

**United Nations General Assembly's
Special Session on Children:**

A World Fit for Children

**The United Kingdom's National Progress
Report**

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A World Fit For Children: United Kingdom's National Progress Report

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A World Fit For Children: United Kingdom's National Progress Report

Introduction

1. In May 2002 the national delegations at the United Nations General Assembly's Special Session on Children reaffirmed their obligation to "promote and protect the rights and well-being of all children" and pledged to create a World Fit for Children (WFFC). The Special Session developed a Plan of Action which drew together previous commitments and which contributes to the implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).
2. This document is the United Kingdom's National Progress Report against the WFFC Plan of Action and follows UNICEF's suggested format for such reports. It gives an overview of how the UK's policies for children and young people have evolved over the past five years, how these policies have been resourced, and how their impact is monitored. It describes the UK Government's partnerships with key stakeholders, how they help to champion children's views and interests, and how children and young people themselves are actively involved in shaping Government policy. It also briefly summarises the most recent data on children's outcomes, sets out the main challenges for UK children and youth policy and explains how the UK Government is seeking to address these challenges.
3. This Progress Report draws on and complements the United Kingdom's latest UNCRC Periodic Report¹ published in July 2007. This report covers England, Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland, Overseas Territories and the Isle of Man. It provides a more detailed exposition of the UK Government's policies for children and young people.
4. Each of the contributions to the UNCRC Periodic Report - from England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland - was developed through extensive and open consultation with Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs), youth-led bodies and children and young people themselves. For example, in England the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) commissioned a consortium of NGOs to gather the views of children and young people on the implementation of the Convention, as well as NGOs' own views. In Scotland, an initial stakeholder conference was followed by consultation with children and young people and an opportunity to comment on a draft Scottish contribution – including an "unplugged" version for children and young people. In Northern Ireland, two events were held with representatives from the NGO sector, along with a series of meetings held with children and young people, who received a young people's version of the report. In Wales, comments were invited from the UNCRC Monitoring Group, which comprises NGOs and academics concerned with children and young people's rights, and from the Children and Youth Assembly (Funky Dragon).

¹ *The Consolidated 3rd and 4th Periodic Report to UN Committee on the Rights of the Child*, UK Government, 2007, <http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/resources-and-practice/IG00249/>

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5. An additional UK-wide consultation event took place in May 2007, the purpose of which was to gather the views and comments of key NGOs from across the UK which acted as 'critical friends' on the draft UK report. This was followed by a four week consultation period for the NGOs to submit written comments on the draft report, also including the views of children and young people.

6. The policies and activities outlined in this report that pertain to England reflect the Machinery of Government arrangements announced by the Prime Minister on 28 June 2007.

Section One: Major national actions taken for children since 2002 towards the World Fit for Children Targets

Legislation

1.1 The UK Government and the Devolved Administrations have put in place a substantial body of legislation since 2002 which has served further to enshrine children's well-being in law. This legislation encompasses the principles of the UNCRC and creates an effective national framework to support positive outcomes for children.

1.2 For England and Wales, the most important legislation is the Children Act 2004. This gives a clear focus and a new status to children's services, and provides the legal framework for the *Every Child Matters* reforms in England and for implementing the *Rights to Action* agenda in Wales. The Children Act 2004 provides for a range of measures designed to encourage the delivery of more closely integrated children's services, and to improve local accountability for children's services and outcomes for children. The Act also provides for the establishment of a Children's Commissioner for England - an independent champion for children and young people's views and interests, taking account of the UNCRC.

1.3 Also of particular key significance is the Childcare Act 2006, which became the first UK legislation to be devoted to early years and childcare. It places a range of duties on local authorities in England, in particular to improve the well-being of all young children in their area and to reduce inequalities between those achieving the poorest outcomes and the rest. This means that, when improving the outcomes for all children, local authorities are required to improve the outcomes of the most disadvantaged at a faster rate. The 2006 Act also places a duty on local authorities to secure prescribed early years provision free of charge in specified circumstances. At June 2007, the stock of registered childcare places in England stood at over 1.28 million (more than double the 1997 level). In Wales the number of registered childcare places in Wales has increased since 1999 from 54,603 to 67,711 at March 2006.

1.4 In Scotland, the Childcare Strategy aims to provide affordable, accessible, good quality childcare for children in all neighbourhoods. Funding is provided to local authorities to allocate in order to meet local childcare needs. Funding has risen from £5.75m in 1999 to its present level of £44.56m (2007-08). Additional funding is being provided to promote and develop the 'baby-sitters' service. This provides childcare in the child's own home from early morning until late evening 7 days a week. In March 2007, there were 156,814 registered day care places for children.

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National Plans of Action

England

1.5 *Every Child Matters: Change for Children* is the overarching reform programme for children's services in England. It is designed to enable families, local communities and services to work together to improve the lives of all 0 to 19 year olds, and to narrow the gap between those who do well and those who do not. The programme enables children's services to work across professional boundaries, using common processes and terms of reference.

1.6 Each local authority has a Director of Children's Services responsible for driving forward the implementation of *Every Child Matters* locally. Local areas carry out joint analysis of the needs of their local population and prioritise and plan their services, in conjunction with service users, through a Children and Young People's Plan which is regularly reviewed and evaluated.

1.7 *Every Child Matters* takes an outcomes focused approach. It measures progress in improving the lives of children and young people in five broad areas (known as outcomes, which are enshrined in law through the Children Act 2004): Stay Safe; Be Healthy; Enjoy and Achieve; Make A Positive Contribution; and Achieve Economic Well-Being.

Scotland

1.8 Scotland has taken a similar approach to England, building a vision and plan of action for children centred on their needs and wishes, and the outcomes every child should be able to achieve. Scotland's vision is that all of its children should be confident individuals, effective contributors, successful learners and responsible citizens.

1.9 In March 2006, the Scottish Executive published a new Quality Improvement Framework (QIF) for Integrated Children's Services, supporting self-evaluation and performance improvement within and across children's services. The Framework is supported by a suite of key performance indicators, based on the key elements of the vision. The Framework will be embedded within the wider Integrated Children's Services Planning framework and will be a key element in underpinning joint inspections of children's services.

Northern Ireland

1.10 *Our Children and Young People – Our Pledge: A Ten Year Strategy for Children and Young People in Northern Ireland 2006-2016* was launched in June 2006. It sets outcomes for progress in six areas. The strategy is based on a vision statement that includes all children, and is explicitly informed and guided by the UNCRC.

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1.11 The first action plan for the strategy was published in March 2007. All Northern Ireland government departments (including the Northern Ireland Office and the Northern Ireland Court Service) contributed to the action plan. This is the first time that a document has been produced which describes what all the Northern Ireland government departments will be doing on behalf of children and young people. The action plan will be subject to further review one year after publication to allow for potential revision by local Ministers. Thereafter, the action plan will be continually reviewed and produced every three years during the lifetime of the strategy.

Wales

1.12 Wales has taken a rights-based approach to supporting its children and young people. It has drawn up Seven Core Aims for Children and Young People, each based on the UNCRC Articles. The Core Aims underpin the Welsh Assembly Government's *Children and Young People: Rights to Action*, published in 2004. The UN Convention underpinned this and other key overarching policies.

1.13 The Seven Core aims provide a common framework for planning for children and young people throughout Wales, at national and local level. They also form the basis of the reporting structure for the new statutory 3-year Children and Young People's Plans that set out agreed priorities for improving outcomes: the first Plans cover 2008-11. In March 2007 the Assembly Government published a report on progress to date in implementing the UN Convention *Rights in Action: Implementing Children and Young People's Rights in Wales*.

Summary of UK outcomes and aims against World Fit for Children theme

The following table shows how the outcomes and aims within each of the UK's different approaches relate to relevant World Fit for Children themes:

	England (<i>Every Child Matters</i> Outcomes Framework)	Scotland (<i>Getting it Right for Every Child</i> outcomes)	Wales (<i>Rights to Action</i> Seven Core Aims)	Northern Ireland (<i>Our Children and Young People – Our Pledge</i> outcomes)
World Fit For Children themes:				
Promoting healthy lifestyles	Be Healthy	Healthy Active	A Flying Start in Life The best possible health, free from abuse, victimisation and exploitation Play, Leisure,	Healthy

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			Sporting And Cultural Activities	
Promoting quality education	Enjoy and Achieve	Achieving	A Flying Start in Life A comprehensive range of education, training and learning opportunities	Enjoying, learning and achieving
Child protection against abuse, exploitation and violence	Stay Safe	Safe Nurtured	A Flying Start in Life The best possible health, free from abuse, victimisation and exploitation A safe home and community	Living in safety and with stability
Additional themes adopted by the UK:				
Inclusion & participation	Make a Positive Contribution	Respected and Responsible Included	Treated with respect and have their race and cultural identity recognised Play, Leisure, Sporting And Cultural Activities	Contributing positively to community and society Living in a society which respects their rights
Domestic poverty and material deprivation	Achieve Economic Well-Being	Included	A Flying Start in Life Children and young people not disadvantaged by poverty	Experiencing economic and environmental well-being

Sustainable Development

1.14 The Sustainable Schools initiative in England aims to empower children to lead sustainable lives by teaching them the skills and behaviours needed to become part of the solution to the world's big challenges, rather than part of the problem. Sustainable Schools are about helping young people and improving the communities and environments in which they live. By becoming sustainable, a school can save money, improve the health, fitness and emotional well-being of its pupils, and contribute to local social and environmental goals.

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1.15 During the 2006-07 academic school year the Department for Children Schools and Families in England ran a Sustainable Schools *Year of Action* which aimed to give all schools information about the Sustainable Schools strategy; encourage schools to address the strategy's goals in their school development plans; have an impact on pupils' knowledge and understanding of sustainability issues and/or improved the schools' environmental performance. The Department has put in place challenge, support and evaluation measures to help schools in England maintain their commitment to 2020.

1.16 The Department is also working closely with the Sustainable Development Commission (SDC) to formulate an action plan in response to the SDC's report *Every Child's Future Matters* (August 2007). The SDC's report highlights the environmental dimension of children's wellbeing and the potential value of sustainable development as a means of delivering Every Child Matters. It recommends further work on the environmental dimension of children and young people's wellbeing. Three priority areas are identified for action: road traffic; green spaces; climate change.

1.17 Clearly the environment is critical to children, young people and families' everyday well-being and to their prospects for better outcomes in the future. The DCSF wants to build a greater focus on sustainable development in policy making and local delivery. For example, the funding available for the roll-out of Sure Start Children's Centres will cover the up-front costs of enabling new or refurbished buildings to meet high standards of sustainability.

1.18 The issues raised within the SDC's report will be taken into consideration as part of the development of the Children's Plan, a comprehensive review of policy for children and young people, in England, that is currently in progress (see Para. 4.8).

Overseas support towards delivering the Millennium Development Goals

1.19 The Department for International Development (DfID) seeks to improve the conditions of children in the countries with which it works, for example, through programme spending in basic services such as health, education, water and sanitation. It is difficult to identify specific expenditure by DfID on children, because of its integration into wider spending and because of the nature of the social and economic reform programmes of partner governments. However, notable resource allocations include: £8.5 billion from April 2006 in support of education in developing countries over the next 10 years; £252 million over five years to the Government of India's Reproductive and Child Health programme; £8.9m in total to the ILO's International Programme for the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC) for work in the Greater Mekong region.

1.20 In 2006, the UK was the second largest donor providing £105m with £19m as core funding to UNICEF. Approximately 80% of DFID funding to UNICEF is non-core financing. In 2007, DFID increased its core contribution from £19m to £21m to UNICEF.

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1.21 The Scottish Executive established an International Development Fund (IDF) of £3 million per year to support a number of projects run by NGOs, some of which are aimed at supporting children and protecting their rights. For example, work with children with HIV/AIDS; reducing infant and maternal mortality; and ensuring children have the right to education.

1.22 *Wales for Africa: A Framework for Welsh Assembly Government Action on International Sustainable Development* (September 2006) outlines how the Welsh Assembly Government will make a distinctive contribution to delivery of the UN Millennium Development Goals. The Framework focuses on African countries with which Wales has existing links, including Lesotho, which has been twinned with Wales since 1986. Through the Lesotho Teacher Placement Programme, 24 teachers from Wales will undertake six month placements in schools in Lesotho during the period 2005-08.

Section Two: Resource trends for children

2.1 The UK's investment in children is substantial and wide ranging. However, it is not possible to provide an accurate UK-wide figure, or an assessment of the percentage of Gross Domestic Product spent on children. This is because of a combination of factors such as: devolved administration and differing policy priorities; a variety of ways in which budgets are allocated and data collected; devolution of resources to the front line; and a deliberate drive to reduce the burden of reporting on local government and front-line providers.

2.2. However, it is possible to offer an overview of some of the main sources of funding on services for children in the UK²:

Education funding: Expenditure on education for under 18s has risen from around £33 billion in 2000-01 to over £50 billion in 2005-06, representing an increase from 3.4% of GDP to 4.1%

Health funding: In England there has been record investment in the NHS – rising from £33 billion in 1996-97 to £92.2 billion in 2007-08.

Child benefit: Expenditure on child benefit rose from £8.6 billion in 2000-01 to £9.6 billion in 2004-05

Children's Services: Expenditure on children's services in England (excluding education) has doubled between 1997 and 2006 - from £3.35 billion to £7.46 billion. This was an average annual increase of 8% in real terms of which £1.64 billion (over the same period) was for new investment in early years.

2.3 There is also significant expenditure in other areas, such as the Working Tax Credit and Child Tax Credit, proportions of which are spent on children but which expenditure cannot be disaggregated. In addition to these examples of large scale expenditure, there is significant investment by the UK Government and devolved administrations in other specific policies which benefit children.

² UK Education figures (excluding HE and student support) are taken from the annual Public Expenditure Statistical Analysis (PESA) report from HMT and the ONS. Spending classified as 'education' here is consistent with the UN 'classification of the functions of government' (COFOG) system for classifying govt spending. Child Benefit figures are taken from the Tax Benefit Reference Manuals for the relevant years.

The figures above do not include: i) DCSF spending on children not classified as education (i.e. largely if not entirely social protection spending); ii) other Government Departments' expenditure on children - because expenditure is not disaggregated by age group; iii) Devolved administrations' spending on other services for children - not picked up by first and second bullets above; iv) Children's Social Services - outturn figures are published for England, but not the UK as a whole; v) Child Tax Credit and Working Tax Credit - the WTC will in part be attributable to families with children, but cannot be broken down.

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2.4 Allocations to local authorities to support education and other services for children in Scotland have risen from £3,381m in 2002-03 to £4,428m in 2007-08. These resources support a wide range of services including the provision of school education, school building and refurbishment, social care, pre-school education, nursery and childcare, services for looked after and vulnerable children, youth work, youth justice and the costs of inspectorates which ensure the quality of these services.

2.5 Following an exercise to identify Assembly Government and Assembly Government-funded spending on children's services and initiatives, the Welsh Assembly Government found that, of the Assembly Government and Local Authorities' budgets for 2005-06, around 30 per cent was used to the benefit of children.

2.6 In July 2007, research was published in Northern Ireland on the comparative levels of public expenditure on children in Northern Ireland relative to counterparts in the rest of the UK.

Section Three: Monitoring instruments to track the World Fit for Children and Millennium Development Goals targets

Overview

3.1 The UK Government and the devolved administrations are committed to the use of data to inform policy development and have in place a range of systems to collect aggregated data relating to children and their outcomes at both national and local level. For example, these systems include requirements for local authorities in England to provide statutory data returns which can be co-ordinated and assembled nationally, and such reports are the subject of frequent debates in individual administrations. The nature of these data collections, and the subsequent reports and debating processes, closely reflects the statutory basis on which information is gathered.

3.2 As set out in Section One, within the UK and the devolved administrations there is a variety of arrangements in place for delivering improved outcomes for children. These outcomes broadly relate to the World Fit for Children themes and Millennium Development Goals. Each territory has its own mechanisms for monitoring progress against outcomes for children.

3.3 In England there is a Ministerial Cabinet Committee on children's policy. At official level, a Permanent Secretary chaired group will oversee new Public Service Agreements (PSAs) (see paragraph 3.5) which support each *Every Child Matters* outcome. Regionally, Government operates through nine Government Offices in England. These co-ordinate central government policies and help local authorities to implement them at local level. Each Government Office has a Director of Children and Learners responsible for children's policies and services across their region. Locally, children's services are delivered through partnership arrangements (known as children's trusts) between each of the 150 English local authorities and their partners. Each local authority has a Director of Children's Services who is accountable for children's services and outcomes for children in their local area.

3.4 A key element of *Every Child Matters: Change for Children* is the 'improvement cycle' for local children's services. The purpose of this is to bring together national performance review, monitoring and assessment requirements to ensure that local processes support and drive the integration of children's services and deliver against the five *Every Child Matters* outcomes.

3.5 Public Service Agreements (PSAs) are transparent commitments which the UK Government is held accountable for. PSAs are an integral part of the Government's public expenditure framework, helping to ensure value for money from public services, and that outcomes are delivered in return for resources. Progress in delivering these targets is monitored closely and reported in annual Departmental reports. The Government has set a number

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of PSAs relating to outcomes for children which range across several Government Departments.

UNCRC Periodic Report

3.6 The UK submitted its Initial Report to the United Nations in March 1994. Its most recent Periodic Report was submitted in July 2007. This Report is intended to enable the Committee on the Rights of the Child to make a comprehensive assessment of the UK's progress in relation to the Convention's implementation. As described in the Introduction to this update, the UNCRC Periodic Report includes the views of children and young people.

Children Act (1989) Report

3.7 From time to time, the Government lays before Parliament a consolidated report on the Children Act (1989). This Report, which covers England, is based on the Government Objectives for Children's Social Services and provides information drawn from statistical collections and research. It covers, for example, issues related to children in care; protection from harm; the life chances of children in need, children looked after, and care leavers; services for disabled children and their families; and children's participation. It also covers resource and workforce issues.

Surveys

Tellus 2

3.8 The Tellus 2 survey is an example of how the Government, in England, is embedding the views of children and young people into the way it does business. It asks children and young people a series of questions about how they feel about their lives and the services they receive locally, across the five Every Child Matters outcomes. The survey ran during May 2007 and the results of the survey are currently being analysed. It is planned to run the survey annually for at least the next two years.

3.9 The survey has several purposes: to give local areas a tool to compare how local children feel and to inform local planning; to inform Annual Performance Assessment (APA) inspections of local authorities; to give more detailed information which allows comparison Local Authority performance; and to inform policy.

Millennium Cohort Study

3.10 The main objective of the Millennium Cohort Study (MCS) is to collect longitudinal data on the health, lifestyle, education, employment and income of individuals in families with children born in 2000-2001 in the UK and to see how these factors affect outcomes and achievements later in life. The MCS covers topics that were neglected in previous cohort studies such as father's involvement, childcare and grandparents. The sample was boosted to include more families from areas with a high proportion of ethnic minority groups

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(England only) and families from areas of high child poverty rates (all UK countries) to enable adequate analysis of these groups. There are also boosted samples in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. Overall 18,500 families were interviewed in sweep 1 of the study; around 15,500 families were interviewed for the second sweep and around 15,200 in the third sweep at age 5.

Families and Children Study (FACS)

3.11 The main objectives of FACS are to:

- evaluate the effectiveness of the Government's work incentive measures in terms of helping people into work, improving living standards and improving child outcomes;
- compare the living standards and outcomes for children and for families across the income distribution;
- compare changes in family circumstances over time.

3.12 FACS also aims to provide commentary on longer-term objectives such as the Government's Public Service Agreement to eradicate child poverty within a generation. It also provides data on employment related behaviour of parents and outcomes for children, such as educational attainment, health and behaviour.

3.13 Further information, including links to reports and other publications, may be found on the DWP [FACS](#) web pages, the National Centre for Social Research [Families and Children Study](#) web pages and, the [UK data Archive](#)

National Evaluation of Sure Start

3.14 The National Evaluation of Sure Start (NESS) is a comprehensive, long-term evaluation that will determine whether Sure Start Local Programmes (SSLPs) are effective by tracking 8,000 children and their families over time. It will investigate:

- whether Sure Start Local Programmes (SSLPs) are effective in improving child and family outcomes and have wider impacts on the communities in which they operate;
- how SSLPs have been developed, whether the way services are delivered is effective, and what constitutes best practice; and
- how cost effective SSLPs are.

3.15 NESS began in January 2001 and will run for 7 years in the first instance. It is being carried out by a consortium of academics and practitioners. All reports can be accessed via the National Evaluation website at www.ness.bbk.ac.uk.

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Youth Cohort Study

3.16 The Youth Cohort Study of England and Wales is a series of longitudinal surveys that contacts a sample of an academic year-group or 'cohort' of young people in the spring following completion of compulsory education (age 16/17). There are usually three more annual contacts. Cohorts are generally sampled (from Year 11 school rolls) at two year intervals (and therefore the four year cohort studies are overlapping). The survey looks at young people's education and labour market experience, their training and qualifications and a range of other issues including youth-social issues, attitudes and behaviour. To date the YCS covers 13 cohorts and over thirty surveys.

Longitudinal Study of Young People

3.17 The Longitudinal Study of Young People in England (known as *Next Steps* to its participants) was launched in March 2004 to provide an evidence base for policies designed to support the transitions that young people experience from education to labour market. Specific policy questions that will be answered include: understanding the role of family on educational and career matters; information on educational aspirations and experiences in early teens; monitoring the level of disadvantage experienced by different groups of young people; evaluating government initiatives such as Excellence in Cities, labour market programmes, and Education Maintenance Allowances.

3.18 The initial issued sample was over 21,000 young people drawn from Year 9 school rolls in England in early 2004. There was over-sampling for key ethnic minority groups and those pupils in schools where there is a high level of entitlement to free school meals. Four Waves have been carried out so far and all of these had interviews for both young people and at least one parent.

Overseas support

3.19 The Department for International Development (DFID) has a number of PSAs which are based on the Millennium Development Goals. Details of the PSAs can be found at: <http://www.dfid.gov.uk/aboutdfid/psa-sda.asp>. DFID produces an annual Autumn Performance Report which sets out progress against the PSAs. Progress against the report is also covered in DFID's annual Departmental Report.

3.20 In July the International Development (Reporting and Transparency) Act 2006 passed into law. The Act requires the Secretary of State for International Development to report annually on various areas, including expenditure on international aid, progress towards the United Nations target for Official Development Assistance (ODA) to make up 0.7% of gross national income (GNI) by 2013, and the effectiveness and transparency of aid. The

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Act's requirements will be reflected in DFID's 2007 Departmental and Annual Report.

3.21 In addition, Country Assistance Plans set out how DFID aims to contribute to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals in various countries. They start from the basis of our partner country's Poverty Reduction Strategy and set out in detail how DFID will work as part of the international development effort to support a country's strategy for reducing poverty. They include a framework for annual assessment of DFID's performance in implementing the plan. Major reviews of Country Assistance Plans are to be undertaken every three to four years.

Section Four: Enhancing partnerships, alliances for children and participation

The Children's Commissioners

4.1 Children's Commissioners have been established across the UK. Each of the Commissioners has a remit appropriate to their own local circumstances, although they work together for the benefit of all the UK's children. The four UK Commissioners have also come together with the Irish Commissioner to create the British and Irish Network of Ombudsmen and Children's Commissioners (BINOCC) to facilitate their overlapping roles, and to agree an approach on issues concerning the British Isles.

4.2 The post of Children's Commissioner for Wales was established in 2000, and the first Commissioner was appointed in 2001. The Commissioner acts as an independent champion for children and young people in Wales. His or her principal aim is to safeguard and promote the rights and welfare of children and in doing so he or she has a duty to have regard to the UNCRC. The Children's Commissioner for Wales reports annually to the Welsh Assembly.

4.3 The Commissioner for Children and Young People for Northern Ireland was established in 2003 and is independent of government. The Commissioner's primary aim is to safeguard and promote the rights and best interests of children and young people and, in determining how to exercise his functions, must have regard to the relevant provisions of the UNCRC. The Commissioner must lay a copy of his/her annual report before the Northern Ireland Assembly. The report can cover any matter concerning rights & best interests of children, and it may be produced in a child friendly version. He or she must send a report of any formal investigation to the authority concerned and to the relevant bodies.

4.4 The Office of the Children's Commissioner for Scotland is independent of the Scottish Executive and their primary function is to promote and safeguard the rights of children with particular emphasis on the rights set out in the UNCRC. The first Scottish Commissioner took up post in April 2004. The Children's Commissioner for Scotland reports annually to the Scottish Parliament. He or she may lay any other reports on her functions before Parliament as considered appropriate, and must publish any report laid before Parliament. The report must be published in a child friendly version. He or she must also lay report on any investigation, containing recommendations, before Parliament.

4.5 The Children's Commissioner for England is responsible for England, and for non-devolved issues affecting children and young people in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. The Commissioner is charged with promoting awareness of the views and interests of children in England. This provides a broad strategic remit which must be discharged within the framework of the five *Every Child Matters* outcomes and with regard to the UNCRC. The Children's Commissioner for England was set up to operate independently of

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Government. The Commissioner reports annually to Parliament via the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families.

The Children's Rights Director for England

4.6 The post of Children's Rights Director (CRD) was established through the Care Standards Act 2000. The Children's Rights Director works with specific groups of particularly vulnerable children, such as those living away from home in regulated settings such as children's homes, foster care and residential special schools, and those receiving support from children's social care services.

4.7 The CRD's role is to ensure that the rights and welfare of these vulnerable children and young people are properly safeguarded and promoted within the work of Ofsted (the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills). The CRD advises on changes needed to regulations, standards and government guidance about welfare in the services the Commission inspects or reviews. CRD also advises Ofsted on its methods of registration, inspection and responding to complaints.

Stakeholder involvement

4.8 In England, the Government is currently developing a *Children's Plan* which will set out the vision for children and children's services and delivery plans. It will put these within the context of the Government's longer term ambitions to improve outcomes for children as set out in *Every Child Matters*.

4.9 Three working groups of expert practitioners – organised around the 0 to 7, 8 to 13, and 14 to 19 age ranges - have been set up to look at how best to meet the challenges within the themes of prevention, personalisation, positive childhood and families. The groups will produce a report outlining their recommendations. In addition, a national consultation, *Time to Talk*, was launched on 6 September 2007 to stimulate debate among the public and stakeholders. Through it the Department for Children, Schools and Families is seeking the views of experts, parents, young people and anyone who works directly with children. The consultation includes a range of activity including: a *Time to Talk* website; posters and leaflets in local community venues; and national and regional media coverage targeting parents and young people.

4.10 The Children's Plan will be informed by the consultation work set out above and will build on the Department for Children, Schools and Families' existing plans. The Department is currently developing plans to ensure that the *Children's Plan* has an ongoing impact on the way it works and engages children and families.

4.11 The Department for Children, Schools and Families in England is committed to engaging stakeholders in its work programmes and policy development. It works closely with other government departments and a wide range of individuals/external organisations (e.g through consultations, stakeholder fora, workshops, meetings with ministers/officials etc) towards

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this end. The following are just some examples of the numerous stakeholder groups that the Department meets with on a regular basis.

4.12 The Government commissioned National Children's Bureau, an NGO, to manage the Department's Children and Youth Board (CYB) for 2007-08. The CYB was established in 2004 to provide advice to the Department's Ministers and officials. Members of the Board gather the views of their peers on key issues that affect them and provide direct advice on the development of national policy and practice. The CYB comprises 25 young people aged between 9 and 18 and they are drawn from the 9 Government office regions in England.

4.13 The Children's Inter Agency Group (CIAG) acts as a "critical friend" of the UK Government and also works closely with officials in an advisory capacity on various issues, including policy development – for example, the development of the 10 Year Youth Strategy and the Care Matters White Paper. The CIAG was established independently of the Department and brings together key statutory and voluntary organisations delivering services to children, young people and families. The purpose of the Group is to lead a more integrated and effective approach to improving outcomes for children, young people and their families in England, through building consensus between the key statutory and Third Sector agencies concerned with children.

4.14 The Board of Stakeholders was established following a commitment in the Green Paper *Every Child Matters (2003)*, to advise the Government to ensure the effective delivery of the programme of change for children and young people and to improve the cohesiveness of Government policy on children and young people. It comprises a broad range of organisations that are critical to the effective implementation of the *Every Child Matters: Change for Children* programme and - because of the cross-cutting nature of the programme – it includes Ministers from across Government

Children and young people's involvement

4.15 Since 1999, the UK Government and devolved administrations have made the participation of children and young people a priority, enabling policy development and delivery to be driven and informed by their views at all levels - nationally, locally and in schools, as well putting mechanisms in place which increase the involvement of vulnerable young people in the decisions that affect them.

4.16 Section 53 of the Children Act 2004 amends sections 17, 20 and 47 of the Children Act 1989, and requires that, when working with children in need, their wishes and feelings need to be ascertained and used to inform decision making. To underpin this, the Government funded the development of *Say it your own way: children's participation in assessment*, a resource pack designed in particular to give practical support to practitioners conducting assessments and drawing up subsequent care plans.

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4.17 In England and Wales the Children Act 2004 put local authorities under a statutory requirement to consult children and young people in the preparation of their strategic Children and Young People's Plan. Research into the first Children and Young People's Plans in England found that local authorities are making a real commitment to the involvement of children and young people and are developing lasting structures and practices, which put young people at the heart of both policy and practice.

4.18 In addition, the Childcare Act 2006 requires local authorities in England, when discharging their new duty to promote the wellbeing of young children, to have regard to such information about the views of young children as is available to them and appears to them to be relevant.

4.19 A statutory duty has been placed on key public sector organisations in Scotland, by means of the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003, to initiate and facilitate a Community Planning process for their area. Evidence shows that children are keen to participate and there are several examples of Community Planning Partnerships which have set up themed groups specifically to deal with issues important to children and young people. Increasing meaningful participation by young people remains a significant challenge that the Scottish Executive committed to addressing through its Youth Work Strategy, and by working with and listening to young people and the organisations that represent them.

4.20 The UK Government also supports and provides funding to a variety of organisations which enable young people to engage with decision-makers. The UK Youth Parliament is given core, participation and regional funding by the Government to enable young people in England aged 11-18 to have a voice. 90% of local authorities are currently represented in the UKYP. In Scotland, there is both a Scottish Youth Parliament and a Children's Parliament, which support children and young people aged 9-25 to engage in democratic processes and debates.

4.21 In Wales, the Welsh Assembly Government helped to set up, and funds, the Children and Young People's Assembly for Wales (known as Funky Dragon), which has now been in existence for 3 years. Children and young people from Funky Dragon meet annually with Assembly Government ministers to put their questions and concerns.

4.22 In Northern Ireland, there has been progress in relation to young people's involvement at local council level. For example, Shadow Youth Councils have been developed in Fermanagh and Belfast.

4.23 Also in Northern Ireland, the 'Big Deal' - a strand of funding linked to the National Lottery - has funded Youthnet and Playboard to create a Participation Hub to deliver a coherent approach to the participation of children and young people. The Children and Young People's Unit in Northern Ireland has enabled the establishment of a Participation Network. This will work in tandem with existing or planned participation structures, including the Participation Hub. Emerging structures will include the Northern

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Ireland Network for Youth, which will be established to strengthen the direct voice of young people in all relevant aspects of government provision.

4.24 Providing more and better positive activities for young people is at the heart of the government's plans for radical reform of support services for young people in England. There is a new duty on local authorities to secure access for young people to positive activities. This duty, in the Education and Inspections Act 2006, requires local authorities to take steps to ascertain the views of young people in their area regarding existing positive activity provision, the need for additional activities and facilities, and their access to provision, and to act on these views in their provision of positive activities.

4.25 The government has already provided £115 million through Youth Opportunity and Youth Capital Funds for young people to spend on positive activities in their area, to be spent between April 2006 and March 2008. Young people must make the decisions on how these funds are spent. In the first year of operation of the funds, over 12,000 activities and facilities have been provided. More than 650,000 young people have participated in the use of the funds, including 8,253 acting as grant givers and decision makers on the use of the funds and 73,017 acting as project leaders or successful applicants to the funds - 44% of this latter group were from disadvantaged backgrounds.

4.26 In 2002, the Children and Young People's Participation Consortium was established in Wales, to share ideas and good practice, and to support a co-ordinated approach across statutory and voluntary organisations. The Welsh Assembly Government provides core funding for a Participation Unit to support the Consortium's work. New National Standards for children and young people's participation were launched in January 2007. The National Standards provide a means of inspecting and assessing participatory practice. They have been piloted with children and young people, and endorsed by Funky Dragon (the Children and Young People's Assembly for Wales) and by the Welsh Assembly Government. Work is underway to raise awareness of the Standards and to encourage organisations to use them for self assessment of their current practice. The Participation Unit is also exploring the development of quality assurance or kite-marking schemes associated with the Standards.

Section Five: Achievement of the World Fit for Children Plan of Action and related Millennium Development Goals targets

Promoting healthy lifestyles

Health services

5.1 The UK Government's vision for improving the health of children, young people and pregnant women in England is set out in the *National Service Framework (NSF) for Children, Young People and Maternity Services*, published in 2004. The NSF comprises eleven standards, to be delivered by 2014. Each standard contains markers of good practice, which will help the NHS, local authorities and partner agencies to achieve and demonstrate high quality service provision for all children, young people and their parents and carers.

5.2 In England there has been record investment in the NHS – rising from £33 billion in 1996-97 to £92.2 billion in 2007-08. This increased investment is enabling the NHS to expand its capacity to care for patients, with many of the improvements in health and social care benefiting children. The Department of Health documents *Choosing Health, Health Reform in England: update and next steps* (2004) and published *Our health, our care, our say* (2006) together describe the direction of reform for health and adult social care in England, towards services designed around the needs of the patient, based on the principle of informed choice.

5.3 The *Action Framework for Children and Young People's Health in Scotland* sets out key areas of activity relating to children's health in Scotland for the next 3-10 years and provides a basis for taking forward work on key child health issues. Health services in Scotland have tiered levels of intervention to ensure that those children and families who have a greater level of need are able to access a higher level of support.

5.4 In Wales the Assembly Government's National Service Framework (NSF) for Children, Young People and Maternity Services was launched in September 2005. The Welsh NSF is drafted on a rights basis, and sets out 21 standards over 200 specific key actions which will deliver the standards of service in health, social care, and other local government services (education, transport and environment) from before birth to adulthood.

5.5 The Northern Ireland Public Health Strategy *Investing for Health*, launched in 2002, sets out in detail government's priorities for improving the health and well-being of the people of Northern Ireland. *Investing for Health* has established partnership arrangements, such as the cross Government Ministerial Group on Public Health and at local level Investing for Health partnerships, to support and encourage action to improve health by all sections of society.

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Reducing the rate of teenage pregnancies

5.6 Across the UK teenage pregnancy rates have been falling steadily. For instance, England's teenage pregnancy rate has fallen steadily since the Teenage Pregnancy Strategy was launched in 1999. Between the 1998 baseline year and 2005, the under-18 conception rate fell by 11.8%, to its lowest level for over 20 years. The under-16 rate fell by 12.1% over the same period. While there has been steady progress nationally in reducing teenage conception rates, there is huge variation in performance between local areas.

5.7 In Scotland, teenage pregnancy rates have also fallen since 1999, although rates do remain comparatively high in less affluent areas. *Respect and Responsibility*, Scotland's National Sexual Health Strategy, which was published in January 2005, details two specific targets to tackle teenage pregnancies both generally throughout Scotland and more specifically in deprived areas. High quality Sex and Relationships education has been developed and is offered to secondary schools throughout Scotland. In addition to *Respect and Responsibility*, the Scottish Executive developed policies which address underage drinking and drug abuse, which can contribute to under age and unprotected sex and unintended pregnancies.

5.8 In Wales, since the launch of the *Strategic Framework for Promoting Sexual Health* in 2000, progress has been made towards reducing high rates of teenage conception. Between 1999 and 2005 the rate for conceptions amongst under 18s fell 15.3% and the rate for under 16s fell 18.8%. However, the Assembly Government considers that figures remain too high and that this work remains a priority. Actions to reduce teenage conceptions have included ring-fenced funding for confidential sexual health services and high quality sex and relationship education through statutory Personal and Social Education in schools.

5.9 Northern Ireland's Teenage Pregnancy and Parenthood Strategy comprises a number of actions around: policy development; information and education; parent/child communication; improving services and training; and providing support and research. The Strategy contains a target to reduce the rate of births to teenage mothers aged under 17 by 40% by the end of 2007. Considerable progress has been made towards achieving this target. Latest figures (2003 - 2005) show a reduction to 3.1 per 1,000 births from the 2002 position of 4.1 births per 1,000 girls under 17. All post-primary schools are required to provide relationships and sexuality education. The revised curriculum includes a new compulsory Personal Development strand which covers sex education, with the physical aspects of reproduction also being included within Science, personal health and well-being (including physical and emotional) and also relationships (qualities of a loving, respectful relationship) and managing emotions.

Measures to prevent HIV/AIDs and other sexually transmitted infections

5.10 Since 1999, all pregnant women in England have been offered an HIV test to reduce the level of undiagnosed HIV amongst pregnant women. This

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policy has greatly reduced the number of HIV infected babies born in England and has ensured that pregnant women are able to take full advantage of ante natal HIV therapy to maximise their health and that of their unborn babies. 95% of pregnant women with HIV are now diagnosed during the course of pregnancy (up from 81% in 2001), enabling interventions to prevent mother to child transmission of HIV in the majority of cases, and exceeding the target set for 2002.

5.11 As a result of sustained public education and health promotion programmes the UK continues to have a relatively low HIV prevalence compared to other EU countries. Since the late 1990s there has been a large drop in the number of AIDS diagnoses and 70% drop in AIDS deaths following the successful uptake of highly active anti-retroviral therapies.

5.12 The Government has launched three campaigns in England as part of its cross departmental integrated approach to achieve the PSA target to halve the rate of under-18 conception by 2010 as part of a wider programme to improve sexual health. The campaigns work to educate people about the risks associated with unsafe sexual practices including the spread of HIV and other STIs as well as unintended pregnancies.

5.13 In Scotland, Universal Antenatal Testing was implemented in 2003, which has reduced considerably the number of babies born to HIV infected mothers who did not know their HIV status during pregnancy. Inevitably, there will be an extremely small number of children who are born with HIV or contract it in childhood and anti-retroviral therapy is available for those who require it, including children born outside the UK.

Mental health and counselling for adolescents

5.14 The Department of Health have engaged with Strategic Health Authorities across England regarding the achievement of a Public Service Agreement target for child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS) to ensure that, by December 2006, all patients who needed them had access to comprehensive CAMHS. By the end 2006-07 all 152 Primary Care Trusts in England reported 24 hour cover available for urgent needs and specialist assessments undertaken within 24 hrs or during the next working day. As a result of the *Every Child Matters* reforms, more multi-agency support teams - some incorporating both generalist and more specialist counselling and therapeutic skills - are being developed across local areas in England. The Department for Children, Schools and Families has provided further encouragement to these developments through its *Youth Matters* initiative and the establishment of 14 Targeted Youth Support Pathfinders. The Government aims to roll out Targeted Youth Support to all Local Authorities in England by 2008.

5.15 In Scotland, there are a number of strategies in place for improving child and adolescent mental health services. These strategies emphasise the need to provide more consistent support for children and to ensure high

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quality care and support for those children who are experiencing mental health problems and specifically include commitments for delivery by 2009.

5.16 In Wales, CAMHS provision at all levels and through all agencies is in the process of being reviewed independently by the Wales Audit Office and the Health Inspectorate Wales. The Welsh Assembly Government also consulted on a national strategy in February 2007, aimed at developing counselling throughout all schools in Wales. The Assembly Government will continue to address the need to improve provision.

5.17 In Northern Ireland, an Independent Review of Mental Health and Learning Disability was established in 2002: this included a review of CAMHS. The review's report, *A Vision of a Comprehensive Child* (July 2006) sets out the vision for and makes a wide range of recommendations. Current work includes plans to develop a new 18 bed adolescent mental health inpatient unit which is due for completion in 2008-2009; Crisis Intervention Services funded through the Children and Young People's funding package (worth around £107 million in total); and enhancing CAMHS provision through appropriate timely clinical intervention for young people.

Reducing smoking

5.18 The UK Government and devolved administrations are determined to prevent children from becoming addicted to smoking, and to help those young people who do smoke to give up. The UK Government and devolved administrations is taking forward a multi-faceted tobacco control programme, which includes: introducing smoke free enclosed public places and workplaces, helping to reduce children's exposure to second-hand smoke; media campaigns targeted at young people; school education about the dangers of smoking throughout the UK; and a comprehensive ban on all tobacco advertising, promotion and sponsorship in the UK.

5.19 The age of sale for tobacco was raised from 16 to 18 from October 2007 in England, Scotland and Wales. In Northern Ireland, the Assembly will shortly be invited to consider raising the age of sale. There will also be tougher sanctions against retailers who repeatedly flout the law on under-age sales.

5.20 Smoking rates among 11-15 year olds in England have been reduced from 13% in 1996 to 9% in 2005. In Wales, data suggests that the proportions of 11-16 year olds smoking were 13.9% in 1996 and 11.6% in 2004.

5.21 The Welsh Assembly Government is targeting prevention messages at young people through initiatives such as Smokebugs Clubs for primary school children and the Smoke-Free Class Competition in secondary schools. More recently, after a very successful pilot, the Assembly Government is funding the ASSIST project which is being rolled out by the National Public Health Service. This is a school-based peer education project. Pupils in year 8 (aged 12 to 13) are trained to intervene effectively in everyday situations in

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order to prevent smoking uptake and promote smoking cessation among their peers.

5.22 In Scotland, smoking prevalence among 13 year olds has declined since 1998, from 9% to 3% among boys and from 11% to 5% among girls. Among 15 year olds smoking prevalence has declined since its peak in 1996, from 30% for both boys and girls to 12% and 18% respectively. The Scottish government is also committed to reducing this further and will be publishing a new 5 year Smoking Prevention Action Plan aimed at preventing children and young people from starting to smoke and becoming regular smokers. This will build upon the tobacco control work already undertaken and include a wide range measures including improved educational programmes and steps to reduce the availability of cigarettes to children.

Alcohol

5.23 In June 2007 the UK Government published a new strategy for England, focusing on early interventions to reduce the harm caused by alcohol. New action includes more help for people who want to drink less, investing well over £6 million in public information campaigns to promote sensible drinking, new clear drinking guidance for parents and children, an independent review of alcohol pricing and promotion, compulsory local alcohol strategies in every area and toughened enforcement of under-age sales laws for retailers.

5.24 In England in 2006, fewer young people aged 11-15 reported drinking than in 2001, but those who do drink are consuming more alcohol, more frequently. Whilst 43% of 11 to 15 year olds have never had an alcoholic drink, the 22% who reported drinking in the previous week were drinking greater quantities than reported in previous surveys. Worryingly, the amount of alcohol consumed by 11 to 13-year olds who drink continues to climb, from an average of 5.6 units a week in 2001 to an average of 10.1 units a week in 2006. High levels of alcohol consumption are linked with a range of high-risk behaviours, including teenage pregnancy, anti-social behaviour, offending, and truancy.

5.25 Since the publication of the 2004 alcohol strategy, there has been significant progress on tackling underage drinking. Test purchase campaigns indicate that it is increasingly difficult for under-18s to purchase alcohol. However, evidence suggests that younger adolescents obtain alcohol from parents and peers.

5.26 While there are no current plans to raise the age at which alcohol may be consumed or bought, there is a growing emphasis on the provision of guidance to parents and children. The Government is committed to providing guidance and advice to young people and parents based on the advice of a panel of youth experts (as well as on consultation with young people).

5.27 Reducing harmful drinking by children is one of the key priorities in the Scottish Executive's Updated Plan for Action on Alcohol Problems – aiming for a Scotland in which alcohol is treated responsibly. Its aims are to improve

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school and community based education, improve support for parents and ensure children affected by alcohol problems have access to appropriate prevention, education and treatment services. Measures have been introduced in the Licensing (Scotland) Act 2005 which will tackle under-age drinking. It will be a condition of holding a licence for all licensed premises that they operate a no-proof no-sale system. This means requesting proof where age is in doubt and displaying nationally approved signage. In addition, since June 2006 a trial test-purchasing scheme has been in successful operation in one Scottish police area.

5.28 The Scottish Schools Adolescent Lifestyle and Substance Use Survey found that, in 2004, 84% of 15 year olds and 57% of 13 year olds had had an alcoholic drink. 43% of those 15 year olds and 15% of those 13 year olds reported drinking in the last week. Both 13 year olds and 15 year olds who are regular drinkers are more likely to smoke or use drugs than those who do not drink.

5.29 In Wales, alcohol (and drugs) education is delivered in a consistent manner by the All Wales Schools Programme. The delivery of the Programme ensures that all children in school are receiving key messages and are informed about the choices that they can make. The Programme is delivered by the four Wales police forces and is jointly funded by the police and the Welsh Assembly Government.

5.30 The Programme operates in 97% of primary and secondary schools in Wales. An external evaluation of the Programme was published in autumn 2005, which reported that there had been good progress, in a short period, in implementing the Programme nationally. It was judged to have been well received by pupils and to be on a very sound footing. The Programme has been extended to cater for children and young people disengaged from the formal education system.

5.31 In Northern Ireland, proposed key priorities for the new strategic direction for alcohol and drugs include: developing treatment and support services for young people under the age of 18 in respect of alcohol and drugs; particular focus on the needs of those children and young people deemed vulnerable and/or at risk; addressing underage drinking; and ensuring education and prevention work follows models and principles of good practice.

Promoting quality education

Early years education

5.32 The Government in England has invested over £21 billion on expanding early years and childcare provision since 1997, including progressively increasing the proportion of the under five population in England and Wales that has access to integrated services and quality early learning. Details of measures including the Ten Year Childcare Strategy and the Childcare Act 2006 are set out earlier in this report.

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5.33 From 2002, the Scottish Executive has funded local authorities to meet a statutory duty to provide 12½ hours a week of pre-school education to all 3 and 4 year olds whose parents wish to take it up. Between 2001 and 2006 the percentage of children attending pre-school education has risen from 81.3% of eligible 3-year olds and 96.5% of 4-year olds to, respectively, 96% of 3-year olds and 98.8% of 4-year olds. To help further with the development of services in disadvantaged areas, Sure Start Scotland provides programmes of activity to promote children's healthy development.

5.34 In Northern Ireland places were available for 95% of children in their pre-school year by 2003-04. Government in Northern Ireland is moving to implement key recommendations from the Report on the Review of Pre-School in Northern Ireland published on 25 April 2006. These include actions to ensure that the learning and development settings available for children are those most suitable for their age and actions to address key issues including facilities and resources, training and support and special educational needs.

5.35 The Welsh Assembly Government has, since 2002, funded local authorities to provide a minimum of 10 hours a week of free pre-school education to all 3 and 4 year olds whose parents wish it.

Primary and Secondary education

5.36 In England, the Education and Inspections Act 2006 sets the framework for delivering the vision set out in the White Paper *Higher Standards, Better Schools for All* (2005). Taken together with the fundamental duties of local authorities to secure sufficient provision and school places under section 14 of the Education Act 1996 and to promote high standards under section 13A of that Act, local authorities now have a duty to secure sufficient school places, and in so doing promote high standards; ensure fair access to educational opportunity; promote the fulfilment of every child's educational potential; secure diversity in the provision of schools; and increase opportunities for parental choice.

5.37 The Government in England has increased school funding to support the delivery of higher standards. By the end of 2007-08 funding per pupil will be £1,800 (66%) higher in real terms than in 1997-98. The new Primary Capital Programme will see an additional £150 million invested in primary schools in 2008-09 rising to £500 million from 2009-10. This will support the Government's aims to rebuild, remodel or refurbish at least half of all primary schools over 15 years. In addition, there are 35,700 more teachers and 172,00 more support staff compared 1997.

5.38 Revised data in England for 2006 shows 58.5% of 15 year old pupils achieved 5 A*-C grades at GCSE or equivalent, an increase of 2.2% pts over 2005 and 13.4% pts higher than 1997. Latest data show an improvement in the achievement of pupils eligible for Free School meals, with an increase of 3.1 percentage points in the percentage of pupils at the end of Key Stage 4 achieving 5+ A*-C at GCSE and equivalent between 2005 and 2006, from

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29.9 to 33.0. This compares to an increase within England of 2.4 percentage points.

5.39 The Education (Northern Ireland) Order 2006 took effect on 1 August 2006 and includes provision for a revised Northern Ireland curriculum, to be introduced into schools on a phased basis from September 2007 to 2010. There will be a new requirement on schools to provide every pupil, regardless of their background, school or where they live, with access to a minimum of 24 courses at Key Stage 4 and 27 courses at post-16. At least one third of courses will have to be vocational and at least one third academic.

5.40 The Standards in Scotland's Schools Act 2000 introduced the school improvement framework, an integral part of which are the 5 *National Priorities in Education*: Achievement and Attainment, Framework for Learning, Inclusion and Equality, Values and Citizenship and Learning for Life. The 2000 Act also places a duty on Ministers and authorities to endeavour to 'secure improvement in the quality of school education'. The Scottish Executive published *A Curriculum for Excellence* in 2004 which is designed to: remove over-crowding in the curriculum and make learning more enjoyable; better connect the various stages of the curriculum from ages 3 through to 18; achieve a better balance between 'academic' and 'vocational' subjects and include a wider range of experiences; equip children with the skills they will need in tomorrow's workforce; make sure that assessment and certification support learning; and allow more choice and personalisation to meet the needs of individual children.

5.41 In Wales the curriculum consists of three main phases: an early years curriculum based on active learning and including elements of play and assessment for learning; a skills-based curriculum for 7-14 year olds that builds upon the philosophy of the Foundation Phase and prepares for their 14-19 year old education and training; and a Learning Pathways programme for 14-19 year olds, providing enhanced choice and flexibility, including attractive vocational offers for all abilities.

5.42 The Welsh Assembly Government intends that, from 2008, there will exist in Wales a school curriculum that is learner-centred and skills-focused. It will comprise: a set of revised subject Orders which are manageable and reflect whole curriculum characteristics and those of each key stage; a revised framework for personal and social education; a framework for careers and the world of work; a non-statutory skills framework; a national exemplar framework for religious education; and the Foundation Phase framework for children's learning (3-7 year olds).

14-19 education and further education

5.43 In England the Government's aim is to develop a system of 14-19 education which prepares all young people for success in life. Good progress has been made in improving levels of participation, with record numbers of 16 year olds now in full-time education. As at end 2006, the proportion of 16-18 year olds participation in education and training is estimated at 77.3%.

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5.44 Financial incentives have been introduced to encourage disadvantaged young people to stay on in learning. Over half a million learners have benefited from Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) payments of up to £30 per week (in 2006-07). Since the introduction of the EMA participation has increased to its highest level ever among 16 year olds, with 89% in some form of learning in the last academic year, and an increase of 1.8 percentage points in participation of 16 year olds in full-time education between 2003-04 and 2004-05 alone.

5.45 The Government has also announced its intention to legislate to raise the statutory age for participation in education or training from 16 to 18, to help all young people gain a strong grounding in later life.

5.46 In June 2006 the Scottish Executive launched *More Choices, More Chances - a strategy to reduce the proportion of young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) in Scotland*. The strategy focuses on improving the range of options available to young people most likely to become NEET on leaving school and those already in the group; on improving the (often intensive) support available to young people to allow them to make the most of these increased opportunities; and on ensuring that the services for these young people are comprehensive and appropriately joined-up.

5.47 In Northern Ireland the *Skills Strategy* was published in February 2006. This outlines a vision of vocational training being recognised as a valuable alternative to the traditional academic pathway. New 'Training for Success' provision - which replaces Jobskills from September 2007 - will provide a training opportunity for those eligible young people who have barriers to learning and work, whether it is in terms of learning disability or emotional behaviour, or social difficulties such as drug or alcohol abuse. For these young people, a varied range of support mechanisms will be available to enable them to deal with the barriers and prepare them to enter the world of work. In 2005-06, 79.7% of 16 and 17 year olds were participating in full-time education and vocational training in schools and Further Education colleges in Northern Ireland. In 2001-02 the participation rate was 71.8%.

5.48 In Wales, Learning Pathways 14-19 has been introduced to provide young people with enhanced choice and flexibility, including vocational offers for all abilities, participation in a wide variety of experiences, with accreditation of learning wherever possible. Following a successful pilot, the Welsh Baccalaureate Qualification post 16 at Advanced and Intermediate levels are being rolled out from September 2007. The Welsh Baccalaureate Qualification is designed to accredit learning from the full range of learning pathways and from September 2009 will encompass the new vocational learning from the Diplomas being developed in England.

Improving education for children in care

5.49 The educational outcomes of the approximately 60,000 (at any one time) looked after children in England have improved in recent years. The

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proportion gaining 5 A*-C GCSEs has risen from 7% in 2000 to 12% in 2006 and the proportion participating in education, employment or training at age 19 has increased from 46% in 2002 to 63% in 2006, reflecting the beneficial impact of the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000.

5.50 In May 2000 the Government issued comprehensive guidance (parts of which had statutory force) on the education of children and young people in public care and has provided ongoing funding since then towards ten regional networks across England, that work with local authorities on implementation of the guidance. As part of the Children Act 2004 a specific duty was placed on local authorities to promote the educational achievement of the children they look after. In June 2007 the Government published *Care Matters: Time for Change*, a White Paper which sets out a wide range of measures designed to improve further the educational attainment of children in care and to properly prepare them for the transition to adulthood.

5.51 The educational attainment of Scotland's looked after children has improved slightly over recent years, although it remains poor when compared to their peers. In January 2007, the Scottish Executive launched *Looked After Children and Young People: We Can and Must Do Better*. It highlights the need to improve the educational attainment of these children, builds on the existing framework of educational targets and monitoring and sets out a number of key messages. For example, the importance of the corporate parent role and the importance of providing flexible and appropriate support before, during and post transitions.

5.52 In Northern Ireland, the Looked After Children in Education project was established in 2001 and has been developed by the NGOs Include Youth, Voice of Young People in Care, and Save the Children. The project aims to improve educational outcomes for looked after children in by informing practice and policy development through Children's Services Planning groups, which work on areas of development such as inter agency protocols and the use of Personal Education Plans. There are two initiatives within the Children and Young People's Funding package aimed at improving education provision of looked after children.

5.53 In Wales a grant of £1 million a year in 2006-07 and 2007-08 was distributed across local authorities to enable them to support the education of looked after children. The grant, which was part of the wider Raising Attainment and Individual Standards in Education (RAISE) initiative was aimed particularly at those pupils approaching external examinations at age 16 to help them to move on to further and higher education. The Welsh Assembly Government's strategy for children in need, including looked after children and care leavers, will build on education measures introduced in July 2007 as part of the *Towards A Stable Life* policy which set out new duties on local authorities to improve the health and well-being of looked after children.

Children with Special Educational Needs (SEN)

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5.54 In January 2006 some 236,700 (or 2.9%) of pupils in England had statements of SEN. There were 1,293,300 pupils with SEN without statements, representing 15.7% of all pupils. Children with statements of SEN are supported in education by being admitted automatically to the school named on their statement, whether that school has places or not. 58.7% of children with statements are educated in mainstream schools and 34.9% in local authority special schools. Local authority expenditure on SEN has increased from £2.8 billion in 2001-02 to £4.5 billion in 2006-07 (an increase of 60% and representing some 13% of all education spending).

5.55 In Northern Ireland, there are now almost 12,000 children with Statements of SEN (36% more than in 2000) and approximately 42,000 children (13% of the total school population) at Stages 1-4 of the Code of Practice. The principle is enshrined in legislation that, subject to certain provisos, children should be educated in a mainstream setting. The Special Educational Needs and Disability (Northern Ireland) Order 2005, (SENDO), has strengthened the right of children with SEN to be educated in mainstream schools where parents want it and the interests of other children can be protected. A total of £57.8m over three years has been provided to implement SENDO. Plans are in hand to establish a Centre of Excellence in the education of children with Autism at Middletown in County Armagh to promote excellence in the education of children and young people with Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) throughout Ireland.

5.56 The Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004 introduces a new system for identifying and addressing the additional support needs of children who face a barrier to learning. The Act encompasses any need that requires additional support in order for the child to learn. It places duties on education authorities and requires other bodies and organisations to help. In providing school education, education authorities are required to identify and then make adequate and efficient provision for the additional support needs of children. The Act also introduces new rights for parents and provides for children to have their views taken into account in discussing, monitoring and evaluating their learning. In September 2006 there were 36,148 pupils with Additional Support Needs in Scotland, 70% of whom were boys. This compares to 27,540 with special educational needs in 2005, a 6% per cent increase.

5.57 In Wales, the number of pupils with a statement of SEN decreased by 2.7% during 2005, bringing the total number with a statement to 16,076 at January 2006. At January 2006, 3.2% of pupils on roll had statements of SEN. The percentage of pupils with statements on school rolls over the last seven years has remained constant. The number of pupils newly assessed as requiring a statement decreased during 2005. 1,556 pupils were newly assessed as requiring a statement compared to 1,712 in the previous year. Nearly 92% (14,776 pupils) of the total with statements were educated within their 'home' authority rather than in other authorities. 33% of those pupils educated outside their 'home' authority attended maintained special schools (429 pupils).

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Black and Minority Ethnic children

5.58 Head teachers and school governing bodies in the UK need to be satisfied that their policies comply with the Human Rights Act 1998 and the Race Relations Amendment Act 2000. The latter requires schools to draw up a race equality policy, ensure that policies do not discriminate against racial groups, and places a duty on schools to promote race equality.

5.59 There have been a number of positive trends among pupils from Black and Minority Ethnic backgrounds. For example:

- 45% of Black Caribbean pupils achieved 5+A*-C in 2006 compared to 42% in 2005, 36% in 2004 and 33% in 2003.
- 57% of Bangladeshi pupils achieved 5+A*-C in 2006 compared to 53% in 2005, 48% in 2004 and 46% in 2003.
- 51% of Pakistani pupils achieved 5+A*-C in 2006 compared to 48% in 2005, 45% in 2004 and 42% in 2003.

5.60 More than one in eight pupils in maintained schools in England is now from a minority ethnic background. The Government is committed to closing the unacceptable achievement gap that still exists between children from certain ethnic minority groups. The Government set out its *Aiming High* national strategy for raising the academic achievement of ethnic minority pupils in 2003. The "*Aiming High Raising the Achievement of Minority Ethnic Pupils*" projects have sent a consistent message that minority ethnic pupils' attainment is a mainstream issue that needs to be addressed through whole school policies.

5.61 A particular priority is improving the life chances of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children, for whom outcomes remain behind those of other children. As part of the *Aiming High* strategy, the Government is working closely with TESS, local authorities and schools to improve the educational achievement of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children. Many local authorities in England use part of the Children's Services Grant to provide a Traveller Education Support Service (TESS) which offers advice to local authorities and schools, supports attendance, integration or reintegration into school; and provides additional educational support to enable Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children to achieve their full potential.

5.62 In Northern Ireland there are currently 3,911 children who do not have English as a first language and who have significant difficulty with English (October 2006 school census). The total allocation for the 2006-2007 financial year for EAL (English as an Additional Language) teaching in Northern Ireland is £4.4 million. Specific action is also being taken to support the 792 school age Traveller children in Northern Ireland, including offering greater flexibility in preschool; publishing post-primary research on Travellers; funding 3

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publications for schools on Human Rights and the Bill of Rights, and collecting and making available statistical data on Travellers through the Department of Education's website. The Department of Education has allocated nearly £1.1 million for the 792 Traveller pupils.

5.63 In Scotland, a number of initiatives are underway to actively promote equality within education and help enable every pupil to achieve their full potential, regardless of their gender, ethnicity, religion or social background. These initiatives include the development of materials to help support schools in dealing with racist and homophobic incidents; developing training resources for school staff on equality issues; and producing materials to support schools in mainstreaming anti-discrimination into the curriculum. In addition, the Scottish Traveller Education Programme (STEP) published a set of leaflets and accompanying DVD in March 2006 for Gypsy/Traveller parents and families providing targeted information on the Scottish education system. STEP will also assess the effectiveness of guidance for local authorities and schools on inclusive approaches for Gypsies/Travellers.

5.64 The Welsh Assembly Government issued new guidance in October 2006 on Inclusion and Pupil support which encourages a whole school approach to managing and celebrating diversity. Linked to this, separate guidance on how to raise minority ethnic achievement is being prepared along with practical guidance for teachers. The Assembly Government makes significant funding available to promote minority ethnic achievement and in 2007-08 its Minority Ethnic Achievement Grant will amount to £8.1million. Refugees are also covered by the grant along with the children of migrant workers, whose numbers are increasing steadily. Over 20,000 minority ethnic children, most of whom have English as an additional language, are supported by the grant. In addition, the Assembly Government provides a specific grant of almost £1million annually for the education of Gypsy Traveller children, of whom there are approximately 1,200 in Wales at any one time.

Protection against abuse, exploitation and violence

Child death reviews

5.65 Local authorities across the UK have long been expected to undertake a form of review where a serious incident has occurred and abuse and neglect are considered to be a factor. From April 2006, the carrying out of these reviews in England and Wales has become the statutory responsibility, in accordance with the Children Act 2004, of Local Safeguarding Children Boards (LSCBs)

5.66 The Welsh Assembly Government has asked the National Public Health Service (NPHS) for Wales to undertake a feasibility study on how child death inquiries might be taken forward in Wales. A detailed options and costing study is being undertaken during 2007-08, and because of the scale of the task it is likely that a comprehensive scheme for child death reviews will be introduced, at the earliest, in 2008-09.

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5.67 In Northern Ireland, a Child Death Review Protocol has been developed which outlines the responsibilities of statutory agencies and professional staff when dealing with the sudden or unexpected death of a child. The Protocol was drafted by a multidisciplinary regional working group and a period of widespread consultation has ended. It is anticipated that the final document will be published later in 2007.

5.68 The Scottish Executive issued revised guidance to child protection committees in 2007 on how to conduct a Significant Case Review, following a consultation on this topic. The guidance sets out criteria and suggested timelines and other operational advice on when and how and with whom a review should take place in the event of the death of a child or a series of concerning incidents about that child.

Safeguarding children

5.69 In England there were 25,900 children on child protection registers, as at 31 March 2005 (25,700 in 2002). In Wales there were 2,163 children on the child protection register as at 31 March 2006 (2,126 in 2001). In Scotland there were 2,791 children on the child protection register as at 31 March 2006 (2,294 in 2005). In Northern Ireland there were 1,639 on the child protection register as at 31 March 2006 (1,414 in 2001).

5.70 Under sections 11 (in England) and 28 (in Wales) of the Children Act 2004, organisations have a general duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. Section 11 works in practice through Local Safeguarding Children Boards (LSCBs). LSCBs coordinate the work of local partner organisations to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and to ensure that the work of each partner is effective in this respect.

5.71 To ensure that the system for vetting and barring of those working with children is robust, a new vetting and barring scheme is being introduced by the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006 in England and Wales, and in Northern Ireland by the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups (Northern Ireland) Order 2007. The new vetting and barring scheme will seek to bar unsuitable individuals not just on the basis of referrals, but also at the earliest possible opportunity as part of a centralised vetting process that all those working closely with children and/or vulnerable adults will need to go through.

5.72 The Government in England is currently developing a new cross government strategy on safeguarding children and young people to ensure that government work is coordinated. The consultation document *Staying Safe* (July 2007) aims to raise awareness of the importance of safeguarding children and young people. It also sets out proposals for how Government should work with parents, children and young people and the wider community, to raise awareness and understanding and enable everyone to play a role in keeping children safe from harm.

5.73 The UK Government has also taken action to strengthen the system for conducting child death inquiries, and advocacy arrangements and other

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safeguards for children in care or who are private fostered. These actions are described in Chapters 5 and 8 of the UK's most recent UNCRC Periodic Report.

Monitoring, responding to and prosecuting abuse and neglect.

5.74 The Integrated Children's System (ICS) has been developed in England and Wales to improve outcomes for looked after children and other children defined as "in need" under the Children Act 1989. A key aim of ICS is to provide front line staff and their managers with the necessary help, through information technology (IT), to record, collate, analyse and organise the information into the outputs required e.g. on screen, paper reports such as chronologies, and reports on performance indicators. In the longer term, as the ICS becomes widely used, its supporting IT system will enable authorised children's social care staff to identify those children on the system who, for example, have been the subject of enquiries into whether they are at risk of suffering, or have suffered, significant harm.

5.75 The *Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and their Families* (2000) is statutory guidance for English and Welsh local authority children's social care. It provides a framework to be used in assessing a child's need for services, considering the needs of a child, the capacity of his or her parents or carers to meet those needs, and wider family and environmental factors. *Understanding the Needs of Children in Northern Ireland* (UNOCINI) provides a similar framework for assessment of need for children and young people in Northern Ireland.

5.76 In Scotland, the Executive acted, through the Vulnerable Witnesses (Scotland) Act 2004, to improve conditions for witnesses to enable children, to give the best evidence they can. Implementation of the Act, associated practitioner guidance and public information material will help ensure that a vulnerable child is not victimised in legal proceedings by providing support for the witness when giving evidence, while taking account of the child's views on how that should be done. It also promotes a child's sense of dignity and worth by seeking to ensure that a child's evidence will be taken seriously whether the child is a witness or an accused person.

5.77 In Northern Ireland, all alleged and suspected cases of child abuse in Northern Ireland are jointly investigated by Police and Social Services. All Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) officers receive Child Abuse and Rape Enquiry (CARE) training. The PSNI's CARE Units are made up of plainclothes detectives who receive specialist training on child abuse and rape trauma syndrome and who investigate all alleged and suspected cases of child abuse.

Domestic Violence

5.78 The Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act 2004 introduced new powers and amendments to existing ones to strengthen the safeguards for victims and their children. The Government has also clarified the definition of

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'harm' in the Children Act 1989 (as amended by the Adoption and Children Act 2002). This makes it clear that when a court is considering whether a child has suffered, or is likely to suffer harm, it must consider harm that a child may suffer, not only from directly suffering domestic violence, but also from witnessing it.

5.79 In March 2005 the Government published its *National Domestic Violence Delivery Plan for England*. This cross-Government action plan focuses on ensuring a clear and consistent, multi-agency approach to understanding and supporting victims of domestic violence, reducing instances of domestic violence, and increasing the early identification of and intervention with children and young people who are affected by domestic violence.

5.80 The April 2006 revision of *Working Together to Safeguard Children: A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children* has taken place and the document now includes guidance on issues such as domestic violence, forced marriage and female genital mutilation. It reinforces the need for agencies to collaborate closely when investigating these issues.

5.81 Domestic violence issues are also reflected in the *Every Child Matters: Change for Children* programme, and domestic violence has now been included within the Common Assessment Framework - a common process and format to assess and decide how to meet the additional needs of children and young people at risk of not achieving positive outcomes.

5.82 In Wales, *Tackling Domestic Abuse: The All Wales National Strategy* was launched in March 2005. The Strategy gives a clear message about protecting children and young people, especially those who witness violence. It provides a framework for the development of local action and emphasises the need for joint agency working.

5.83 In Northern Ireland, a 5 year strategy "*Tackling Violence at Home – A Strategy for Addressing Domestic Violence and Abuse in Northern Ireland*" was launched in October 2005. The Strategy identifies a number of objectives aimed at supporting children who live in violent homes. Annual Action Plans translate the strategy's principles and aims into practice by setting out the key actions to be achieved within defined timescales. Legislative change is also anticipated, which will strengthen the protections available for all victims of domestic violence and abuse.

5.84 In Scotland, the Executive allocated £6m over 2 years, 2006 to 2008, to ensure a minimum standard of direct support is provided to children experiencing domestic abuse. This funding, together with approximately £2m contributed from local authorities, will ensure a key worker service in women's refuges, whilst also allowing Women's Aid/local authorities to establish an outreach service to children experiencing domestic abuse in the wider community.

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5.85 The Executive also established the National Domestic Abuse Delivery Group for Children and Young People, which is taking forward the delivery of domestic abuse pathfinder pilot projects focussing on a multi-agency response, and the development of a National Delivery Plan in 2007.

Sexual violence and abuse and exploitation

5.86 The Government has strengthened measures, in England and Wales, to safeguard children and young people against the effects of child pornography. The Criminal Justice and Court Services Act 2000 Act increased the maximum sentence from 6 months to 5 years imprisonment for possession of child pornography and from 3 years to 10 years for production and distribution. The Sexual Offences Act 2003 extended existing prohibitions on the production, circulation and possession of any indecent photograph of a child under 16 to include images of children aged 16 and 17. This Act also established a range of new offences relating to unlawful sexual activity with children, including the offence of 'grooming'.

5.87 In 2001 the Government established the Task Force on Child Protection on the Internet to bring together Government, law enforcement, children's agencies and the internet industry to work to ensure that children can use the internet in safety.

5.88 In 2006 the Government set up the Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (CEOP). The Centre provides a single point of contact for the public, law enforcers, and the communications industry to report the targeting of children online and has a total annual budget of £5.11m per annum (2006 figures). CEOP also carries out proactive investigations and works with police forces around the world to protect children.

5.89 The *Cross Government Action Plan on Sexual Violence and Abuse* (published in 2007) sets out a range of measures intended to support victims and to maximise the prevention of all forms of sexual abuse. The Plan recognises that sexual abuse is a form of violence which affects children and which needs to be tackled. Linked to this, the *Review of the Protection of Children from Sex Offenders* (also published in 2007) sets out steps which the Government will take (in England and Wales) to improve the management of child sex offenders in the community and help ensure the protection of the public.

5.90 Significant changes have been made to the law in Northern Ireland through the extension of a number of offences in the Sexual Offences Act (2003) aimed at protecting children. The body of sexual offences law is currently being reviewed and it is proposed to have new legislation in place during 2007.

Sale, trafficking and abduction

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5.91 On 23 March 2007 the United Kingdom became a signatory to the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings. The Convention will build on our strategy to combat human trafficking by providing minimum standards of protection and support for victims. It will also provide a platform upon which the UK Action Plan on Tackling Human Trafficking, which we also published on the 23 March 2007, can build.

5.92 The new edition of *Working Together to Safeguard Children* (April 2006) makes clear that safeguarding children in England who may have been trafficked is within the scope of LSCBs and their work.

5.93 The Sexual Offences Act 2003 introduced offences covering trafficking into, out of or within the UK, for any form of sexual offence. These carry a 14 year maximum penalty. The equivalent Scottish provisions are contained at Section 22 of the Criminal Justice (Scotland) Act 2003. An offence of 'trafficking for exploitation', which covers non-sexual exploitation, such as forced labour and the removal of organs, was included in the Asylum and Immigration (Treatment of Claimants, etc.) Act 2004.

5.94 The Serious Organised Crime Agency (SOCA) was established in April 2006, with a renewed focus on improving intelligence and targeting those organised crime groups causing the most harm. CEOP – which is affiliated to SOCA - also focuses on combating the sexual exploitation of children. A new UK Human Trafficking Centre (UKHTC) was established in October 2006: this acts as the central point for the development of police expertise and operational co-ordination.

5.95 In 2005, 9 people were found guilty under Section 57 of the Sexual Offences Act 2003 of arranging or facilitating the arrival into the UK of a person for sexual exploitation. In the same year, 3 people were found guilty under Section 58 of the Act of arranging or facilitating travel within the UK of a person for sexual exploitation. These figures apply to England and Wales.

Section Six: Lessons learned and initiatives taken since 2002

6.1 This section sets out the main challenges for child and youth policy in the United Kingdom. In England all these challenges will be taken forward through the Government's new national priorities (as reflected in Public Service Agreements) for 2008-2011.

Health

6.2 Physical activity levels and take up of sport are improving. However, the level of mental health problems is stable but nevertheless high, and the use of alcohol and some categories of drug use among 11-15 year olds is also high by international comparisons. Smoking uptake also remains problematic, and the UK's teenage pregnancy rate is high internationally, despite some good progress in reducing this. Living in poverty has a distinct impact, with the levels of obesity, smoking and under 18 conceptions higher for children living in deprived areas.

6.3 Another major health issue for children in the United Kingdom (as with much of the developed world) is obesity. The proportion of overweight and obese children in the population is rising sharply. At present, obesity is responsible for around 9,000 premature deaths in England each year.

6.4 That said, the United Kingdom's existing strategy to tackle child obesity is regarded as good practice by the World Health Organisation Europe. Measures include:

- new restrictions on food and drink broadcast advertising to children in April;
- 86 per cent of school children now do at least two hours of school sport a week - beating our own target of 75 per cent for 2006. The Government is committed to increasing the numbers of 5-16 year olds participating in at least 2 hours of high quality PE and sport in schools per week. In addition, the Government wants more opportunities for 5-19 year olds to participate in a further 3 hours per week of sporting activities through attractive provision designed to stimulate and increase take-up and sustain participation.
- New, tougher nutritional standards for school food have been published, with nearly £500 million being committed, between 2005 and 2011, to support the transformation of school food, and
- front of pack labelling is making it simpler for families to make healthier food choices; this has been adopted by many major retailers and producers

Risk taking behaviours

6.5 Educating and encouraging young people to make informed and healthy lifestyle choices is central to tackling these issues. Findings from a

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study of young people carried out in 2004 make clear the scale of the challenge. Participants were given a list of risky activities and asked to identify those that carried the most and least risk. They judged taking heroin to carry the highest risk and having sex using condoms as the least risky. Three in 10 young people did not perceive having sex without a condom as at all risky; four in 10 said binge drinking is not at all risky; and one in 10 regarded riding a motorcycle or skateboarding as risk-free.

Education

6.6 As highlighted in Section 5, all groups of pupils have seen overall improvements in education. There has been progress in educational attainment at all Key Stages, and the UK is rated above average in most international comparisons.

Reducing educational inequalities

6.7 However, there is a persistent gap between more affluent pupils and those from poor or disadvantaged backgrounds. Less than half children are achieving a good level of personal, social and emotional development at the Foundation Stage. The achievement gap between students on Free School Meals and those who are is not narrowing significantly.

6.8 In order to continue to raise standards, the UK increasingly needs to focus on narrowing attainment gaps between high and low achievers, particularly those from specific disadvantaged groups. To help schools do this, Governments across the UK have put in place measures designed to improve the educational prospects of poor pupils and other groups at high risk of doing less well at school, such as pupils with a disability or Special Educational Needs, teenage parents, and those from certain ethnic minorities. Despite some improvements, outcomes for Looked After Children are still poor by comparison with other children, and this group is a particular priority for the UK.

Young people not participating in education, employment or training

6.9 A particular challenge is reducing the number of young people who are not participating in education, employment or training (NEET). There is strong evidence that young people who are NEET are at higher risk of experiencing poor life chances as adults. Further action is needed to create opportunities for these young people to attain the optimum educational outcomes and secure economic and other aspects of well being.

6.10 The Scottish Executive has also worked closely with the public, private and voluntary sectors to tackle the issues which underlie young people's non-participation in further learning or training. Action is being taken across education, training and wider services to transform the educational experiences of all children and young people, especially those at risk of disaffection and under-achievement.

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Improving the education of children in custody and their reintegration into education

6.11 The UK Government recognises that there is more to do to improve education for children in custodial settings in England. We are reviewing education for young people in custody to consider how best to improve access to appropriate education and to raise the quality of teaching and learning in line with mainstream education improvements in the community. Ensuring appropriate support and reintegration for young people as they leave custody and re-enter the community is a particular challenge. The Government is committed to publishing by the end of 2007 plans to improve education for young people in the youth justice system.

Safeguarding children

6.12 The UK has made good progress on reducing the risk of serious harm or death through accident, injury or maltreatment. That said, there is still more to do to mitigate the impact of poverty and low socio-economic status on children's safety. Children of parents who have never worked or are long term unemployed are 13 times more likely to die from unintentional injury and 37 times more likely to die from exposure to fire. Children from lower socio economic groups are five times as likely to die in a pedestrian accident, and there are large socio-economic differences in death by homicide.

Support and challenge for parents and families

6.13 The most important source of nurture and support for children is from parents and wider families. The primary responsibility of the state is to make available information, support and services for parents to take up as they see fit. However, where families are unable, or even unwilling, adequately to safeguard and promote their children's welfare, the state has responsibility compulsorily to intervene in family life.

6.14 With proper court scrutiny, the state should make arrangements to protect children from harm. It is particularly challenging to strike the right balance when undertaking this task, but the legislative priority given to children's welfare, across the UK jurisdictions, provides a sound, principled basis for this activity.

Bullying

6.15 Children cite bullying as a major concern, and children from minority groups are more likely to be bullied. The Government takes bullying very seriously and will continue to implement strategies to address the various ways in which bullying manifests itself, prejudice-driven bullying and cyber bullying. The situation will continue to be monitored and the Government will continue to work in partnership with schools and NGOs all the time this remains an issue of concern to children.

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6.16 The Schools (Safety and Supervision of Pupils) (Scotland) Regulations 1990 place a duty on education authorities in Scotland to take reasonable care for the safety of its pupils. Building on this duty, the Executive has provided funding to support implementation of the recommendations in the *Better Behaviour – Better Learning* report on promoting positive behaviour in schools. To support children and young people affected by bullying the Executive funded ChildLine Scotland to run a specific Bullying Line to listen to children and support them.

6.17 In Northern Ireland, all schools are required by law to have a policy on bullying behaviour and to consult with pupils and parents on these policies. Research has been undertaken around policies and to determine the extent and nature of bullying. There is a commitment to promoting an anti bullying culture in schools and this is done through a partnership between voluntary and statutory bodies.

Enjoyment and making a positive contribution to society

6.18 The UK has high levels of youth participation in sport and community activities, but we want to go further. There is lower participation in constructive activities from social groups C2, D and E, with a quarter of 12-18 year olds not participating in any constructive activity. A high proportion of children and parents alike report a lack of things to do.

Economic well-being

6.19 The UK has high per capita income overall, which increases more quickly for couples with children. Nevertheless, the UK's child poverty rate is still high by international standards, and social mobility remains weak in the UK compared to other developed nations - although the strong decline appears to have stopped.

6.20 In 1999 the UK Government set itself the ambitious challenge of halving child poverty by 2010, and eradicating it by 2020. As a result of policies such as financial support for families with children such as the Child Tax Credit, the New Deals and affordable childcare provision, the number of children living in relative poverty fell by 600,000 between 1998-99 and 2005-06. The number of workless families also fell, and the proportion of children living in poor housing has also decreased.

6.21 Government statistics show that families with a large number of children; lone parents; disabled parents; parents with a disabled child; children living in social housing; and some ethnic minority groups are at higher risk of poverty. Many of these characteristics overlap and all are associated with worklessness.

6.22 Despite the fact that the lone parent employment rate is 11 percentage points higher than in 1997, increasing the lone parent employment even further is key to tackling child poverty in the UK. 'In-work poverty' is also relatively high in the UK. Almost half of all children in poverty are in

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households in which at least one adult works, the majority of which are couple families. This is in part be attributable to low pay and to the low number of hours worked.

6.23 The Department for Work and Pensions' *Working for Children* strategy (March 2007) and *In Work, Better Off* Green Paper (July 2007) both set out measures for helping more parents into work. As a result of changes to the personal tax and benefit system since 1997, by April 2009 households with children in the poorest fifth of the population will be, on average, £4,000 per year better off in real terms. And as a result of the Comprehensive Spending Review 2007, the Government will be investing an additional (compared to 2007-8) £2bn a year on public services to alleviate child poverty, and break cycles of deprivation by 2010-11.