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To: Children, Families and Education Policy Overview Committee –
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Subject: Statutory Guidance on the Early Years Outcomes Duty

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Summary: The Childcare Act 2006 introduces for the first time, a duty on Local Authorities to improve all young children's outcomes from birth to five years of age, and to reduce inequalities between them, through integrated early childhood services.

Members are requested to note the new statutory requirement.

Introduction

1. (1) The new Early Years Outcomes Duty for Local Authorities and their partners outlines a clear vision of the future for early childhood provision. The consultation document states:

'The vision is for parents, from the time they know they are expecting a child, to be able to see a coherent pattern of accessible child health, early years provision and family support services ahead of them, some free at the point of delivery and some subsidised according to income. A good start in life is seen as essential if all children are to achieve their potential and high quality childhood services will result in better outcomes for young children, their families and society.'

(2) The new duty makes it a priority to

- provide the best start for all children, promoting social mobility so that children are able to fulfil their potential regardless of their family income or background.
- reduce inequalities to narrow the gap between those performing least well and the rest, improving outcomes for those children most at risk of poor outcomes because of deprivation and disadvantage.
- deliver integrated early childhood services in ways that provide a seamless experience for parents and children that makes a real difference to the life chances of all children.

(3) Primary Care Trusts, Strategic Health Authorities and Jobcentres Plus are under reciprocal duties to work with Local Authorities and to have regard to the new statutory duty that becomes effective from April 2008.

(4) This duty will ensure that parents and young children in every community are able to access effective, integrated early childhood services.

Key Principles for Ensuring Success

2. (1) The duties are deliberately framed to place the reduction of inequalities in the context of improvements for all children. The guidance is clear that, as a nation, we will not be successful in raising standards until we tackle child poverty with its far-reaching impact on all outcomes.

(2) Jobcentres working in partnership with the Local Authority (who co-ordinate sufficient childcare) can make a real difference in supporting parents to make the transition to work and by doing so, reduce child poverty, parental unemployment and low income.

(3) To meet this duty the following arrangements are proposed under the auspices of the Children's Trust

- (a) Establishing a strategic partnership, led by the Director of Children's Services
- (b) Partnership working with agencies, parents and other parties
- (c) Involving parents and children and taking account of their views
- (d) A clear agenda for continuous quality improvement in provision and a shared understanding of high quality
- (e) Using a commissioning process to reshape services and fill gaps
- (f) Maximising access and benefits to all customers.
- (g) Ensuring that services are of high quality and improve outcomes for young children.
- (h) Using data and research information from all partners, effectively.
- (i) Agreeing arrangements with partners for the management of pooled budgets.

Key Structures

3. (1) It is essential that the steps that the strategic partnership takes to deliver the vision and to fulfil these duties are embedded within the wider framework associated with the Joint Commissioning Framework, the Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP) and the Local Area Agreement. This will involve

(2) All partners contributing to and developing the CYPP.

(3) Consulting with the private, voluntary and independent sectors so that provision matches actual need.

(4) Local Strategic Partnerships providing the forum for setting the vision for a local area and within that, the children's trust arrangements providing the strategic vision for children, young people and their families.

(5) Early years as a key part of regeneration and employment strategies so that partnerships link local initiatives utilising fully opportunities.

(6) Involving relevant partners within the Local Authority and forging strong links by sharing objectives.

It will be up to the Children's Trust to determine

- who to involve beyond their statutory partners
- how to make the links with the education and care of older children and adults
- how to develop further vocational education and training available as preparation for work
- where necessary, how to link with housing departments or with public transport

(7) Local strategic partnerships will require strong evidence bases for their local development which must include full consultation with families. They will need to find ways of drawing together all sources of information and it may be that there is a key role for community organisations in reaching out.

Statutory Targets

4. (1) Targets based on Foundation Stage outcomes will be agreed through annual negotiations between LAs and National Strategy officers and the Department for Children, Schools and Families.

(2) The new targets will have two elements

- (a) Raising standards for all children
- (b) Reducing the gap between children in the lowest 20% and the median child.

Recommendations

5. Members of the Children, Families and Education Policy Overview Committee are asked to:

- (a) To consider the implication of this new statutory duty
- (b) To note the report

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Background Documents:

Raising Standards, Improving Outcomes – Guidance on the Early Years Outcomes Duty

Every Child Matters: Change for Children - www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/

Childcare Act 2006 – <http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2006/20060021.htm>

Education and Inspections Act 2006 -
<http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2006/20060040.htm>

Ten Year Strategy - <http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/resources-and-practice/search/IG00058/>

Code of Practice on the Provision of Free Nursery Education Places -
<http://www.surestart.gov.uk/publications/index.cfm?document=1747>

Sure Start Children's Centres –
<http://www.surestart.gov.uk/improvingquality/guidance/practiceguidance/>

Participation, co-operation and inter-agency working

Statutory guidance on the duties placed on local authorities and other key partners to co-operate in order to improve the wellbeing of children and young people –
<http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/resources-and-practice/search/IG00012/>

“Working with Voluntary and Community Organisations to Deliver Change for Children and Young People” and “Engaging the Voluntary and Community Sectors in Children's Trusts” are available from
www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/strategy/voluntaryandcommunity

Building a Culture of Participation
www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/participation/buildingaculture