

CHANGE FOR CHILDREN

**Achieving better
outcomes for children
and young people**

A toolkit for practitioners

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Contents

	Summary of Contents	3
1.	Background to the Toolkit	4
2.	A Guide to Outcomes	11
	Introduction	12
	The big picture	18
	Setting outcomes	25
	Examples	32
3.	A Guide to Evaluation	37
	Introduction	38
	Sources of information	45
	Collecting information	52
	Analysing, reporting and disseminating	61
4.	Case Studies and Examples	69
	Be healthy	72
	Be safe	75
	Enjoy and achieve	79
	Make a positive contribution	81
	Achieve economic well-being	84
	Setting service level outcomes	88
	Advice from Bristol	95
	Appendix: List of services interviewed	98
	Index	99

Summary of Contents

The purpose of this toolkit is to assist child care services in setting outcomes and designing appropriate systems for evaluating the impact of work with children, young people and their families. The toolkit has been developed within the context of the Every Child Matters outcomes framework. As well as drawing on the broader theory and practice of outcome focused services, we also carried out extensive interviews with child care services based within Bristol City to establish how outcomes are currently conceived and applied. The toolkit is in four main sections.

Section 1 describes the background to the toolkit, justifies the emphasis on an outcome focused approach and outlines how information was collected from child care services within Bristol City.

Section 2 describes what outcomes are, how they differ from outputs, the benefits to children and families that can arise from an outcome focused approach and how outcome setting can realistically be incorporated into routine service design.

Section 3 is a guide to evaluation. There is little point in building an outcome focused approach into service design if we have no means of evaluating to what extent outcomes have been achieved. This section describes the respective merits of different kinds of evidence, how evidence may be collected and how service evaluation can be used to improve and promote child care practice.

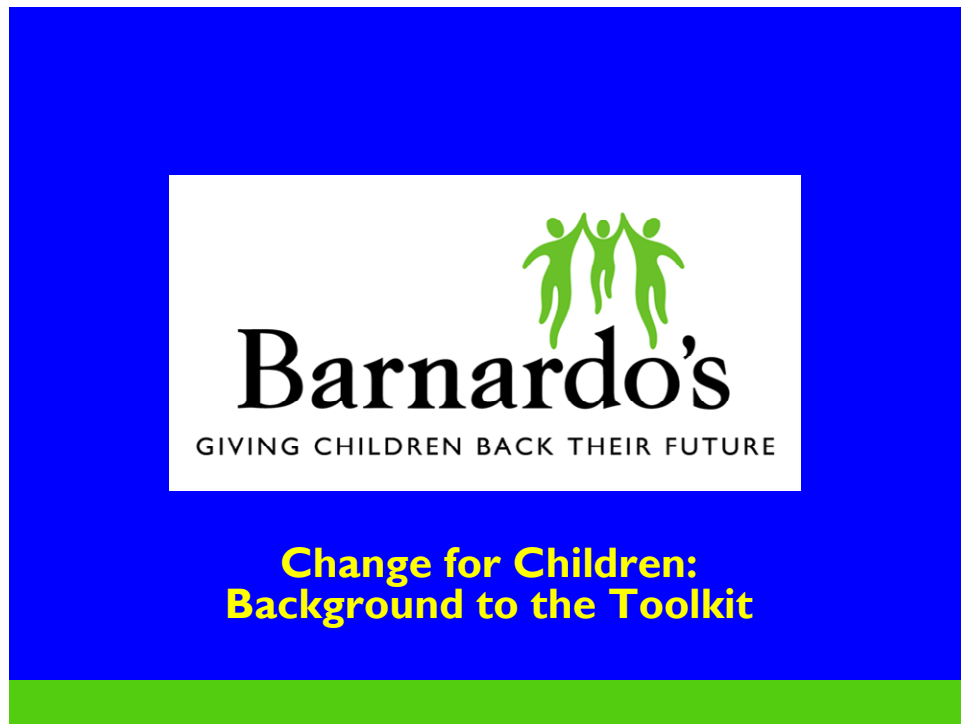
Section 4 provides examples of outcome setting and good practice from services both within and outside Bristol. Practice examples and research studies are presented within the Every Child Matters outcome framework.

An index at the end of this toolkit enables you to locate subjects of interest easily.

The toolkit is accompanied by a CD-Rom which contains Powerpoint presentations of the four main sections. These may be used separately or combined as appropriate. Each slide has explanatory notes which can be used for presentation purposes.

Section 1

Background to the Toolkit



The Change for Children toolkit

The toolkit contains:

- Case studies from Bristol City and examples from other parts of the UK
- A guide to outcomes
- A guide to evaluation



Barnardo's, with the agreement of the Local Strategic Partnership for Bristol, was commissioned in September 2005 to produce a good practice toolkit to help develop effective responses to children's needs in the Children and Young People's Trust Partnership (CYPTP). The project was steered by the Change for Children Manager's Group and funding was provided by the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund Grant. The purpose of the funding was:

To develop work which would link with, and contribute to, the Change for Children agenda in Bristol. The work would focus on achieving the five outcomes outlined in Every Child Matters.

What is the 'good practice toolkit'?

The toolkit, which is in the form of a manual with accompanying Powerpoint slides for presentation purposes, is aimed at all services which are contributing to the CYPTP Strategic Plan. It is structured around the outcomes described in Every Child Matters (ECM) and draws on good practice experience in Bristol and beyond. The toolkit is designed to help enable individual services to audit their practice, identify where good practice exists and where new strengths need to be developed. It contains:

- A description of how to describe, monitor and achieve outcomes.
- A description of how work can be evaluated to ensure outcomes are being achieved.
- Case studies from services within Bristol.
- Summaries of evidence based strategies and interventions which can help achieve positive outcomes for children.

Who was involved in the project?

The respective responsibilities of the staff involved were:

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Additional material was provided by Pip Tyler and Sara Scott.

The case studies illustrate...

- How services have engaged with the Every Child Matters framework
- How services have engaged in the outcomes process
- How services have responded to evaluation

...and provide...

- Advice for others engaging with outcomes and evaluation from services in Bristol
- Examples and evidence from other UK studies



Change for Children within Bristol provides services with the opportunity to pursue a new approach to the well-being of children from birth to 19 across the city.

The aim is for every child, whatever their background or circumstances, to have the support they need to:

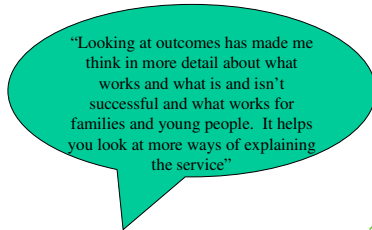
- Be healthy
- Stay safe
- Enjoy and achieve
- Make a positive contribution
- Achieve economic well-being (DfES 2005)

As part of the project, a number of services from across the city were visited and representatives were interviewed to illustrate how they were engaging with the Every Child Matters agenda. The information gathered also sought to provide evidence of how local services were engaging with the outcomes and evaluation process.

Finally, representatives from all the local services involved with this work were asked to provide advice to others engaged with this process. Hopefully, services which are about to embark on the process of setting outcomes and conducting evaluation, and those who have already started it, will find the wealth of advice given invaluable.

As well as illustrating the outcomes and evaluation process with case study material from services in Bristol City, information has also been drawn from evidence based strategies and interventions from across the UK.

Why outcomes?



Dhek Bhal Asian Children and Youth Liaison Service

In the section A Guide to Outcomes (see p. 11) we provide a range of - we hope - convincing answers to the question “*why bother with outcomes?* “. During discussions with services from Bristol many reasons were given and were ultimately summed up in the above quote. A number of practitioners discussed how setting outcomes enabled them to focus more clearly on their work and the service they were delivering. It allowed them to share and understand terminology and helped them identify trends in provision and see gaps.

All services said that engaging in the process of setting and measuring outcomes enabled them to improve their service.

- At an individual level it helps to provide a more personal and individual service – “*to go that bit extra*” (Children Looked After Nurses). It enables a service worker to “*unpick what is at the root of a problem for an individual*” (Behaviour and Education Support Team).
- At a service level improvements can be made by finding out what is working well and what isn’t. In addition, by focusing on, and clarifying definitions, communication with stakeholders and other agencies can be improved.

All services identified challenges to this way of working. They stated that time was needed in order to think through outcome-focused questions, to set up systems to obtain meaningful data and to communicate what was being done and why. Having the capacity to carry out this work was often cited as a challenge. In a project with only one or two workers it was often difficult to undertaken outcome focused work.

Another point made by many services was that often small changes were difficult to measure and, that a significant challenge was finding ways to set outcomes and use measures to signal very small changes in progress and make this attributable to the service delivered.

Overall, clear benefits could be identified for the project and individuals to this way of working and the benefits outweighed the barriers. However, real challenges were identified and thinking creatively is necessary to overcome them. In addition, external support may be required for services to be truly effective in this way of working.

How we gathered the information from Bristol

- Sixteen services were identified for interview from the Change for Children showcasing event
- Services were chosen according to a range of criteria:
 - Work with different age groups
 - Address all the ECM outcomes
 - Work with different community groups
 - Funded from a variety of sources
- Representatives from 15 of the services were interviewed between October and December 2005



On Friday 30th September 2005 a Change for Children Showcasing event – Supporting and Sharing Good Practice - was held at the Council House in Bristol. The event was an opportunity for staff from a range of services; education, health, social care and youth work, to show how they work to achieve better outcomes for children and young people. Following this event, the project team visited a sample of services in Bristol to learn more about their work, their strategies for achieving better outcomes for children and the barriers that need to be overcome. Selected services were used, with their permission, as case studies. These appear in section 4 of this toolkit.

From this event and the guide, sixteen services (see p. 98) were identified for interview to help provide information for the case studies found in this toolkit. Services were identified to meet a wide range of criteria: age, Every Child Matters (ECM) outcomes, community groups and funding bodies. Services were chosen that worked with different age groups within the birth to 19 age phase. This ranged from Sure Start services working with babies and under fives to a project working with school leavers.

A variety of services were chosen to ensure that all the Every Child Matters outcomes were addressed. Services were matched to the ECM outcome with which they worked most directly and these were collated to ensure full coverage of ECM outcomes was achieved.

Services were also chosen so that different community groups across Bristol were represented. Some services did not specify a particular user group and were open to all. Others specified a particular user group, for example, Shakti Imani Inclusion Project which works with Asian and African families or Education of Children Looked After Service which works with Looked After Children. Some services catered for a distinct area of the city and sampling attempted to ensure geographical spread across the city with services such as Hengrove Full Service Extended School – School Family Link Worker and Easton Multi-Agency Panel.

Finally, services were chosen which represented a variety of funding bodies from the statutory and voluntary sectors. For example, services funded from Bristol City Council, North Bristol Primary Care Trust, Barnardo's and NCH were all included. The final sample of services numbered fifteen as one project was unable to participate and representatives from these were interviewed between October and December 2005.

We asked questions about -

- Outcome setting and Every Child Matters
- The Every Child Matters principles
- Outcome measurement and achievement
- Stakeholders
- Service delivery



The questionnaire schedule was designed to elicit information on different aspects of the outcomes process and evaluation. Representatives from the services were asked:

- What are the outcomes for your service?
- How are they chosen?
- How do these outcomes relate to the Every Child Matters framework?
- Which ECM outcomes are addressed?

Interviewees were questioned about the principles of the ECM framework, specifically:

- What they knew about them
- How much they addressed them in their work
- Whether they evidenced them through outcomes questions

There were questions concerned with measurement and achievement in order to identify strategies used to evidence whether outcomes had been attained. Other questions were designed to provide information to other services embarking on and engaging with this process, such as:

- What has been helpful?
- What have been the barriers?
- What advice would you give to others?

A number of questions were devised to elicit information on stakeholder involvement:

- Were all stakeholders involved in the outcome setting process?
- Have you any examples of services engaging with this aspect of outcome setting?
- What information, for example, successes and changes, is shared with stakeholders?

Finally, staff were asked about service delivery. Some questions were designed to provide information on multi-agency working, some were designed to probe services' engagement with evaluation with services identifying and giving examples of changes they had made to service delivery as a result of work on outcomes. At the end of the interview representatives from the services were given the opportunity to add any other information they felt might be useful or had been omitted during the discussion.

The results of this consultation are summarised in section 4 of the toolkit. But first, we turn to the issue of outcomes.