

Briefing - Healthy Lives, Brighter Futures: the Strategy for Children and Young People's Health February 2009

Speaking Out

Speaking Out is a partnership between Children England (formerly the National Council of Voluntary Child Care Organisations) and the National Council for Voluntary Youth Services (NCVYS), which seeks to build a voice for the children and young people's voluntary and community sector across government.

The project aims to develop closer links between a range of government departments (Home Office, Ministry of Justice, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, Communities and Local Government, Cabinet Office and HM Treasury) and the voluntary and community sector in delivering cross departmental policies such as Every Child Matters and *The Children's Plan* and the direct implementation of initiatives which affect children and young people.

Speaking Out aims to support children, young people and families voluntary and community organisations to better understand the impact on their users of a wider range of government policies and provide routes to influence them. The project is funded by the Office of the Third Sector in the Cabinet Office.

Who are these briefings for?

This series of briefings intends to provide members of both NCVYS and Children England and other interested parties with background and analysis on specific policy items affecting the sector.

Other activities

In addition to these briefings the Speaking Out project is developing work streams around the policy themes which include:

- organising a series of seminars and events;
- establishing communities of interest amongst members and other organisations on specific policy themes; and
- making representations to government; and linking with wider NCVYS and Children England campaigns.

To discuss this briefing or any other aspect of the Speaking Out project please contact Sophie Griffiths, Policy and Information Officer at Children England on 020 7833 3319 or email sophie@childrenengland.org.uk or Hannah Dobbin, NCVYS's Policy Officer on 020 7278 1041 or email hannah@ncvys.org.uk.

1. Introduction

In February 2009, the Department of Health and the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) launched the *Healthy lives, brighter futures: The strategy for children and young people's health*. The strategy outlines the Government's vision for improving health services for children, young people and families. *Healthy lives, brighter futures* sets out how Government will work in partnership with local authorities (LA), Primary Care Trusts (PCTs) and those working across children's health services to build the quality of support for families at key stages in their children's lives.

The strategy outlines greater support for all parents, children and young people across England by setting out plans for universal, targeted and specialist support across three life stages - during pregnancy and the early years, school-age children and young people. This is in an effort to ensure parents receive greater, more accessible and relevant information in order to make informed choices for their families and that children and young people are equipped with the tools to make healthy choices in their own lives.

At a strategic level, the strategy calls for much greater collaboration between the NHS and local authorities in order to deliver meaningful packages of care for those children and families most in need. Moreover, it also builds on the Aiming High for Disabled Children agenda by outlining much greater support for children and young people with additional and acute health needs.

2. Policy Context

Healthy lives, brighter futures sets out how Government plans to deliver improvements in children's physical and psychological health, building on existing policies such as the *National Service Framework for Children, Young People and Maternity Services*¹ and the Every Child Matters² (ECM) reforms. The Government first made a commitment in *The Children's Plan*³ in December 2007 to publish a child health strategy jointly between the Department of Health and the DCSF.

The strategy is linked to, and builds upon, the National Service Framework (NSF) for Children, Young People and Maternity Services, published in 2004. The NSF is a 10-year programme which put in place national standards for children's health and social care and remains the most comprehensive policy guidance that underpins focused improvements in children and young people's health and wellbeing.

As part of the NSF, the Child Health Promotion Programme was introduced, designed to promote health and wellbeing from pre-conception to adulthood, integrating pre-school and school-age health promotion and assessment, including screening and immunisation.

The overarching policy agenda within the DCSF which links into child health is the ECM agenda. A particular focus of the ECM programme has been to encourage integrated design and delivery of services around the needs of children, young people and families in order to help organisations to work together to deliver improved outcomes for children. Through, in particular, its proposals on how to better support mothers and fathers in fulfilling their responsibilities, and through its support for even greater integration of health and children's services, this strategy supports the vision and principles of *The Children's Plan*.

This strategy takes the ECM aims and objectives as its starting point, in particular by encouraging more integrated support for children to be healthy.

Several of the ambitions in *Healthy lives, brighter futures* are being addressed through other

¹ Department of Health (2004) *National Service Framework for Children, Young People and Maternity services* http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Healthcare/NationalServiceFrameworks/Children/DH_4089111

² HM Government (2004) *Every Child Matters: Change for Children* <http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/publications/>

³ DCSF (2007) *The Children's Plan: Building brighter futures* <http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/childrensplan/>

strategies, such as the *Staying Safe Action Plan*⁴, the *Youth Alcohol Action Plan*⁵, the *Teenage Pregnancy Strategy*⁶ and the *Youth Crime Action Plan*⁷. Towards the end of 2008, the Government also published a review of the delivery of sex and relationship education in schools, and its responses to the independent reviews of CAMHS⁸ (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services) and SLCN (Speech, Language and Communication Needs)⁹. Other existing strategies include action on childhood obesity and excess weight, including the *Healthy Weight, Healthy Lives* strategy and more recently the *Change4Life* campaign.

3. Healthy lives, brighter futures: The strategy for children and young people's health summary

This section summarises the key points in the Child Health Strategy *Healthy lives, brighter futures*¹⁰. It highlights areas that are of particular interest to the children and young people's voluntary and community sector.

Pregnancy and the Early Years

One of Government's key aims in the strategy is to ensure that parents have the information and tools to raise healthy children right from the earliest days of pregnancy. As part of this Government expects local areas to set out what children and families can expect from their health services locally. In doing so, the focus will be on ensuring that the right services, support and advice are available for all parents, and that more intensive support is given to the most vulnerable. The Government has also emphasised the key role fathers play throughout pregnancy and the very earliest stages of a child's life.

Key announcements to support parents include:

- further development of the health visitor workforce to deliver the Healthy Child Programme;
- the development of a new Antenatal and Preparation for Parenthood programme that, following successful testing, will help engage parents, including those from more disadvantaged backgrounds;
- the expansion of the successful Family Nurse Partnership Programme, which provides intensive support from highly trained nurses for the most vulnerable first-time mothers. It will be expanded from 30 to 70 sites by 2011, with a view to rolling out this support for the most vulnerable first-time young mothers across England over the next decade;
- a strengthened role for Sure Start Children's Centres – both through additional health-based programmes, focusing on reducing obesity and smoking, and by ensuring that each centre has access to a named health visitor; and
- committing maternity and early years services to closer engagement with fathers, including allowing them to stay overnight in hospital after the birth of their children.

⁴ DCSF (2008) *Staying Safe Action Plan* <http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/resources-and-practice/IG00312/>

⁵ DCSF (2008) *Youth Alcohol Action Plan* www.dcsf.gov.uk/publications/youthalcohol/

⁶ DfES (2006) *Teenage Pregnancy Next Steps: Guidance for Local Authorities and Primary Care Trusts on Effective Delivery of Local Strategies* <http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/resources-and-practice/IG00145/>

⁷ Home Office (2008) *Youth Crime Action Plan* <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/documents/youth-crime-action-plan/>

⁸ Department of Health (2008) *Children and young people in mind: the final report of the National CAMHS Review*

http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH_090399

⁹ DCSF (2008) *Better Communication: An Action Plan to Improve Services for Children and Young People with Speech, Language and Communication Needs* <http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/slcnaaction/>

¹⁰ DCSF and Department of Health (2009) *Healthy lives, brighter futures: The strategy for children and young people's health.*

<http://publications.dcsf.gov.uk/default.aspx?PageFunction=productdetails&PageMode=publications&ProductID=285374a&>

School-age children

Government wants to see schools take an even greater role in supporting children and young people's emotional and physical well-being. It is also keen to see young people themselves make healthier choices. Government recognises that as children reach school age, those services which support their health need to be linked to places which are convenient and accessible for children and their parents.

Key announcements to support school-age children's health include:

- an improved Healthy Child Programme for school-age children will be developed, which will set out what services should be available to all parents in all areas;
- the role of schools in promoting pupils' health will also be supported through strengthening the National Healthy Schools Programme;
- the creation of a world-class system of PE and sport, offering 5 to 16-year-olds 5 hours a week and giving them high quality sports in the run-up to, and after, the London 2012 Olympics;
- pilots will be established to build the evidence base on the impact of extending free school meal criteria to a greater number of pupils, including, in some areas, by putting in place free school meals for all primary pupils;
- Government will improve the quality and consistency of Personal, Social, Health and Economic (PSHE) education and intend to make it statutory within the curriculum;
- the Parenting Early Intervention Programme, which targets parents of children aged 8 to 13 at risk of negative outcomes, will roll out evidence-based parenting programmes across all local authorities from April 2009; and
- by 2010 all schools will have school travel plans, encouraging pupils to walk or cycle to school.

Young people

In the strategy, the Government identifies adolescence as both a key transitional point between childhood and adulthood and a distinct development stage in its own right. The strategy also highlights Government's concern about young people and risk taking, stating that although taking risks is a part of growing up, too large a group of young people in England are taking risks with their current and future health particularly in relation to underage drinking. To reach young people Government proposes that services are offered in a way, and with a focus, that speaks to the particular needs of children and young people. This includes accessible sexual health advice, and integrated youth support services providing information, advice, healthy opportunities and support.

Key announcements to support young people's health include:

- the Department of Health has developed and published the *You're Welcome Quality Criteria: Making Health Services Teenage Friendly* – a set of quality principles and criteria for various health settings. The 'You're Welcome' standards will be rolled out across England, so that all young people will be able to access young people-friendly health services;
- a new campaign to increase young people's knowledge of effective contraceptive methods will be launched, backed by increased investment in contraceptive services in a range of settings;

- school and county sport partnerships will work with schools, FE colleges, community, sport and youth clubs to attract young people to take part in more sport. The partnerships will also consider how young people not in education, employment or training can access sport;
- Government is extending the principles of the National Healthy Schools Programme into the further education sector to create a whole college framework to help improve access for students and staff to health-related advice, information and guidance, and will promote positive health and healthy activities;
- Government is investing £6 million over the three years 2008-09 to 2010-11 to support PCTs and further education colleges to improve information and advice on contraception to young people in further education. Further education colleges and PCTs will be expected to forge strong links, together with other providers of health and wellbeing services, including the voluntary sector; and
- Government expects to see the systematic involvement of young people and their parents in service development, supported by accredited frameworks for young people's involvement such as 'Hear by Right'.

Services for children with acute or additional health needs

Prior to the publication of the *Healthy lives, brighter futures* strategy, Government undertook work with parents of disabled children. This highlighted some of the frustrations and difficulties that remain in navigating health, education and social care systems, punctuated by individual experiences of good service. Research found that children and families can still encounter professionals with relatively poor knowledge of a child's condition, experience a fragmentation of services for children with complex health needs, or encounter variability in services available between different areas.

Building on this research, and the commitments made in the *Aiming High for Disabled Children* paper Government has outlined more programmes and funding for children and young people with acute or additional health needs.

The strategy:

- establishes the funding available in the NHS over three years for palliative care and end-of-life services, short breaks, community equipment and wheelchair services for disabled children and young people – totalling £340 million in NHS allocations over the three years 2008-09 to 2010-11, including £30 million to meet commitments made on palliative care and end-of-life care, in addition to the £340 million revenue funding already announced by DCSF for the *Aiming High for Disabled Children* programme for children's services;
- sets out plans to test and expand new approaches to the provision of services – for example by extending the learning from innovative work on wheelchair services by Whizz-Kidz and Tower Hamlets PCT to other parts of London;
- promises that all children with complex health needs have an individual care plan by 2010, which will support co-ordinated care for children with complex health needs when navigating between numerous different services; and
- commits Government to working with the third sector to make use of their expertise to build services around the needs of children and families. Part of this will be establishing the extent of good and bad practice for children, young people and families with complex and ongoing needs. This will also inform work with schools to support children with additional health needs.

Making it Happen: System-Level Transformation

In the strategy Government is clear that to deliver on their objectives to achieve world-class

outcomes and the highest-quality services requires system-wide transformation. This will involve joined-up local governance, planning and commissioning, feeding through to improved service delivery. It also involves improved data sharing, including information drawn from close engagement with children and young people and their parents. Skilling the workforce with the right skills is also a priority.

The strategy outlines that Government will:

- promote joint leadership and strengthen local accountability arrangements for children's health, including putting Children's Trust Boards on a statutory footing, and transforming the Children and Young People's Plan from a local authority plan into one owned by the Children's Trust Board¹¹;
- promote action to ensure that all organisations with responsibility for child health and well-being are fulfilling their statutory responsibilities for safeguarding children;
- improve the engagement of GPs with Children's Trusts, by setting an expectation that directors of children's services will consult with primary care trusts to secure GP membership on Children's Trust Boards;
- introduce a high-level joint commissioning guide to support local authorities and health bodies, in particular PCTs to commission child health services – the guide is being published alongside this strategy;
- promote better use of data, including development of minimum child health datasets and models for the planners and commissioners of services, for example to improve local authorities' and PCTs' understanding of the complex relationship between child health spend and children's health outcomes;
- strengthen the child health workforce – through work that will help strategic health authorities assess the roles, skills and capacity they need in their local children's workforce. Also strengthening the workforce through work on extending GP training which being led by the Royal College of General Practitioners;
- further promote the voice of children and young people, through commitments to ensure that children and young people's views are given prominence in future assessments of healthcare organisations; and
- ensure that robust arrangements are in place to promote and ensure the quality of health services.

4. Possible implications for the children and young people's voluntary and community sector

The Government's children and young people's health strategy is predominantly aimed at local authorities, the NHS and schools, but it is important that the voluntary sector knows about the strategy and possible ways where it can contribute to improving child and adolescent health.

The children, young people's voluntary and community sector (CYPVCS) provides support, services and advice to parents, children and young people about improving their health and well-being. The sector also contributes to wider preventative and social support to families which can foster good physical and emotional well-being, for example parenting support for vulnerable parents, support in getting into work and training and providing leisure and sporting activities for young people.

¹¹ NCVYS has produced briefing papers and responded to several Government consultations around Children's Trusts and Children and Young People's Plans. These are available via: <http://www.ncvys.org.uk/index.php?page=265>

Children and young people with acute or additional needs

The announcements made with regard to the need for better support for children and young people with acute, on-going and additional needs follow much campaigning from within the voluntary sector to get the needs of these families recognised and acted upon. This is best shown through the *Every Disabled Child Matters* campaign. The commitments made to providing short breaks and community equipment are areas in which the voluntary sector can link into. Many voluntary organisations already provide short breaks services, and would be keen to improve the availability of community equipment. Their involvement in this is dependent upon the actions of local commissioners, and to avoid the strategy becoming a document of promises rather than actions, Government needs to ensure that money is ring-fenced for these activities and that local authorities and NHS bodies are actively encouraged to seek out the expertise and experience of voluntary groups working with these children and families. Local SHAs and PCTs will need to develop transparent plans for the use of this funding to ensure that palliative care is prioritised. Local children's trusts will need to exert a coordinating role for the use of this funding in partnership with other local delivery partners to meet local priorities and address needs in the local area. In short the funding needs to be clearly planned with joint partners around the table to ensure a holistic use of funds in local implementation.

The proposal to develop individual care plans for children with complex health needs by 2010 is welcome, however to embed this in practice to a high standard the workforce needs to be well equipped to develop and implement these plans. The workforce needs to understand who is responsible for the plan locally, what is its status, if and how will it be inspected and where they can access support if a plan needs to be revised or updated. Individual care plans have the potential to help track the care being provided to children and young people with additional, complex or ongoing needs, relieving the current pressure on families to navigate between numerous different services to ensure they receive appropriate and high level care.

New approaches to service provision

In the strategy, Government states that it is looking to test and expand new approaches to service provision, giving the example of the charity Whizz-Kidz in developing innovative approaches. There are many hundreds of other examples of innovative and creative work being carried out by the VCS to support the emotional and physical well-being of children and young people. The strategy appears to open up greater collaboration between statutory partners and the VCS in learning from one another about developing truly user-focused services. It also offers an opportunity for the sector to show and be recognised for the good work it is doing. It is important that this dialogue is meaningful across all levels of Government, and is not just tokenistic.

This emphasis on learning new methods of delivery and being innovative in service design contrasts with the continued emphasis on Sure Start and Children's Centres. Much of the emphasis in reaching children, young people and families has been placed through using Sure Start and Children's Centres, for example, the pledge to introduce a named health visitor for each centre and to develop stop smoking and obesity service within centres. However, there is a danger that by placing resources in centres which not all parents access, will deny certain children and families access to important clinicians such as health visitors. This could be a missed opportunity by the Government as targeting children's centres may well only address a small proportion of the people who require improved health services.

Participation

There is little on the participation of young people in the strategy, this is despite the Government's support in the effort to build the *hear by right* standard into the health sector. Rather, the strategy looks to schools to improve health and well-being of children and young people through the Healthy Schools Agenda and the teaching of PSHE. However, often those who engage in risky behaviours are also the ones who are less likely to engage with these sorts of programmes and activities. The fact that they are delivered in schools may be part of the problem.

Equally, there is a growing understanding of just how much health and social care depends on the co-operation of families, children and young people. It is difficult to get families to change their

eating habits or to encourage young people to use contraception without their genuine engagement. Many of the programmes outlined in the strategy are unlikely to work without the genuine co-operation and collaboration of the people involved, and a support group to go with it.

This kind of mutuality requires an organisational culture to support it, one that can be found in the CYPVCS. A way of engaging these young people in taking greater care and responsibility for their health is through giving them greater control over activities and services which pertain to support them. The CYPVCS is a crucial partner in giving children, young people and families, some of whom may be from deprived and marginalised backgrounds, a voice in identifying and addressing their needs. Equally, public service bodies will also need to think through their relationships with voluntary organisations that are not just providers, but key players in local communities and the local economy. In implementing these ideas and programmes local commissioners need to listen to the voices of these young people and families, local voluntary organisations would be a crucial partner in doing this.

Local Implementation

The only way that the majority of proposals laid out in the strategy will make a difference to the lives of children, young people and families is through effective implementation on the ground in partnership with local providers working with the health sector. SHAs, PCTs, LAs and Government Offices need to take responsibility for ensuring strong local leadership on the strategy and for overseeing and coordinating the implementation of the strategy. Children's Trusts also have a crucial role to play in priority setting and planning service delivery with health partners to achieve effective local implementation and joint leadership across agencies. The CYPVCS sector has much expertise and experience in supporting the health and well-being of children, young people and families and it is crucial that local partners tap into this. A greater emphasis on multi-disciplinary, cross-sector collaboration in improving the health and well-being does necessitate change and a need for support. The CYPVCS is not absent from the need to develop its workforce to better support the health needs of the children and young people it works with. Voluntary and community sector practitioners are likely to need training to understand this strategy and its implications, particular workers such as those dealing with sexual health, CAMHS, obesity will need additional support. There is a need for LAs and PCTs to work together with the local voluntary and community sector to plan training across sectors, to encourage information sharing and to share best practice. The sector will also be keen to see and understand the mechanisms Government will put in place to ensure this happens so that PCTs, local authorities, schools and the voluntary sector can be full partners in achieving the aspirations of the *Healthy lives, brighter futures* strategy.

The strategy is reliant on good information sharing and collaborative working across sectors, for example in delivering the Healthy Schools Programme or contraceptive advice in further education colleges. Better sharing of information will help local authority commissioners to better plan services jointly with the PCT and other delivery partners including the Voluntary and Community Sector, it will also help those setting priorities in the local children and young people's plans to ensure that the priorities under the Being Healthy strand of local plans, genuinely represents the needs and priorities of children and young people in the local area and that agencies are working towards meeting these needs. The voluntary sector has a key role in sharing its expertise in order to reach and support young people who may need support but are not confident in accessing services. Local infrastructure organisations could play a part in this by working with local authorities and local NHS bodies through structures such as the local Children's Trust to share information on how best to design and deliver services which are accessible and meaningful to young people. This also reflects the commitments Government has made in developing child and adolescent friendly services in the strategy.