

Every Child Matters: A draft benchmark for 'gap narrowing' Central and Local Government in partnership with schools

To narrow the gap in outcomes between children who do well and those who do not:

- i. there must be ambition, commitment, energy and focus evident at every level and which is shared by key partners
- ii. the drive to reduce poverty should be evident in all key policy and service delivery areas
- iii. leaders must focus on the areas where they can make the most difference across all outcomes, but especially on the outcomes for those children who are vulnerable and whose life chances may be at risk
- iv. central and local government leaders must model and inspire the development of effective professional alliances, new working practices stimulating culture change across the system
- v. the voice of children and young people and their likely experience of any actions must be evident
- vi. learning and development is personalised to meet individual need and interest, is challenging and seeking of the active participation of children and young people
- vii. a skilled and appropriately trained workforce should be created with a focus on narrowing the gap across all outcome areas
- viii. parents (mothers and fathers) and carers must be engaged in the strategic planning and delivery of local support services and they must be treated as equal partners in their children's education and development
- ix. the policy and delivery interface with adult services should be well integrated into strategic planning of services, such that the needs of children whose parents are using adult services are taken into account
- x. performance systems must distinguish between the quality of services and the quality of life or outcomes and there is a particular focus on vulnerable children with accountability for better results shared across strategic partnerships
- xi. data and information is shared across and between central government departments, and is replicated in local partnerships with data being interrogated in respect of 'gap narrowing' trends and the action needed to achieve intended outcomes

partnership strand	
central government	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. There is clarity in the message and leadership of 'gap narrowing' objectives regarding children, young people, their families and carers 2. Early intervention and prevention is a central theme across all policy areas in respect of children, young people, their families and carers, particularly for vulnerable children in their early years 3. Policy development in respect of children and young people takes full account of the need to engage parents and carers 4. The emotional health of children and young people is a central policy theme, where particular attention is paid to the needs of vulnerable children, young people, their families and carers 5. The workforce strategy for children and young people's services supports the development of a workforce characterised by appropriately qualified and highly committed staff with an understanding of and commitment to children
local government	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. There is a comprehensive and rigorous analysis of need in each local area, which profiles the needs of children and families who are vulnerable and who would therefore benefit from local services designed to intervene early 7. The configuration of local services is such that it facilitates the delivery of swift and effective support to vulnerable children and their families, including clear health service engagement with enduring health visiting support for vulnerable families 8. The duty of 'sufficiency' in accordance with the Childcare Act 2006 is met and all children under 5 yrs have access to high quality early years services which integrate education, care and health, and with smooth transitions into primary and secondary school 9. There is a transparent strategic plan to develop multi-agency extended services from schools, supporting education, health, care and families. This is actively offered to all disadvantaged and vulnerable children 10. All vulnerable children and young people have one trusted and dependable adult (in addition to their family) to whom they can turn and early years practitioners take responsibility for children's well-being and their role in keeping them safe 11. All settings integrate provision for children with disabilities and special educational needs and provide additional support where appropriate 12. Practitioners working with parents and carers are suitably qualified and skilled to carry out this work effectively
schools	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 13. School improvement plans include a commitment to the development of high quality extended services which also provide a foundation for the integrated youth offer locally 14. School leaders are focused on 'narrowing the gap', integrate that focus into their business and improvement plans and ensure they are ambitious for all children regardless of circumstance and background 15. Children and young people at risk of or already under-achieving are accurately identified, assessed, support is tailored to meet their individual needs and specific practices that make the most difference are identified and implemented. 16. There is close support and guidance that engages learners and which helps them persevere with their activities and achievements. 17. Schools and early years settings actively support parents in creating supportive learning environments at home