

## 24. EVERY CHILD MATTERS / THE CHILDREN ACT 1989

### **General Principles of the Act**

Every Child Matters: Changes for Children is a new approach to the well being of children and young people from birth to age 19.

The programme places better outcomes for children firmly at the centre of all policies and approaches involving children's services. It aims to improve these outcomes for all children and to close the gap in outcomes between disadvantaged and vulnerable children and young people and their peers. These outcomes are:

- Be healthy
- Stay safe
- Enjoy and achieve through learning
- Make a positive contribution to society
- Achieve economic well-being

The programme demands that all organisations that provide services to children work together in more integrated and effective ways.

The need for change was made apparent in Lord Laming's report into the death of Victoria Climbié, the young girl who was horrifically abused and tortured and eventually killed. The report highlighted a need for improved integration and accountability across children's services.

### **Main aspects affecting schools**

Change for Children recognises that schools already support children's wider well being and propose a change in future inspection criteria to recognise this changing role. Schools and headteachers are described as 'key strategic partners in shaping the pattern of local services. The government, in partnership with local areas is working towards developing extended schools, partnerships with local private, community and voluntary services to offer childcare and other activities to support parents, including access to specialist services on specialist sites.

### **Parental Responsibilities**

Successful outcomes are dependent on the support of parents, carers and families as they are the most important influence on children and young people's outcomes. The Change for Children programme aims to ensure that support for parents becomes routine, particularly at key points in a child's or young person's life. This includes information, advice and support provided through children's centres, extended schools, libraries and GPs. Targeted and more specialist support will be given to parents of children who need them.

### **Implications of parental responsibility for Section Heads**

There will need to be much more co-operation between the different professionals, common ways of working and a pooling of resources. It is essential that health, social services and education establishments share information locally and part of that strategy will be the establishment of an index system carrying essential information on every child allowing concerns to be flagged up early on.

Preventative policies that help support families and stop children becoming vulnerable in the first place will have to be pursued.

An improvement in vocational education offering increased and more varied opportunities for young people including further support for those with additional needs

**Revised: July 2009**