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11MILLION reasons to take  
seriously the health and wellbeing  
of children and young people

Professor Sir Al Aynsley-Green

Children's Commissioner for England



**"The 11 MILLION children and young people  
in England have a voice"**

Children's Commissioner for England,  
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# The Children's Commissioner for England



- Created by Act of Parliament 2004
- Independent
- Promote the views and interests of ***all*** children and young people
- Must use the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)
- Wide powers including power of entry
- Report to Parliament

# The power of entry



- Power to enter announced or unannounced any premises except a child's home
- Power to interview any child, and in private if the child agrees
- Locations include
  - Prison
  - Immigration and deportation centres
  - Schools
  - Health facilities; secure mental health centres

# Why do we need a Children's Commissioner?



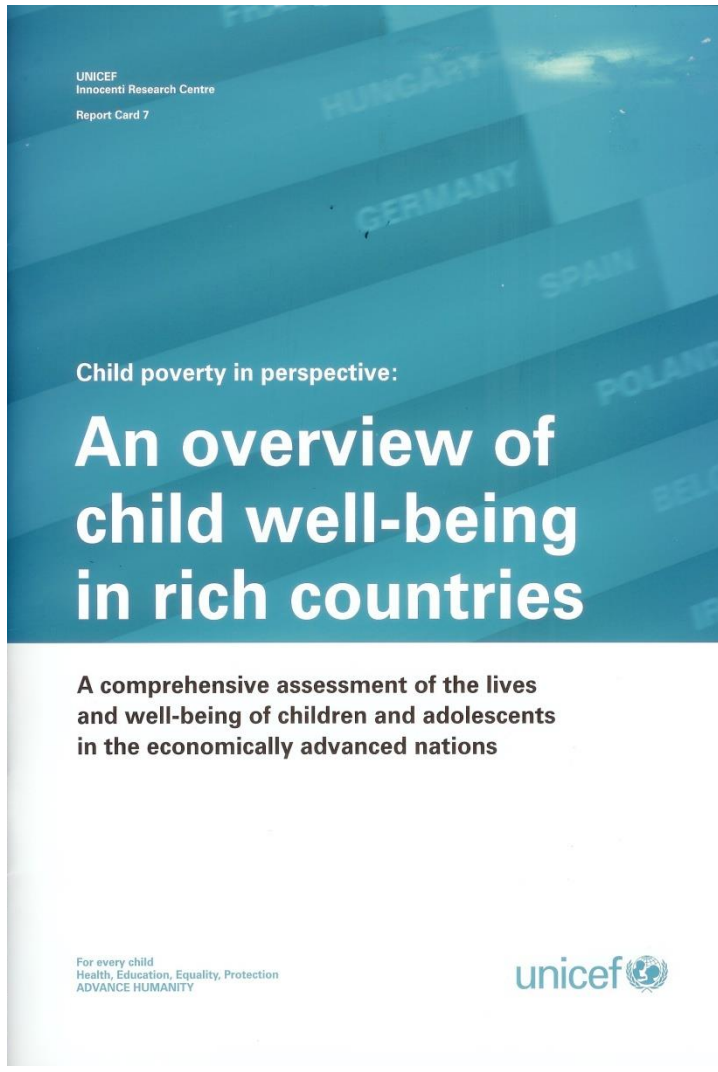
*As a nation England has been  
failing its children and young people!*

# UNICEF Report 2007



40 separate indicators in  
6 groups:

- Material well being
- Health and safety
- Education
- Peer and family relationships
- Behaviours and risks
- Subjective well being



# The evidence



The UK is ***bottom*** of the table overall

Bottom for 5 of the 6 groups of indicators

- High poverty
- Poor health
- Poor family and peer relationships
- Risky behaviour – alcohol, early sex & teen pregnancy
- Low expectations
- Highest number not in employment, education or trainings
- Low self-assessed well being

# The top performing countries



1. Netherlands
2. Sweden
3. Denmark
4. Finland
5. Spain
6. Switzerland
7. Norway

What do we have to do to improve?



# The Children's Commissioner:

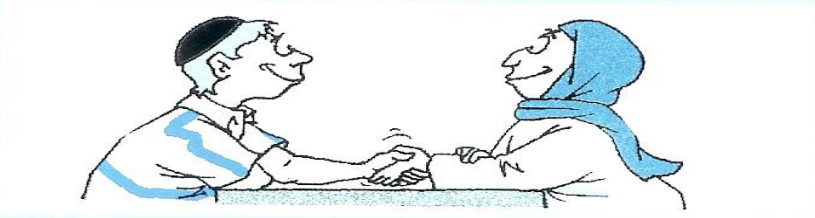


- *Expose* issues
- *Provoke* discussion and debate
- *Influence* public, parents, and politicians through effective *advocacy*
- *Inform* and scrutinises policy
- *Hold organisations* to account
- *Celebrate the contributions* of children and young people to society through their *participation*

*If children have a right to be educated, then they have the obligation to learn as much as their capabilities allow and, where possible, share their knowledge and experience with others.*

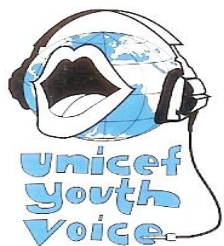
*If all children have a right to a full life, then they should also lend help so the needy, the disadvantaged, and the victims of discrimination also enjoy this right.*

*If children have a right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, then they also have the obligation to respect other's thoughts or religious principles.*



You can probably think of many more.

Derived from a Universal Declaration of Human Responsibilities, by an organisation called World Goodwill, composed of ex-heads of state.



Check out UNICEF UK's website for children and young people:  
[www.therightssite.org.uk](http://www.therightssite.org.uk)

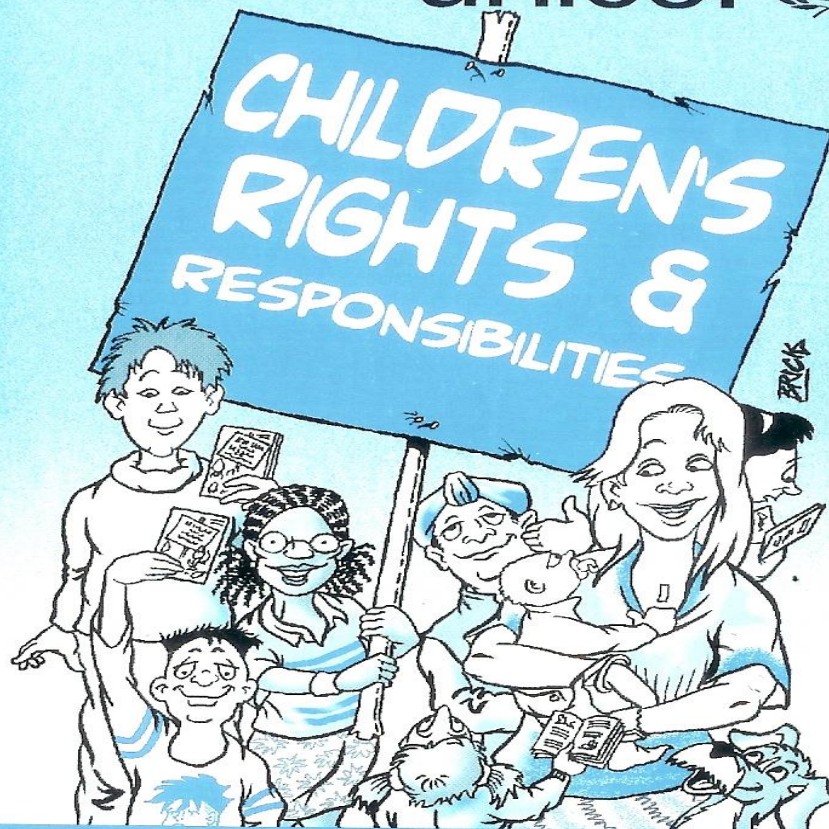
**UNICEF website: [www.unicef.org.uk](http://www.unicef.org.uk)**

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Quote code: 32124

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**unicef** 



Cartoons by Brick

**This leaflet contains a summary of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child**

*A convention is an agreement between countries to obey the same law. The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland agreed to obey (ratified) the Convention on the Rights of the Child on 16 December, 1991.*

*That means our government now has to make sure that every child has all the rights in the Convention, except the two they have 'reservations' about (Articles 10 and 37).*



# Awareness of the UNCRC



- In England <25% children and young people have heard of the UNCRC
- Only a minority of professionals working with children have read and understood the UNCRC

Article 42 UNCRC:

*The Government should make the Convention known to parents and children*

***What is the circumstance in Japan?***

# The right to participation

## Article 12



*Children have the right to say what they think should happen when adults are making decisions that affect them, and to have their opinions taken into account.*

# Participation, ***not*** consultation!



- ***Consultation*** implies that adults ask questions and adults decide
- ***Participation*** means that children and young people are *seriously* engaged in making decisions that affect their lives



Designing our premises

Working with 5-8 yr olds













Appointing all members of staff

# Reality Check:



Do we **REALLY** respect their views?

- 11 MILLION has not recruited where children feel that the candidate lacks empathy
- I have been appraised by children

# Getting children and young people's views







Listening to children  
in school

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Listening to young people  
on ***their*** territory

# Young Commissioners

*Children & young people speak for themselves locally*







Listening to those with  
physical and learning  
disability

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# Defining our strategy for 2008-9





# Young people want:



- Security and safety, end to family breakdown and violence
- School life
  - End to bullying and racism
  - Less anxiety and stress
  - Better school environment – to enjoy school more
  - Non-judgemental information on sex and sexuality
  - Knowledge and help in dealing with alcohol and drugs
- Someone to turn to
- To be asked, listened to, heard and respected



# Children and young people voted on 14 key issues



The top votes were for:

- Violence, abuse and bullying
- Respect and discrimination

These are in our business plan for 2008-9,  
and children will decide how to spend half of  
our project money

# The culture of violence



- Violence is everywhere
- Marketing of violence
- Violence in sport
- Violence in the home
  - Domestic violence
  - Child abuse
- Bullying
  - In the workplace
  - In and outside schools

# Physical punishment



Spare the rod and spoil the child!

# Smacking children

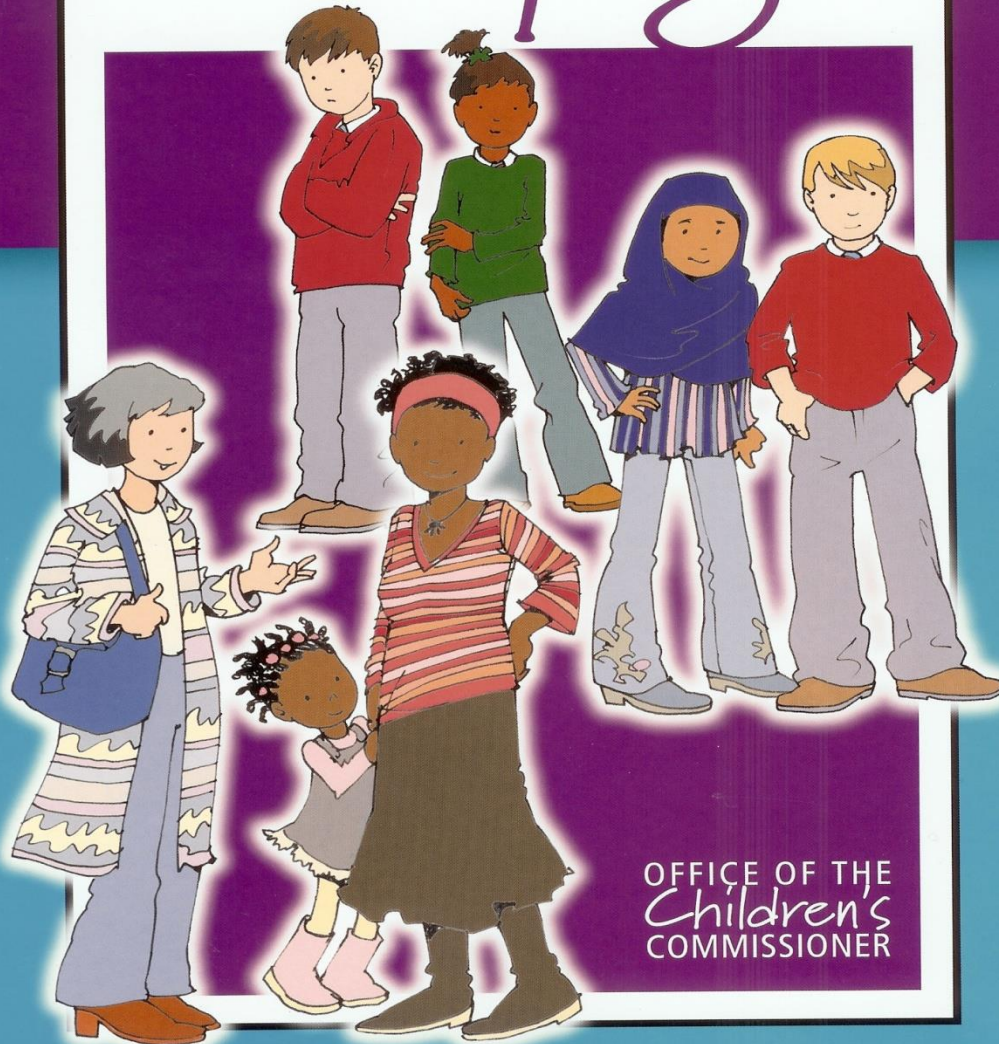


*All four UK Commissioners for  
Children call upon Government  
to ban the physical punishment of  
children **BUT** coupled with investing  
in Positive Parenting  
(January 2006)*



**JOURNEYS -**  
children and young people  
talking about

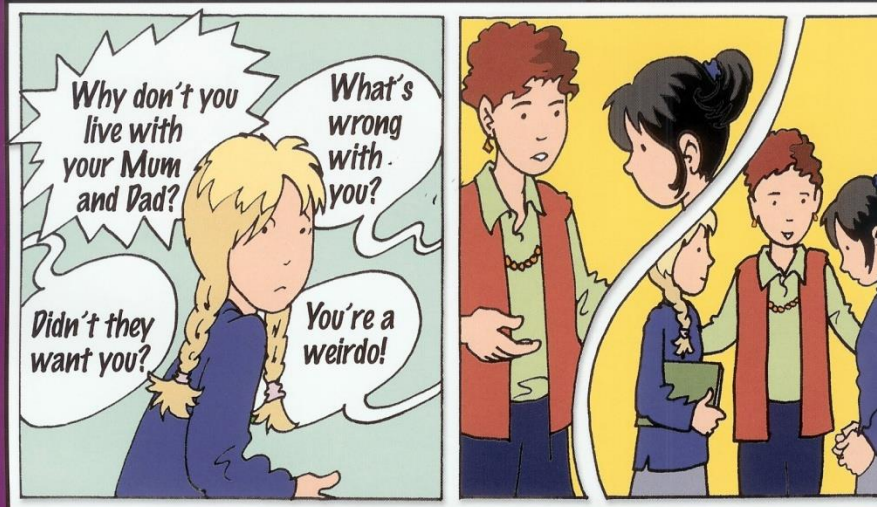
# Bullying



OFFICE OF THE  
*Children's*  
COMMISSIONER



## Sara's Journey



I was bullied from year 9 to year 11 basically because I was in care. I'd just come into care. People had the wrong ideas about people in care, like they're in the wrong and they said nasty things when I came to the school.

They should have covered it earlier in education so that children understand, because people often tell them wrong things about children in care, like keep away from them. That's what their parents tell them.

The girl who started it was the main person in the class. Everybody followed her. The teacher saw it and didn't really comment.

It got worse and eventually I didn't want to come to school.

If teachers aren't going to say anything, the children end up having all the power. The girl that started the bullying had actually been bullied herself before I came to the school. The teacher was shocked because of that.

They got her to apologise but she tried to make it look like I had made a big thing of it. The next day it was back to square one.

Some people said she was getting beaten by her Dad at home. She might have made it up but it might have been true.

I've never been brought up to stand up for myself. I come from a strict Christian background. You don't hit back but turn the other cheek. I just kept quiet and thought if I said something they'd take the mick, make fun of my name, or anything I said. They probably thought it was funny. But my grades got affected.



The bullying went on for two years and it drove me so far in the end that something just triggered - it wasn't me. There were people chucking something at me and I asked them to stop; then I had no control, I pushed a girl back on her chair. I was scared of myself.

I couldn't concentrate after this, I felt sick each time I had to go to school. My stomach hurt. My foster carer didn't believe me. But then she rang the school and negotiated they'd give me the revision to do at home. I was predicted 'E's and 'U's and I got my grades up to four 'C's and three 'E's even though I didn't turn up for two GCSE exams.

If I hadn't been bullied I'd have better grades. It has made me a stronger person. I am now a befriender for other children in care and I can see that bullying is a common experience. People have to understand that children are in care, because just maybe their parents have some difficulty in coping and they need some time out.

## The COMMISSIONER'S VIEW



Sara's journey reflects unwelcome levels of ignorance and hostility towards young people in care. It shows bullying damaging an already vulnerable young person, affecting her health, well-being, school attendance and attainment. Sara sees her resolution in her own ability to cope, to survive and to move on.



- Young people need to be engaged in learning about difference and social diversity;
- Some young people eventually lash out under the pressure of constant victimisation;
- For some young people the intervention of adults does not resolve the bullying they experience.

**Did you know?** In one study 60% of looked after children

and young people reported being bullied at school.



# Exposing hidden harm:

- 300,000 children with drug misusing parent
- 850,000 children with alcohol misusing parent - Impact of Fetal Alcohol Spectrum
- Parental mental health: ~ 50% of adult mental health patients are parents
- Domestic violence – 14 million episodes in one year
- 175,000 young carers in the UK – high risk of mental health problems

***Think Parent – Think Child***



# Children and young people tell us:



- *‘Nobody understands’*
- *‘I’ve got nobody to talk to’*
- *‘I get bullied at school and the teachers punish me for not doing my homework on time’*
- *‘I really needed help when my mum died’*
- *‘Every school should have a drop in centre’*
- *The Market Place has been fantastic’*



# The burden of poor emotional and mental health:



- Children need good mental health to learn ***but***
- 1 in 10 has a diagnosable mental health disorder
- Particularly vulnerable groups
  - Young carers
  - Children in care
  - Bereavement
  - Disability
  - Children who have been abused
  - Young people with drug or alcohol issues

# What does this mean for schools?



In a 1000 pupil secondary school, at any one time:

- 100 will be suffering significant mental illness
- 50 pupils will be seriously depressed
- 10-20 pupils will have an obsessive compulsive disorder
- 5-10 girls will be affected by eating disorders

***BUT:***

- Only 25% of CYP with clinically significant mental health problems will be accessing the services they need.

***Early recognition and intervention are  
crucially important***

It is time to *celebrate* their contributions as citizens



# 11MILLION

## ‘National Take over day’



- To ***celebrate*** contributions and value of children and young people
- November 23<sup>rd</sup> 2007
- Opportunity to ‘showcase’
- Over 500 organisations signed up
- Over 10,000 children and young people took part



# English government policy for children -where are we now?



# Support from the very top



‘Our objectives are....to make sure that every child of the next generation has the opportunity to flourish, regardless of where they are born, where they grow up, where they are educated’

*Tony Blair, 18 September 2002*



Ending Child Poverty

# Important successes



## Politics

- Secretary of State and Minister for Children, Young People and Families
- National Clinical Director, National Children's Taskforce

## Policy

- *'The Children's Plan'* Government policy for children

## Legislation

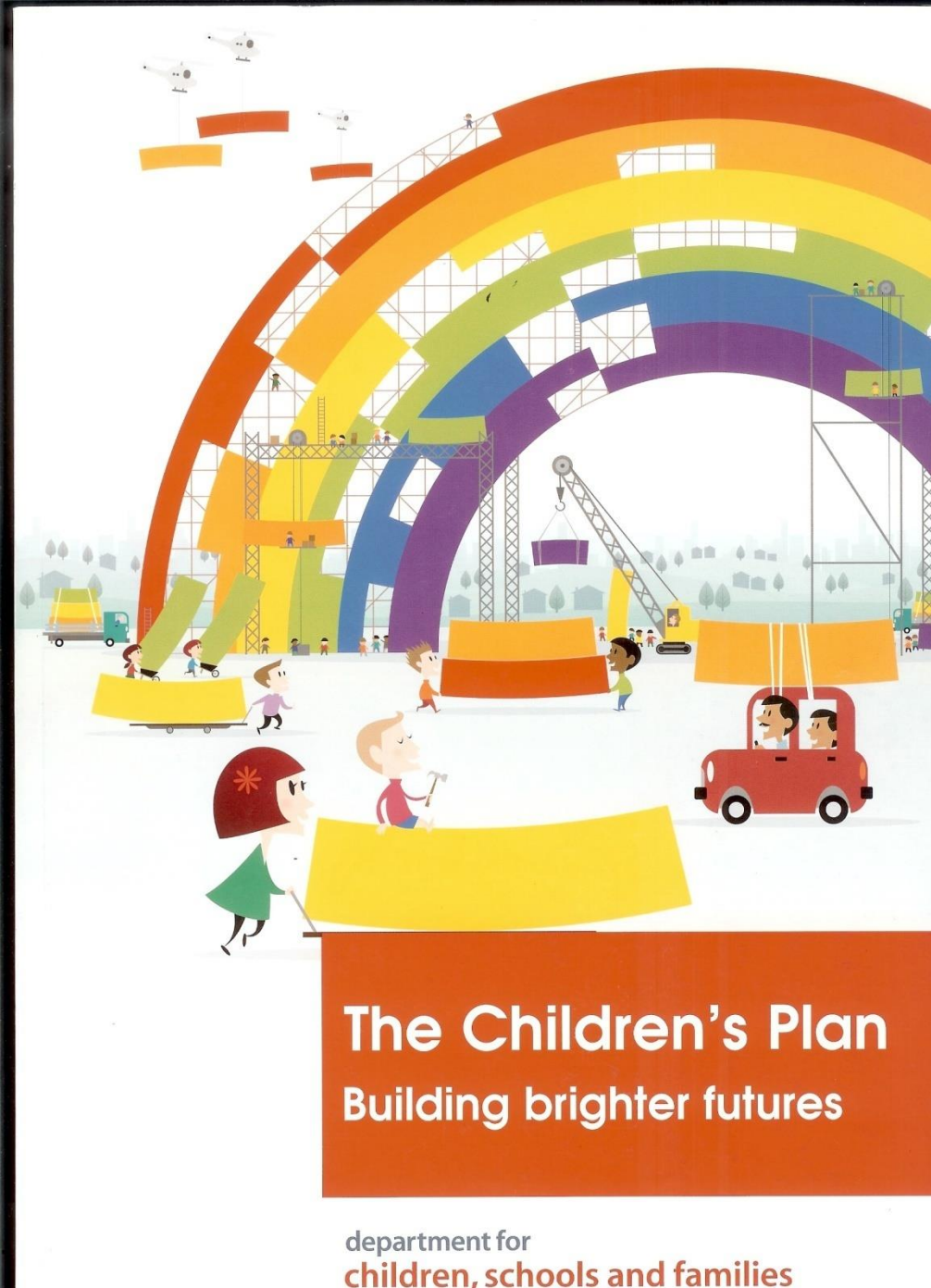
- Children Act 2004:
  - A Commissioner for Children
  - New legislation for local government



# Government Policy for Children 2008

## Five Outcomes:

- Be Healthy
- Stay Safe
- Enjoy and Achieve
- Make a Positive Contribution
- Achieve economic well being



**The Children's Plan**  
Building brighter futures

department for  
children, schools and families

## ECM:CfC OUTCOMES FRAMEWORK

Version 0.4  
12 October 2004  
This replaces all other previous versions

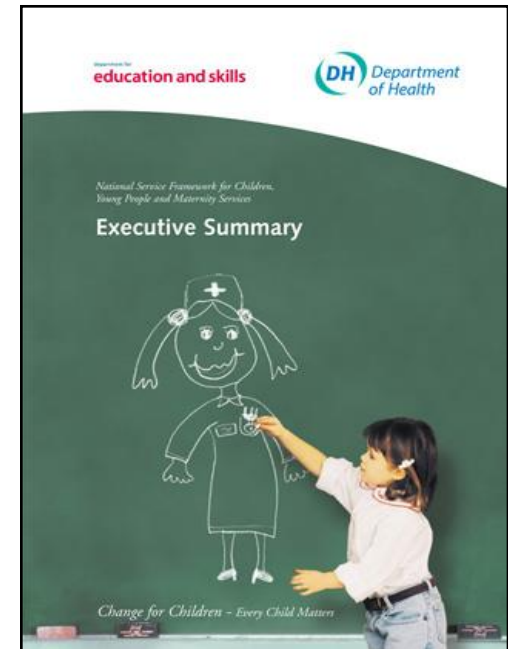


# The Children's National Service Framework

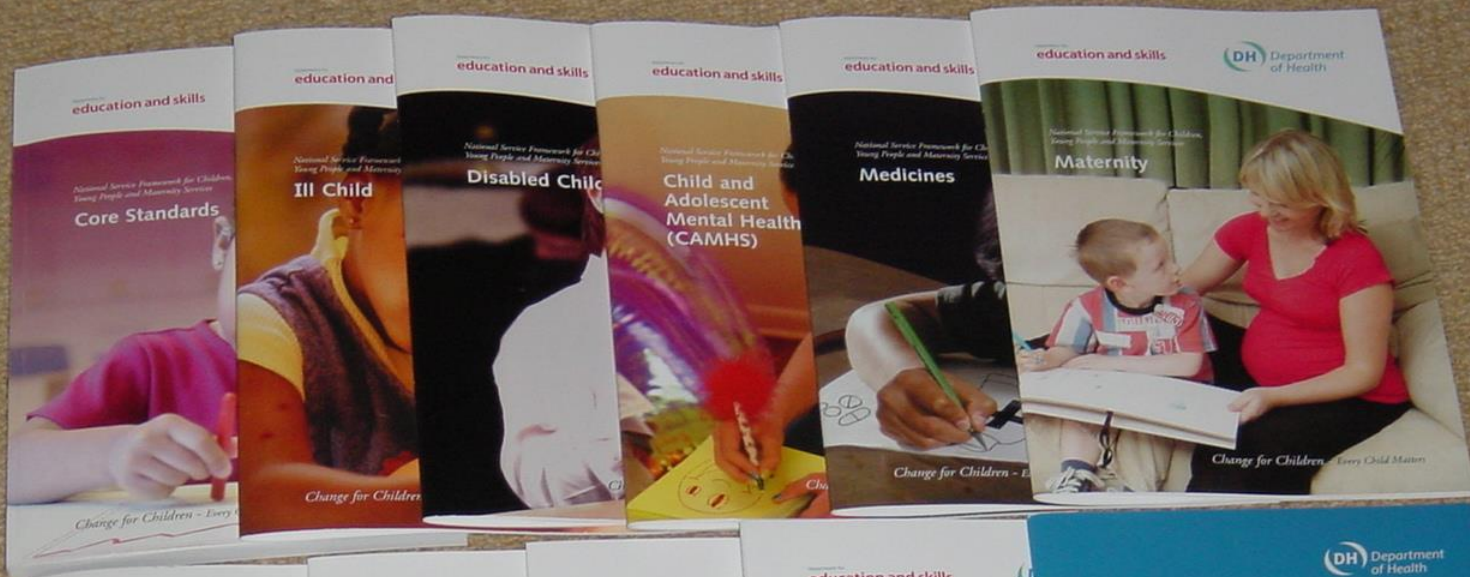
Published in September 2004



- Sets standards of quality for health services that must be implemented
- Defines the how to modernise services in ten years







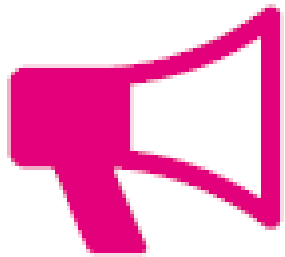


# How is all this relevant in your country?



- How does your society value children and childhood?
- Do children get a good deal?
- Who listens to them?
- Who speaks for their needs?
- Is all well with the services to support them?
- Where do children fit in government policy?
- What is the responsibility of children's professional staff to lead this debate?

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“Children are a living message to a time we will not see.”<sup>1</sup>



**MILLION**



Every child in  
England is special.  
Each is one in 11 million.



Children and young people  
at the heart of 11 MILLION







# MILLION

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