

A FPI overview of the Department for Children, Schools and Families' Children's Plan: Building brighter futures

December 2007

The Family and Parenting Institute (FPI) is the UK's leading centre of expertise in families and the upbringing of children. We are an advocate for improved family and parenting services and we press for policy change to help address the challenges that families are facing.

This paper introduces the Department for Children, Schools and Families' Children's Plan, gives a response from FPI to key points, and provides a summary of important proposals for those interested in the field of family, child and parenting support.

Introduction

The Children's Plan sets the Government's ambitions for improving children and young people's lives over the next decade and how it intends to achieve them. The Children's Plan acknowledges that it is parents that bring up children, not governments, and so intends this plan to be the beginning of a new kind of relationship in which the Government commits to working in close partnership with families at every level, from making policy to delivering services. It is based on results from consultations with children, young people and families across England.

The Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) has six strategic objectives to improve children and young people's lives:

- secure the health and wellbeing of children and young people;
- safeguard the young and vulnerable;
- achieve world-class standards;
- close the gap in educational achievement for children from disadvantaged backgrounds;
- ensure young people are participating and achieving their potential to 18 and beyond;
- keep children and young people on the path to success.

In addition, five principles underpin the Children's Plan:

- Government does not bring up children – parents do – so government needs to do more to back parents and families;
- all children have the potential to succeed and should go as far as their talents can take them;
- children and young people need to enjoy their childhood as well as grow up prepared for adult life;
- services need to be shaped by and responsive to children, young people and families, not designed around professional boundaries;
- it is always better to prevent failure than tackle a crisis later.

The Government intends to report back in a year on progress made on the actions outlined in this plan.

The Family and Parenting Institute's response to the Children's Plan

The Family and Parenting Institute warmly welcomes the DCSF's Children's Plan. This document represents an ambitious attempt to draw all current and future provision and initiatives for children, young people and their families together into a coherent narrative of family policy for the 21st century. The sheer size of the Children's Plan reflects the Government's ongoing commitment to improving the lives of all children, young people and their families over its duration in office.

The Family and Parenting Institute is particularly pleased to have contributed to a wide range of policies outlined in the Plan. Our chief executive was a member of the Children's Plan 8 - 13 Expert Group; the recommendations in the Plan on parental involvement build on Parental Voice, a project FPI undertook with the National Consumer Council for DCSF; and FPI has pioneered work around information sessions for parents in schools, and is leading the national roll-out of training for the Starting Schools project in partnership with 4Children.

We have further helped set the agenda on parenting with our delivery of the Parenting Fund and leading the Early Learning Partnership consortium.

And as a partner in the new National Academy for Parenting Practitioners (together with King's College London and Parenting UK), the Family and Parenting Institute brings its expertise in policy, research and knowledge transfer to the development of a skilled parenting workforce that will be essential in supporting the implementation of the Children's Plan.

We are delighted that the Government has taken on board our concerns about the commercialisation of childhood, our advocacy of prevention and early intervention and our research on improving family support in children's centres and extended schools. We also very much welcome the emphasis that the Plan places on the importance of joining up health and education alongside adult and children's services, both areas which we have long highlighted as needing improvement.

As to the detail of the Plan, we are heartened to see that children are seen within the context of their families and are to be placed at the centre of work with families. We are especially gratified to see fathers and grandparents explicitly mentioned.

The key worker approach for families in greatest need is a critical development in family policy and will go a long way towards ensuring that children's and adult services work closely together. We are also supportive of plans to pilot an expansion of intensive phone-based support services.

FPI is pleased to see new funding being made available for specialist parenting advisers in every local authority to provide additional help for families who are finding it hard to deal with their child's behaviour. Likewise, we are gratified to note that the Government intends to invest in the development of outreach services in Sure Start Children's Centres. Our own research has shown that this has a beneficial effect for families who have traditionally been hard to reach¹.

Likewise the national Parents' Panel, which we have proposed, will be an essential element in ensuring that the Government is best placed to plan, design and implement services for families that adequately reflect parental opinion. The development of a Parents' Charter will be an important tool in alerting parents to services that should be available from their local authority and to help them know what support they are entitled to at each stage of their child's life.

FPI is also pleased to note that the recent focus on young people is to continue, with action planned for reducing alcohol consumption, risk taking behaviour and encouraging participation in positive activities right up until early adulthood. We are delighted to see that further plans for Information, Advice and Guidance services for young people include work with parenting advice services to support parents in advising their children.

We also warmly welcome plans for a restorative approach to youth offenders and the forthcoming green paper on outcomes for young offenders when they leave custody. We are particularly interested in the proposed Youth Crime Action Plan's scrutiny of how younger children are dealt with within the youth justice system and hope that this signals the development of a supportive approach at the whole family level.

There are many aspects of this Children's Plan to recommend it, not least the breadth of its reach, confronting many concerns that parents and families face today – from worries over the effects of advertising on children and young people, the role of the internet, to schools and their child's educational opportunities and then on to the transition to adulthood.

The vision is compelling; we now want to see the Government turn its attention to the implementation of its vision. There are three important areas to which we would like to draw Government attention. First, we think there needs to be further thinking on reviving the structure for responding to children in need. Secondly, now that the Government is ramping up outreach services, it needs to ensure that there are enough specialist intensive services to respond to the inevitable increase in demand. Finally it is important that Government protects innovative local and national services.

The Children's Plan requires the coordinated effort of a number of Government departments and across disciplines – the Department for Children, Schools and Families, the Department of Health, the Home Office, Ministry for Justice, schools, local authorities, social services and health services to mention just a few.

¹ Apps J, Reynolds J, Ashby V and Husain F (2006) *Family Support in Children's Centres Planning, Commissioning and Delivery* (London: Family and Parenting Institute)

Smooth integration of working practices and coherent lines of responsibility will also be crucial in the implementation of this plan and ongoing evaluation of its efforts. In order to achieve the aims of this plan, it is essential that a continuous cross-department, cross-services policy analysis monitors achievements at regular intervals and ensures that each advancement remains true to the central ethos of the Children's Plan and its vision for a family policy for the 21st century.

The subsequent parts of this document are taken directly from the Children's Plan and are an attempt to extrapolate new developments from existing policies and to draw together important changes for those interested in the field of family, child and parenting support.

Chapter 1 - Happy and Healthy: Secure the wellbeing and health of children and young people

A family policy for the 21st century

The Government's vision is for all families to be confident in their ability to achieve the best for their child. It recognizes that parents and carers want information, advice and support to be easily accessible and available when they need it. To this end, family policy will support families with whatever level of information and support they need, when they need it, including lone parent families, step families, and families where children are being brought up by their grandparents.

Employment patterns are changing, and more women than ever and an increasing number of men are juggling family life with paid work. More parents are providing support and care to elderly relatives as well as bringing up children. The Government wants to encourage and support fathers so that they can play a bigger role in their children's lives, both at home and in school.

The Government is intending to:

- allocate £34 million over the next three years to provide two expert parenting advisers in every local authority;
- expand school-based Parent Support Advisers;
- develop for parents a personal progress record on their child's development from the early years to primary school, building on the idea behind the 'red book' given to parents of babies by midwives or health visitors to record details of developmental checks and vaccinations etc;
- put parents' views at the heart of government by creating a new Parents Panel to advise Government on policies affecting parents.

For families that need more help, the Government will:

- ensure all families benefit from Sure Start Children's Centres by improving outreach services;
- strengthen intensive support to the neediest families by piloting a key worker approach, bringing services together around need;
- help families in which children are caring for others;

- make £90 million capital investment to improve facilities for disabled children to take short breaks;
- extend the Family Fund which supports the families of disabled children by extending support to age 18.

To improve children's health the Government plans to:

- publish a Child Health Strategy in spring 2008, produced jointly between Department for Children, Schools and Families and the Department of Health;
- review Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services to see how universal, mainstream and specialist support services can be improved for the growing number of children and young people with mental health needs.

The Government has reiterated its goal to half child poverty by 2010 and eradicate it by 2020. A joint Department for Children, Schools and Families and Department for Work and Pensions Child Poverty Unit will coordinate work across Government to break the cycle of poverty from generation to generation. In particular, in relation to poor housing, the Government will:

- tackle overcrowding and intends to publish an action plan in 2008;
- prioritise children's needs in housing decisions, especially the need to stay close to services like schools.

Informing and involving parents

Local authorities, in particular through their Children's Information Services, play a vital part in informing parents of the support available in their area. A national telephone helpline service, Parent Know-How is being developed, alongside a search engine to link available directories of services for parents.

A Parents' Charter is being developed, which will describe the minimum level of support all parents can expect to receive from their local authority. All local children's services, will offer their own Parents' Charter, which will set out what parents are entitled to at each stage of their children's lives.

The Government is considering extending the principle behind the 'red book' given to every parent to track their child's health development through the first years of its life by exploring how to develop a personal parent-held record that will run from birth to age 11, and potentially beyond. It is also examining how schools can use online information to let parents know how their children are developing, coupled with advice on how they can support them further.

A new national Parents' Panel is planned - designed to reach into the heart of Government, with links into a full cross-section of parental opinion, so these perspectives are better reflected in government policy making. The confidence and satisfaction of parents in the services they use will be evaluated. There will be forums in all local areas for parents of disabled children so that they can participate in shaping local services.

Reaching the most vulnerable families

To provide support for families who are finding it hard to deal with their child's behaviour, £34 million is to be allocated over the next three years to provide two expert parenting advisers in every local authority. These experts will build on the current network of Respect parenting experts, and will work through extended schools and across the local authority.

The Government also intends to invest in the development of outreach services in Sure Start Children's Centres to ensure all families benefit by establishing core principles and standards for an effective and comprehensive outreach service. To ensure it meets the diverse needs of different families and communities, this will be supported by appropriate training materials and courses and will provide additional funding for practitioners without other sources of funding, potentially enabling some 5,000 practitioners to take up new training opportunities.

There are plans to pilot an expansion of intensive phone-based support services – with the aim of reaching up to 10,000 parents over three years.

For the families in greatest need of support, it is essential that children's and adult services work closely together. Intensive support to the neediest families will be strengthened by piloting a key worker approach. Taking forward proposals in the Government's Families At Risk Review, Think Family, and with the additional £13 million to support families with multiple problems announced early in 2007, this support will be delivered through 12–15 new Family Pathfinders, building on the existing Family Intervention Project model. A contract between the family, key worker and agencies will make the commitment of all parties clear.

Supporting stability and coping with breakdown

An effective family policy must start with supporting strong couple relationships and stable, positive relationships within families. Working across Government and with organisations such as Cafcass, the Government is to launch work on how better to support parents (including non-resident parents) and their children during and after family breakdown. This work will endeavor to highlight opportunities for universal services to spot warning signs of relationship breakdown early and to signpost support to parents and children at critical moments. It will also look to find better ways to enable children to maintain regular contact with both parents if they part.

Children in care and on the edge of care

Care Matters sets out how the Government will improve the quality of 'corporate parenting' for those who are in care by strengthening the voice of the child and the role of the local authority, with a key role for both the Lead Member and the Director of Children's Services. In 2008 the Government will publish further detail on the implementation of Care Matters.

Young carers

Once the review of the Department of Health's Carers Strategy has concluded plans to support young carers will be set out. However, to secure early progress, there are proposals to build on existing plans for Family Pathfinders, extending them to model more effective, preventative support around families affected by illness, disability or substance misuse, who rely on the care of a child.

Disabled children

In addition to plans already laid out in Aiming High for Disabled Children: Better Support for Families, £90 million will be invested over the next three years in short break provision. This funding for public, private and voluntary sector providers will help improve equipment, transport and facilities and allow more inclusive breaks, where severely disabled young people can take part in activities with their non-disabled peers.

In 2008–2009 the Government will conduct the first annual survey of parents with disabled children to support the disability indicator. However, families with severely disabled young people aged 16 and 17 also need additional financial support. With additional investment over the next three years, the age threshold in relation to the Family Fund will be increased to 18. This will provide up to 16,200 grants to enable disabled young people to make the transition to adulthood.

The children's social care workforce

Building on Options for Excellence and Care Matters the Government intends to address turnover, quality of supervision and burnout of new children's social workers and to pilot a newly qualified status from 2008–2009 offering a year of guaranteed induction support as well as introducing quality standards and assessment. Entry routes into children's social work are to be expanded by developing and piloting a fast-track work-based route into children's social work aimed at mature graduates.

The forthcoming Children's Workforce Action Plan in 2008 will establish a framework for professional development to set out the standards and competences expected at different career stages, provide a coherent career pathway, and provide incentives for good social workers to remain on the front line.

Play

There is to be a new national strategy on play in 2008. This strategy will support individuals in communities to take a professional role by providing funding to enable 4,000 play workers to achieve recognised play qualifications, and within that to enable a core of professionally qualified new graduate leaders to emerge.

To create more safe places to play, £225 million will be invested over the next three years. This will offer every local authority capital funding that would allow up to 3,500 playgrounds to be rebuilt or renewed and made accessible to children with disabilities. To address the particular problems encountered by children aged eight to 13 in finding places to play there will be up to 30 new pilots of supervised play parks

aimed at eight to 13 year-olds in disadvantaged areas. These 30 play pathfinders which will test innovative approaches to promoting and supporting play spaces.

Improving children's health

The Department of Health (DH) and DCSF are due to publish a Children and Young People's Health Strategy in spring 2008. It will build on the National Service Framework for Children, Young People and Maternity services and be taken forward in the context of the NHS Next Steps Review, Our NHS, Our Future, which reports in 2008.

The 2008–2009 NHS Operating Framework will make clear the priority the Government attaches to children and young people's health.

Pregnancy, infancy and the first years of life

The DH, with the DCSF and CLG, will be putting in place an action plan to reduce and tackle inequalities in infant mortality. An updated Child Health Promotion Programme will improve access to ante-natal services and more tailored and accessible support for parents.

The current review of the Child Health Promotion Programme will consider how the NHS can best lead the delivery of a high-quality, evidence-based, visible and popular health promotion programme that is universal but tailored to the needs of children and families, fathers and mothers, at individual, community and population levels. The most at risk children and families need an intensive, preventative programme that begins early enough to make a difference. The revised programme will include evidence-based programmes for families with greater risks, including the Nurse Family Partnership Programme, which is beginning to show early evidence of improved outcomes for families.

The role of schools in health

Schools play a vital role in promoting physical and mental health, and emotional wellbeing, underpinned now by a duty to promote the wellbeing of pupils in the Education and Inspections Act 2006, guidance on which will be issued early in 2008.

Child obesity

The Government's goal is to reduce the proportion of overweight and obese children in the population to 2000 levels by 2020. A national strategy and action plan to be published in early 2008 will set out plans for tackling obesity in children and adults. To complement national action, the NHS National Operating Framework for 2008–09 has established tackling obesity as one of the national requirements for Primary Care Trusts (PCTs).

Emotional health and mental wellbeing

Because social and emotional skills are of such importance to unlocking children's potential, a national measure of children and young people's social and emotional skills at key transition points in their education is to be developed. In addition, one of the Government's 2020 goals is to enhance children and young people's wellbeing, particularly at key transition points.

The Government is to commission an externally-led review of CAMHS with a remit that includes identifying how mainstream and universal services could play a more effective role in promoting the emotional wellbeing and mental health of children, young people and their families – including looking at the training of staff. It will also advise on key gaps in the delivery strategy to support the CAMHS elements of the Child Health and Wellbeing PSA.

Child poverty

The Government is committed to halving child poverty by 2010 and eradicating it by 2020. The policies set out across the Children's Plan are intended to strengthen the approach to both tackling child poverty in the short term and helping to eradicate it over the next decade, through supporting families, communities and children of all ages.

Ending child poverty requires a sustained national, local and regional effort across all agencies, service providers and professionals, but also businesses and communities. Regional and local economic and regeneration strategies need to address the needs of the most disadvantaged families. The new Child Poverty Unit which is a joint unit of the Department for Children, Schools and Families and the Department for Work and Pensions will play a lead co-ordinating role.

Chapter 2: Safe and sound

Bringing up children is the responsibility of families and carers. Government has a role to play in helping parents and carers to strike the right balance between protecting their children and managing risk and allowing them to learn and explore new situations safely.

The Government will support families in striking the right balance between keeping children safe and allowing them the freedom they need. It will:

- publish Dr Tanya Byron's review on the potential risks to children from exposure to harmful or inappropriate content on the internet and in video games;
- commission an independent assessment of the impact of the commercial world on children's wellbeing;
- fund a new home safety equipment scheme to prevent the accidents which happen to young children in the home;
- encourage local authorities to create 20mph zones where appropriate because they can reduce child pedestrian deaths by 70 per cent;
- strengthen the complaints procedure for parents whose children experience bullying;
- publish the Staying Safe Action Plan in early 2008.

The Staying Safe Action Plan will respond to the Staying Safe consultation and will set out in more detail an extensive programme of action to improve all children's and young people's safety. This will include areas such as: the safeguarding of disabled children; the sexual exploitation of children; the safety of young people in the youth justice system; and safety on the streets.

Risks from potentially harmful media content

In September 2007 Dr Tanya Byron undertook to examine the risks to children and young people from exposure to potentially harmful or inappropriate material on the internet and in video games using her expertise in child development and working with parents, carers and families. Dr Byron will report back to the Government in March 2008 on the evidence about the benefits and potential risks, what is already happening to address them and what more can be done, to empower parents and protect children.

Commercial activity

The Government will commission an independent assessment of the overall impact of the commercial world on children's wellbeing. The assessors will look into the changing nature and extent of children's commercial engagement, the impact on their wellbeing and the views of parents and children. In particular, the assessment will investigate particular areas where exposure to commercialism might be causing harm to children.

Tackling bullying

Guidance to help schools tackle the bullying of children with special educational needs (SEN) and disabilities will be published in spring 2008.

The Government will also look to strengthen the way that bullying complaints are dealt with in the light of the Children's Commissioner's report, and will consider how to address bullying outside schools in the Staying Safe Action Plan.

Preventing unsuitable people from working with children

A new Independent Safeguarding Authority will be established in early 2008, with which all those seeking to work with children or vulnerable adults, in either a paid or unpaid capacity, will need to register.

Chapter 3: Excellence and equity

Partnership with parents is a unifying theme of the Children's Plan. Early years settings, primary schools and the best secondary schools have done much to work with parents and involve them in their child's education. However, the Government now wants to develop further its vision for parents.

Parents as partners in learning

Partnership with parents is a unifying theme of this Children's Plan. While much progress has been made in Sure Start Children's Centres and primary schools, more needs to be done to reach out to and involve all parents particularly in secondary schools. The Government wants to see parents contacted by a staff member at a secondary school before the child starts at the school.

From the moment they arrive in secondary school every child will have a personal tutor who knows them well in the round and as a main contact for parent. The tutor will coordinate support for the child involving the parent throughout their time in the school. The child's personal tutor will arrange additional support where that is needed to overcome barriers to learning.

Every parent will have regular, up to date information on their child's attendance, behaviour and progress in learning. Parents complaints will be managed in straightforward and open way and as many issues as possible will be resolved quickly. Parents, particularly those who may not be so readily engaged, will understand the route to follow when they have a complaint.

Governing bodies must listen and respond to the views of all parents, and this should include ensuring that fathers and working parents can participate fully. Parent Councils will ensure that parents' voices are heard within the school. Extended schools will consult parents and the community about the opportunities, activities and services they provide, both as they start up and regularly thereafter. Through Parent Support Advisers and others, schools will ensure that parents who find it more difficult are also involved and will reach out to parents, including through community settings.

Family learning programmes enable parents and carers to develop their skills and learn with their children. This includes the family literacy, language and numeracy programme which engages approximately 70,000 parents and carers per year and targets the most disadvantaged families. The Government will allocate £30 million over the next three years to provide more family learning.

The best start in the early years

New tools and guidance to support assessment throughout the Early Years Foundation Stage are to be developed. These are intended to help to strengthen assessment within and communication between settings about individual children, for example through the use of the Common Assessment Framework.

The Foundation Stage - Access, affordability and availability

At present, every three and four year old is entitled to at least 12.5 hours free early education each week, for 38 weeks a year. The Government has already committed to extending the free entitlement over the next three years to 2010–2011 so that, by 2010, all children are entitled to 15 hours free early education per week. Following successful pilots, over the next three years £100 million will be invested to extend the offer of up to 15 hours of free early years education and childcare places to 20,000 two year olds in the most disadvantaged communities.

Reaching out to disadvantaged groups

Sure Start Local Programmes, and now Sure Start Children's Centres, include outreach and home visiting services to provide parents and carers at greatest risk of social exclusion with a gateway to the services their families need. The Children's Plan states a commitment to additional funding to support outreach activities with the most disadvantaged families, to boost the resources in Sure Start Children's Centres from next year, and enable local authorities to fund two outreach posts in those Sure Start Children's Centres serving the most disadvantaged communities. The quality of outreach work through training and development is also to be improved.

In addition, following the passage of the Children and Young Persons Bill, there is an expectation in care planning arrangements for children under five that the social worker will work with the carer and local authority to arrange high quality early years education will be introduced.

Smoothing transitions into school

To help a smooth transition from a pre-school setting into school, Key Stage 1 teachers and early years practitioners should look together at Early Years Foundation Stage Profile outcomes in order to plan effectively for the next phase of each child's learning. £15 million will be invested over three years to promote buddying and other joint work between schools and early years settings. Extended services in schools should help children and their parents cope with transitions, through family learning and through information sessions for parents at the beginning of primary and secondary phases.

Single level tests

Making Good Progress pilots are currently evaluating the use of single level tests. They are aimed at pupils from age seven to age 14. The pilot schools have two opportunities a year to enter pupils, as soon as teachers believe they are ready to move on to the next level. It is the Government's intention to implement new single level tests in reading, writing and mathematics on a national basis at the earliest opportunity, subject to positive evidence from the pilot and to endorsement of this approach from the Regulator. The new tests would replace the current National Curriculum tests for 11- and 14-year-olds.

Personal support for every pupil

The Children's Plan sets out a commitment to ensure that services consider the needs of children across all aspects of their lives and tailor provision to those needs. To support this vision, the Government wants every secondary school pupil to have access to a single member of staff to play this role. The personal tutor will be familiar with each pupil's progress across all of their subject areas. The personal tutor will also have a key role in communicating with parents to report on their child's progress and discuss the support they need at home and at school. A range of tested delivery models that schools can adopt are to be piloted throughout 2008 and 2009, so that all schools can have personal tutors in place in 2010.

Primary curriculum

There is to be a root and branch review of the primary curriculum to ensure continuity with the other phases. It will begin in spring 2008 and report back to the Secretary of State by March 2009 so that agreed changes to the curriculum can be implemented in September 2011. Sir Jim Rose, former Deputy Chief Inspector of Schools, member of the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority's Board, and author of the 2006 report into the teaching of early reading, has been appointed to lead the independent Review of the Primary Curriculum. The Review of the Primary Curriculum should consider how to develop a more integrated and simpler framework of the personal development skills which all pupils should expect to develop through their schooling.

Children with special educational needs and disabled children

Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools will review progress on special educational needs in 2009, in the light of the impact of greater personalised learning. This review will include looking at how well the needs of disabled children are being met.

Children in care

The Children's Plan notes that outcomes for this vulnerable group of children and young people are unacceptable and, despite improvements, insufficient progress has been made. The Children and Young Persons Bill, currently before the House of Lords, provides the legislative framework for change for this group of children and young people. In early 2008 further details on the implementation of Care Matters will be published, setting out how the momentum of the change for children in care will be built on.

Chapter 4: Leadership and collaboration

The Children's Plan states that the single most important factor in delivering the aspirations for children is a world class workforce able to provide highly personalised support, so the Government will continue to drive up quality and capacity of those working in the children's workforce.

Recruitment and retention in the early years workforce

The graduate leader fund is to be boosted so that every full day care setting will be led by a graduate by 2015, with two graduates per setting in disadvantaged areas.

Recruitment and retention of excellent school teachers

From 2008, all new recruits will spend a minimum time training within the one year Graduate Teacher Programme.

Supply cover will be funded so that early years workers can take part in continuing professional development.

By working with the social partnership to introduce a new qualification, teaching is to become a Masters level profession, building on recently agreed performance management measures. A redesigned qualification for headship, the revised National Professional Qualification for Headship will start in 2008, to recognise new responsibilities under extended school provision. The Future Leaders programme which places people with proven leadership credentials into urban schools will be extended so that, by September 2011, there will be over 500 Future Leaders in schools across the country's major city regions.

Behaviour and discipline

Sir Alan Steer is to review the progress made in the last two years in taking forward the agenda set out in his Practitioner Group's 2005 report for improving school behaviour and discipline. Sir Alan will consider any new issues which need to be addressed as well as give a health check on the Government's implementation of the 2005 recommendations.

Local authorities and schools are to be encouraged to work with parents to ensure good standards of behaviour, using voluntary parenting contracts for those who need help and support, and using parenting orders for those who are unwilling to engage with improving their child's behaviour.

Excluded pupils

Alongside the work already being done with local authorities and schools to reduce the numbers of exclusions of black boys, additional work with local authorities which have a relatively good record in the area of reducing exclusions of children with SEN will be carried out, to identify any effective practice which can be shared more widely.

New legislation is to be introduced to require local authorities to replace failing Pupil Referral Units with a specified alternative. New forms of alternative provision are to be piloted which could include using small schools – studio schools – with close links to business and providing a high quality vocational education.

Sustainable environments

The Children's Plan sets an ambition for all new school buildings to be zero carbon by 2016.

Chapter 5: Staying on

By 2015, the Government wants all young people to stay on in education or training to 18 and beyond. To reinforce this it will legislate in this Parliamentary session to raise the participation age to 17 from 2013 and 18 from 2015. £31.5 million is to be allocated over the next three years on a new programme to re-engage 16-year-olds who are not currently engaged in learning, building on the extra measures already announced on young people not in education, employment or training (NEETs), including better tracking and financial incentives to remain in learning.

Information, advice and guidance

From April 2008, local authorities will be responsible for commissioning and managing Information, Advice and Guidance services in their areas. Parent support and advice services in local authorities also have an important role to play and the Government will work with them to ensure that they offer support to parents wanting to help and advise their children.

For care leavers, who are particularly at risk both of not participating in education, employment or training, and of engaging in risky behaviours, the Children and Young Persons Bill will extend the entitlement to a personal adviser up to the age of 25 for all care leavers who are either in education or wish to return to education.

Plans for improving links between services for young people and for adults will be set out in early 2008.

Reforming curriculum and qualifications

In 2013 the evidence and experience following the introduction of all Diplomas will be reviewed to examine how the overall offer meets the needs of young people in progressing to further study and employment. This will be the first full review, following the implementation of the new entitlement, of the range of qualifications available to 14–19 year olds, in the light of experience of uptake and the views of young people, parents, schools, colleges, employers and universities.

A review of apprenticeships, due to report in January 2008, is currently considering the Leitch Review and the planned expansion of the Apprenticeships entitlement.

Collaborative delivery

In early 2008 the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS) and DCSF will consult jointly on our proposals for how the system will work under these new arrangements, both before and after age 19. The joint consultation will be set alongside the review of schools funding which is planned for spring 2008.

14–19 workforce reform

The government is currently consulting on a workforce strategy for further education looking at how to make the workforce more professional, and ensure that the right people are recruited and retained whilst simultaneously developing the existing workforce. Equality and diversity of the workforce is at the heart of the workforce strategy, which will be published in early 2008.

Chapter 6: On the right track

A Youth Task Force has already been set up to ensure improved delivery of young people's services and to ensure that those services are designed around their needs. £60 million has been invested in improving youth facilities in advance of funding released from unclaimed assets. The Children's Plan also mentions investment of £160 million over the next three years to improve the quality and range of places for young people to go and things for them to do.

In addition, £20 million is to be spent over the next three years to use Acceptable Behaviour Contracts as a measure to prevent young people engaging in antisocial behaviour and to ensure young people receive support to improve their behaviour at the same time as an Antisocial Behaviour Order.

Reducing alcohol consumption and drug use

A youth alcohol action plan is to be published in spring 2008, to improve alcohol education in schools and consider the case for further action on alcohol advertising and drinking in public places. Parental alcohol misuse is to be tackled through Family Pathfinders, (commencing in April 2008) which bring together children's and adult services to ensure that families with complex needs receive a whole family package of support; Family Intervention Projects; and parenting practitioners.

The effectiveness of these initiatives for reaching and supporting alcohol misusing parents will be reviewed and, through working with key stakeholders such as the National Academy for Parenting Practitioners, the Government will strengthen its approach if necessary.

The current cross-departmental ten year national drug strategy comes to an end in March 2008 and a new strategy is to be published in 2008.

Improving young people's sexual health

Best practice in effective sex and relationships education and how it is delivered in schools is to be reviewed.

Crime prevention

In advance of the Youth Crime Action Plan, the Children's Plan allocates, with the Home Office, £66 million over the next three years to target those most at risk of offending. It also plans to pilot a restorative approach to youth offenders; and publishing a Green Paper in 2008 looking at what happens when young offenders leave custody and consult on how to improve the education they receive in custody. The Government aims to reduce significantly by 2020 the number of young people receiving a conviction, reprimand or final warning for a recordable offence for the first time, with a goal to be set in the Youth Crime Action Plan in spring 2008.

The Youth Crime Action Plan will look at the overall way that children are treated in the criminal justice system, with a focus on the treatment of ten to 15 year olds to ensure this younger age group's particular needs are met. This will include examining the approaches other countries use to reduce offending amongst young people.

The Youth Taskforce is to run a pilot in 47 areas where local authorities will be encouraged to accompany all applications for Anti-Social Behaviour orders with an Individual Support Order or appropriate support.

Chapter 7: Making it happen

Delivering the vision set out in the Children's Plan will require a series of system-wide reforms to the way services for children and young people work together. The Government intends to build on the ambitions set out in Every Child Matters, and deliver a step change in outcomes through:

- expecting every school to be uncompromising in its ambitions for achievement, sitting at the heart of the community it serves
- setting high expectations for Children's Trusts to:
 - deliver measurable improvements for all children and young people
 - have in place by 2010 consistent, high quality arrangements to provide identification and early intervention for all children and young people who need additional help
- monitoring the difference Children's Trusts are making and examine whether Children's Trust arrangements need to be strengthened to improve outcomes, including by further legislation
- publishing a Children's Workforce Action Plan in early 2008, covering everyone who works with children and young people, which will strengthen integrated working across all services.

Guidance for local authorities regarding Children's Trusts will be revised in 2008 to reflect the demanding role of local leadership and coordination of services. The Government expects local authorities and their strategic partners in Children's Trusts to champion and take responsibility for achieving measurable improvements in the lives of children across all five Every Child Matters outcomes. To provide the basis for these improvements, the Government expects Children's Trusts to have in place by 2010 consistent high quality arrangements to provide identification and early intervention for all children and young people who need additional help in relation to their health, education, care and behaviour, including help for their parents as appropriate.

A new Centre for Excellence and Outcomes (CFEO) will begin work in July 2008, and a new programme to improve commissioning practice will be developed with local authority, health and voluntary sector partners to support Children's Trusts in building world class systems. The CFEO will review the evidence base for what works, and will work with local areas to apply this in their context.

Accountability - schools

To ensure that schools are being measured and rewarded for their contribution to children's overall wellbeing as well as to standards achieved, school level indicators,

that taken together measure a school's contributions to pupil well-being, using existing indicators (such as levels of attainment and progression, persistent absence and permanent exclusion, and proportion of children participating in PE and sport) and developing new ones, for example for bullying, obesity, entrance to the youth justice system, and destinations on leaving. Ofsted will need to reflect these indicators in designing the cycle of inspections starting in 2009.

In early 2008 new guidance to schools will be issued on their duty to promote the wellbeing of their pupils.

Integrated working

The vision within the Children's Plan means that practitioners need to work together as an integrated workforce, characterised by professional respect and trust, cutting across service boundaries to fit services around the needs of children, young people and families. This will involve working in teams made up of a range of people from different professional backgrounds. ContactPoint and eCAF (the electronic enablement of the Common Assessment Framework) are being developed to support integrated working. Senior managers must lead on workforce reform and drive culture change to embed integrated working and common processes, communicating to their staff and to external stakeholders a clear vision of integrated working and how to achieve it. A National Professional Development Framework for Leaders and Managers of Children's Services is to be published alongside the Children's Workforce Action Plan in 2008 to support this.

The Children's Plan can be downloaded from the Department for Children, Schools and Families' website:
http://www.dfes.gov.uk/publications/childrensplan/?cid=childrens_plan&type=bannerad

Appendix 1

Strategies, Action Plans, Guidance, green papers, consultations etc announced in the Children's Plan

- Children's Workforce Action Plan
- Child Health Strategy in spring 2008
- Child Health Promotion Programme – updated 2008
- Review of Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services
- National Strategy and Action Plan on obesity in adults and children early 2008
- Action Plan on Housing
- Families at Risk Review – part 2
- Parents' Charter
- Implementation of Care Matters and plans to support young carers
- National Play Strategy in the first half of 2008

- Action Plan to reduce and tackle inequalities in infant mortality
- Guidance on Education and Inspections Act 2006 issued early in 2008
- Guidance to help schools tackle the bullying of children with special educational needs (SEN) and disabilities in spring 2008
- Workforce Strategy for Further Education
- Staying Safe Action Plan in early 2008
- Independent assessment of the impact of the commercial world on children's wellbeing
- Dr Byron's report on internet safety
- The Home Access Taskforce to make recommendations in April 2008 detailing how universal access to technology could be achieved
- Plans for improving links between services for young people and for adults in early 2008
- Youth Crime Action Plan
- Youth Alcohol Action Plan in spring 2008
- Drug Strategy
- Review of best practice in effective sex and relationships education
- Green Paper looking at what happens when young offenders leave custody
- Respect Youth Taskforce Action Plan