation, management and sharing of records, including electronic databases

53. The need for professionals to communicate and share information effectively was highlighted by the Laming Report following the death of Victoria Climbié. The Government values individual professional expertise but is seeking to break down the traditional professional silos which inhibit practitioners from talking to each other and working together. In many cases it is only when information from a range of sources is
put together that a child can be seen to be in need or at risk. However, it can be time consuming and difficult for practitioners even to find out who else is dealing with a particular child.

54. Therefore, Section 12 of the Children Act 2004 provides a tool – indexes (databases) - to make sure that all children get all the services they need at the earliest stage possible. The detailed operation of the indexes will be set out in regulations - which will be subject to the affirmative resolution procedure - guidance and directions. It is important that the indexes cover every child and not just those judged to be at risk because:

- it is not possible to predict accurately in advance which children will have need of additional targeted and specialist services, or which children will never have them;
- all children have a right to the universal services of education and primary health care.

55. The Government recognises that there are concerns about collecting information on individuals and then sharing that information between professionals. The type and amount of information on the indexes will be stringently restricted with no case information recorded. Where children are not receiving targeted or specialist services, the information held will be limited to basic identifying information and details of their educational setting and primary health care practice. This is proportionate to the Government's aim of ensuring that these universal services are not being missed.

56. Section 12 of the Children Act provides the flexibility for indexes to be established at national, local or regional level – or a combination thereof. As part of the ongoing work we have commissioned on technical feasibility, we are exploring a number of options. Although we are not yet in a position to make final decisions, our current preference is for local indexes to be established, or a combination of local, regional or sub-regional indexes where that might be appropriate, to assist authorities in carrying out their duties under Sections 10 and 11 of the Act. This option would make interoperability between indexes an essential requirement so that a child’s record would be able to follow the child when they move home to another area or receive services in a different authority to that in which they live. As part of this ability to keep track of movements, we envisage there might be a need for local indexes to be supplemented by a national system, whether established by the Secretary of State or another body, that would provide information on which of the local indexes every child’s record was held. The national system could also help by, for example, holding a list of children who are known to have moved out of an area but whose destination has yet to be established. And a national system could provide anonymised information for statistical, monitoring and planning purposes.

57. We envisage that the indexes would contain the following information:

- basic information on all children (name, address, gender, date of birth, a unique identifying number, educational setting, GP practice, person with parental responsibility for or day to day care for the child). There will be no other information about family members or their circumstances on the database;
• details of any targeted or specialist services a child is receiving and the contact details of the person providing them;

• the fact that any practitioner has cause for concern about a child. The nature of the practitioner’s concern would not be described on the system.

58. We are aware of the concerns expressed in both Houses of Parliament and by key stakeholders about how practitioners working in services that may be regarded as sensitive – especially those concerned with sexual health - should record their involvement so as to maintain the confidence of young people in accessing those services. We are also responding to worries about how and when practitioners should record on the index that they have a concern. Debate in both Houses on Section 12 of the Bill and comment from key stakeholders emphasised that there is the fear that the index will be flooded with concerns and that the most vulnerable children will be overlooked; that recording a concern could become a substitute for taking action; that subjective and potentially inaccurate judgements would be widely accessible to others; and that there is no definitive threshold for the recording of a concern.

59. To ensure that we get these crucial operational aspects right, we launched a public consultation on 27 October to help ensure that the indexes provide the most helpful support to information sharing. Children, young people, parents, practitioners, representative bodies, service delivery organisations and voluntary and community bodies are being consulted. Responses to the consultation will inform the draft regulations before they are put to Parliament.

60. We shall be backing up our information sharing measures with:

• statutory guidance on Section 10 and 11 of the Children Act 2004 and statutory guidance and directions on the regulations made under Section 12;

• new guidance on information sharing for practitioners covering education, health, social care, and youth offending settings.

61. As part of our proposals to help practitioners provide a better service to children, we are also developing a Common Assessment Framework (CAF) to help reduce the duplication of information gathering between agencies.

62. The CAF will be a basic assessment tool available to all professionals working with children. It aims to reduce the time spent in repeated basic assessments of the same child by different practitioners. The details of the assessment will not be recorded on the index, but a professional in contact with a child will be able to see from the index which other professionals are already working with the child, and request the assessment that has already been done under the CAF.

63. The CAF will be a starting point and provide core information about the child, young person and family. It will assess needs in a broad, holistic way. Some children will require specialist services, e.g. Special Educational Needs, and these services will have their own assessment processes. The information from the CAF can be used as part of these but it will not replace specialist assessments.

64. The information indexes are just one part of what needs to happen to ensure that
children are safeguarded and protected in the best way possible. The appropriate storage and sharing of information is an important element of services working together in the interests of the child. In this, as in other areas of work, it is vital that trust and confidence is developed between practitioners working in different agencies.
THE OUTCOMES FRAMEWORK

The Outcomes Framework breaks down each of the five outcomes into five further specific aims, and associates with each aim the contribution that parents, carers and families can make.

- **Be healthy.** This means children and young people are:
  - physically healthy;
  - mentally and emotionally healthy;
  - sexually healthy;
  - living healthy lifestyles; and
  - choosing not to take illegal drugs.

Parents, carers and families promote healthy lifestyles.

- **Stay safe:** this means that children and young people are safe from:
  - accidental injury and death;
  - maltreatment, neglect, violence and sexual exploitation;
  - bullying and discrimination;
  - crime and antisocial behaviour in and out of school; and
  - have security, stability and are cared for.

Parents, carers and families provide safe homes and stability.

- **Enjoy and achieve:** this means that:
  - young children are ready for school;
  - school-age children attend and enjoy school;
  - children achieve stretching national educational standards at primary school;
  - children and young people achieve personal and social development and enjoy recreation; and
  - children and young people achieve stretching national educational standards at secondary school.

Parents, carers and families support learning.
• **Make a positive contribution:** this means that children and young people:
  - engage in decision making and support the community and environment;
  - engage in law-abiding and positive behaviour in and out of school;
  - develop positive relationships and choose not to bully and discriminate;
  - develop self-confidence and successfully deal with significant life changes and challenges; and
  - develop enterprising behaviour.

Parents, carers and families promote positive behaviour.

• **Achieve economic well-being:** this means that
  - young people engage in further education, employment or training on leaving school;
  - young people are ready for employment;
  - children and young people live in decent homes and sustainable communities;
  - children and young people have access to transport and material goods; and
  - children and young people live in households free from low income.

Parents, carers and families are supported to be economically active.