

EVERY CHILD MATTERS



WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Green Paper – a paper by the Government which asks people what they think.

This paper is about children and young people living in England, and some of the things the Government does to help you. We want to do things better, especially for children who are harmed or abused, or who get left out when it comes to jobs and homes when they grow up. This can happen for lots of reasons: being ill a lot or disabled, finding school too difficult, committing crime, or being a parent too young.

When we talk about services in this Green Paper we mean:

- Health (making children better, helping prevent illness)
- Education (teaching, help for children having problems in school)
- Social Services (protecting children from harm, helping families to care for their children)
- Youth Offending Teams (helping young people to stay out of trouble)
- Connexions (giving teenagers a wide range of advice)
- Youth and leisure services (providing things to do outside school hours – provided by community and voluntary groups as well as councils).

Agencies are the organisations which provide services: schools, hospitals, health centres, youth clubs, etc.

Professionals are qualified people who work in these organisations: teachers, doctors, social workers, police officers, youth workers, etc.

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Why ask children and young people?

Children and young people are important because you are our future. We want to hear what you say because you have direct experience of being young now, in 2003. We have some ideas about how we can improve what we do for you, but we need your ideas too. Whoever you are, wherever you live, your views matter to us. There are some questions in this booklet, we want your views on these, **but if you have other things you want to say please feel free to say them.**

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Where we are

This section sets the scene for the Green Paper.

Some things have got better:

- Children have got better at reading, writing and maths.
- Exam results have improved, especially for young people living in inner cities.
- The number of children living in families where money is tight has gone down.
- The number of young people who are convicted of crimes more than once has gone down.
- The number of mothers under 18 has gone down. More young women with babies are carrying on with their education or training.
- PE and school sports have improved, and there are much better facilities.



What we still need to do



We think there are still too many children or young people:

- skipping school
- leaving school at 16 and not getting a job or doing some training
- taking up smoking, drinking or taking drugs.

This is something we want to change, because growing up healthy and well-educated will give you a better chance in life and the Government has a responsibility to help you do this.

We are also worried that children from families with more money tend to do better at school than children who are less well off. We think that every child should have the chance to do as well as they can.

We also have a responsibility to keep children safe from harm and abuse and it was our failure to do this in one tragic case – the death of Victoria Climbié – that provided one of the main reasons for writing this Green Paper.



WHERE WE'VE FAILED

Victoria Climbié died in February 2000. She was just eight years old. Her parents had sent her to England for a better life, but the aunt she came to stay with and her aunt's boyfriend abused Victoria and eventually killed her.

The Government asked Lord Laming to look at Victoria's death and see what we could learn from it. He found that lots of people - the police, social workers, doctors - had the chance to save Victoria but none took it. Instead of talking to each other about their worries about Victoria, they assumed someone else was looking after her. This happened 12 times in less than a year.

We don't want other children to suffer like Victoria Climbié and we want to change the way things are done, to make protecting children a priority and to make sure that other children aren't failed by the system in the way that Victoria was.

These are the things we need to put right so it is less likely that other children will die like Victoria:

- Professionals, like teachers, social workers, health workers and the police, need to talk to each other about children who they think may be abused.
- They need to do something about what they know, or make sure someone else is doing something.
- We need to make sure that people who work with children all know how to spot when a child is being harmed or abused and that they know what to do about it.





What is important to you?

A year or so ago, we asked loads of people what they thought was important during childhood and what makes children grow up happy and not feel 'left out'. Not everyone agreed of course, but most children and young people thought it was important to:

- ◆ Be as **healthy** as possible, and choose a healthy lifestyle
- ◆ **Stay safe** and be protected from harm and abuse
- ◆ **Enjoy life** and learn skills to prepare for growing up
- ◆ **Make a contribution** to society and not behave badly or commit crimes.

Most adults also thought it was important to have **enough money**, although this didn't seem to bother children and young people much: you thought family and friends were more important.

Question 1

How do you think you should have a say in what your local council does to make things better for children and young people?



What we want to do about it

It is really important that we try to prevent children like Victoria Climbié from suffering harm. This Green Paper is also about some of the other ideas we have about helping children and young people achieve the things you said were important. To do this we need to concentrate on four things:

Prevention: Growing up is difficult. It is even harder if you don't have enough money to go around, if your school isn't very good, or you are sick a lot, or you live somewhere where there is nowhere to play but there is a lot of crime. Prevention means trying to sort out some of these problems which can hold children back.

Read more on page 7.

Doing more for families and carers: Growing up is also harder if your parents can't look after you properly, or for whatever reason you don't live with your family. We want to help families and also make sure that there are good carers for those children who can't live with their families.

Read more on page 11.

Spotting problems early: Some children need extra help, perhaps because of their health, or because they have trouble learning, or they are abused by adults. If they don't get this help early on, the problems can get worse and children can end up maybe committing a crime, or with nowhere to live. Spotting the problems and sorting them out as early as possible can help stop this happening.

Read more on page 12.

Getting it sorted: Once we know that a child or their family needs extra help, it is important they get it. This is more likely to happen if different services work together as not every problem fits neatly into a box like 'education' or 'health'. It also means that we need good workers who can provide the services children and families need.

Read more on page 14.

Prevention

What we have done so far

We want to halve child poverty by 2010 and end it by 2020, by making sure that families have enough money for their children. We have also thought about how to help children and young people who don't get good services, perhaps because they live in a run-down area. Sure Start is for young children and their families living in poor areas. We also have a special Children's Fund, which helps children aged 5-13, and for young people over 13 there is Connexions. Local children and families have a big say in what is provided by all these services. We have started to improve schools, too, so they are better for all children.

Child poverty is when a child lives in a family where the amount of money the family has to spend is less than 60% of the national average.

Sure Start brings together early education, childcare, health and family support to give a good start in life to children living in disadvantaged areas. ★

The Children's Fund helps children aged 5-13 and their families with all sorts of things, from teaching parents to read, to advice on healthy lifestyles, to helping children who are worried about changing schools. ★

Connexions helps young people aged 13-19. Personal advisers provide advice on careers and lifestyle and issues such as homelessness and drugs. They can get other people to help too. ★



How we're planning to change things:



CHILDREN'S CENTRES

What are we doing? Children's Centres will bring together nursery education, family support, childcare and health services on one site.

Why? We want to bring services together so that families can get them all in one place.

Our goal: By 2006, 650,000 young children living in poor neighbourhoods should have a Children's Centre near them.

EXTENDED SCHOOLS

What are we doing? We want to keep schools open before and after school hours, at weekends and during holidays. This is so that we can provide breakfast clubs, after-school clubs and childcare and let people who live near the school use its sports, arts and IT facilities. We also want to provide other services in schools, so that children with problems don't have to wait a long time or travel a long way to get help.

Why? We want to give children a range of help and activities in school as this is where most children spend a large part of their day.

Our goal: We want all schools to offer some services apart from education. We want to increase the number of 'extended' schools offering a wide range of services, so that nearly all children and young people have one near them.



Q Question 2

Apart from education, what services would you like to see in your school?



YOUNG PEOPLE'S FUND

***What are we doing?** We are setting up a Young People's Fund to make sure that young people across the country have things to do out of school. We have £200 million to spend and more to come later. The sort of thing we have in mind is summer activities, which young people have said they find enjoyable, but we are open to ideas.*

***Why?** The number one concern for many children, parents and communities is the lack of 'things to do' for children and teenagers. We want to do something about that.*

Q Question 3

How should we spend the Young People's Fund to give young people more and better things to do?

We also know that there are some services we really need to improve so that children and young people get a better chance in life. Here is what we are doing about them:

- ◆ **CAMHS (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services):** we are providing extra money so that CAMHS can help more children who are stressed or worried, or have mental health problems.
- ◆ **Speech and language courses:** we are training more speech and language therapists to help children who find it a problem to talk or be understood.
- ◆ **Housing:** by March next year, no homeless family with children should be put in Bed and Breakfast accommodation, unless it's a short term emergency. The law has also been changed so that some young people have to be helped to find accommodation. This includes young people leaving care, and 16 and 17 year olds who are not being helped by social services.



Doing more for families and carers

Parenting Fund

We know that parents and family have a big influence on how well children do later in life. All parents may need advice from time to time so we would like to see places like schools and health centres offering advice to all families.

We know that families can have problems at times – when a child starts a new school, for example, or when someone in the family is ill. So we are setting up a Parenting Fund to help families who are having problems. We have £25 million to spend over the next three years to help out at these times.

Question 4

How do you think the Government can best help families at difficult times?

Foster carers

There will be times when some children cannot carry on living with their families, and some of them will stay with foster carers. These foster carers will become important people in the children's lives, so we need to get the right people to do this work. We are looking for new ideas to encourage people to become foster carers and make sure they feel good about their work.

Question 5

Do you have any suggestions for encouraging people to become foster carers and making sure that they feel good about their work?





Spotting problems early

Services that are meant to look after children often don't spot small problems, or talk to each other about children. This means that warning signs aren't shared, and a lot of small problems can become one big problem. We want to do more and these are some of our ideas:

- ◆ **Getting services to talk to each other:** we want all local authorities to know about children and young people in their area, and which services they are using. We want professionals, like teachers and doctors, to be able to let other professionals know when they are worried about a child, so that everyone can get together and offer help. This will help make sure that children aren't forgotten and that we don't ignore the small problems.
- ◆ **Finding out what children and young people need:** we want different services – such as special educational needs, Connexions, youth offending teams, and social services – to find out what children need in the same way. When a young person starts dealing with a new service, basic information can be passed on from services they have seen before, so they aren't asked the same questions again.

- ◆ **Lead professional:** children and young people who are getting help from more than one person (eg teacher, health visitor, youth worker, social worker) should have one of these people to take special responsibility for them. This 'lead professional' will be responsible for making sure that children get the help they need.
- ◆ **Getting it sorted:** we will encourage professionals to work in teams made up of people from different services, with different skills. These teams will be based in schools, health centres and Children's Centres. They will be able to respond quickly to problems spotted by, for example, teachers or social workers. We will also try to attract more people into working with children.

Q Question 6

When do you think services should talk together about a child without the child knowing or saying it is OK?

Q Question 7

How do you think children and families should have a say in deciding what extra help they need?



Getting it sorted

If we are going to meet the needs of children and families, we need to change the way we work, and encourage more people to work with children and young people. We also need to make sure that there is always someone looking out for the interests of children and young people.

Working together

People working in different organisations have different priorities, targets and budgets. This means it can be hard for them to work together. We think it will help if someone is in charge of making things better for children and young people and if people are encouraged to work together:

- We want to have a **Director of Children's Services** who will be responsible for local education and children's social services. Later on, we also want the Director to take responsibility for other services for children and young people.
- The law says that local authorities must keep children safe and look after their well-being, and we want this law to apply to police and health services too, so that more people are responsible for keeping children safe.
- We have a new **Minister for Children, Young People and Families**, Margaret Hodge.
- We want to judge services on how well they work together to improve services to children, as well as how good they are at running schools, social services, etc.



Encouraging more people to work with children and young people

The people who work with children are really important to help keep them safe and get the most out of life. We want to be able to get good people into these jobs and encourage them to keep working with young people. Some people who work with children and young people think they work too hard for not enough money, and that they don't get thanked for the important job they do.

Some of the things we are looking at include:

- ◆ **How people working with children and young people are paid.**
- ◆ **Making sure that everyone who works with children and young people knows the basics:** how to listen to young people, how to protect children from harm, how to work with people in other teams. We want qualifications from one area of work to be accepted in other areas, so that people can move around more easily and stay interested in their work.
- ◆ **Flexible training** so that people who want to work with children and families can train in a way that suits them, and that prepares them for work. We are introducing a new social work degree to improve the training of social workers. We want to attract more university graduates into children's social work and other work with young people.

Question 8

What ideas do you have for encouraging people to consider careers that involve working with children and families, such as social work or childcare?

A champion for children and young people

We want someone who can take a special interest in children and young people and advise the Government on what we are doing for you. This person will be called a **Children's Commissioner**. We want the Commissioner to make sure that the Government listens to children and young people and involves you in things that affect you. We also want the Commissioner to talk to the media and to businesses about how what they do affects children.



Next steps



What we end up doing will depend on what you and others tell us. We want to get moving as soon as possible, but we really need your views and your opinions to make sure we get it right.

Let us know what you think by replying to the questions in the 'Tell us what YOU think?' booklet. You can reply to all of the questions or just those that interest you most. You can:

- ◆ fill in the attached form and send it in the enclosed envelope (no stamp needed)
- ◆ write your comments on a piece of paper and send it in the enclosed envelope
- ◆ send an e-mail to the address on the form
(Consultation3.CHILDRENSGP@dfes.gsi.gov.uk)
- ◆ download a form from our website www.dfes.gov.uk/everychildmatters fill it in and e-mail it.

You need to do this by:
1st of December 2003.



Young people in trouble

As well as your views on this Green Paper, we also want to know how you think we can deal with young people involved in crime. The Government has now published its ideas about this. If you want to see these and comment on them, visit www.homeoffice.gov.uk or e-mail Public.Enquiries@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk and ask for 'Stopping Youth Crime' a leaflet aimed at young people.

