

How C4EO will deliver its work programme

Overview

This briefing outlines how the Centre for Excellence and Outcomes in Children and Young People's Services (C4EO) will identify and coordinate local, regional and national evidence of 'what works' to create a single and comprehensive picture of effective practice. It also covers how the Centre, using this information, will offer support to Local Authorities and their Children's Trust partners, working with them to help improve strategic and 'whole system' aspects of delivering effective children's services.

Background

C4EO is an independent DCSF-sponsored consortium, which was launched in July 2008 to help improve outcomes for children, young people and families.

The Centre's vision is to create 'a world class collaborative Centre which gathers and shares the best knowledge available of 'what works' to contribute to a step-change in outcomes for children and young people, especially those who are most vulnerable.'

Across eight themes, C4EO will identify and coordinate local, regional and national evidence of 'what works' to create a single and comprehensive picture of effective practice. The theme headings were decided by Department for Children Schools and Families (DCSF) in line with the principles and concerns of the Children's Plan. They are:

- Early Years
- Disability
- Vulnerable Children (particularly children in care)
- Child Poverty
- Safeguarding
- Schools and Communities
- Youth
- Parents, Carers and Families.

For each theme, priorities have been identified around an individual specific outcome. All themes have a number of set priorities. Priorities were substantially influenced by the discussions, both formal and informal, that C4EO's core partners had with key stakeholders, including Directors of Children's Services, members of Children's Trusts and colleagues in national organisations.

C4EO draws on the expertise of a consortium of core partners who are leading on key elements of the Centre's programme. These are:

- National Children's Bureau (NCB) – theme lead for Early Years, manages the Children and Young People's Network and leads the evaluation of the Centre

- National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) – leads on conducting knowledge reviews, gathering the evidence and research, and is theme lead for Schools and Communities
- Research in Practice (RiP) – leads on Capacity Building and is theme lead for Disability
- Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE) – leads on Dissemination and is theme lead for the Vulnerable Children (particularly children in care) and Safeguarding themes.

C4EO is also supported by a number of strategic partners who are also working with the Centre to deliver key elements of the work programme. These are:

- Improvement and Development Agency – lead on accreditation and support for Sector Specialists
- Family and Parenting Institute – theme lead on Parents, Carers and Families and manages the Parents' and Carers' Panel on C4EO's behalf
- National Youth Agency – theme lead for Youth
- Institute of Education – supporting NFER with knowledge management.

Gathering the evidence from the sector

For each priority under each theme a Knowledge Review is carried out by NFER on the Centre's behalf. Each review will bring together a unique, quality-assured blend of qualitative and quantitative data, and the best, validated local practice that has proved to be effective. This element will include strategies, levers and interventions, which have already proved to be powerful in helping services to improve outcomes, and will examine the reasons for their success. Once the Knowledge Review has been published, it will be regularly updated. The knowledge gathered from the reviews will underpin all of C4EO's activities. It will make available to those who commission, provide and work in children's services free, accessible and trusted sources of 'what works' evidence.

Communicating the evidence with the sector

The communication and dissemination of the information gathered from the Knowledge Reviews is being led by SCIE. They are developing a range of 'outputs' to present the information in simple and clear ways. The 'outputs' will include:

- **Progress maps:** These are interactive web-based tools. The purpose is to help professionals access and apply the 'what works' evidence, which has been shown to improve outcomes for children, young people and their families, that C4EO has collected,. The progress maps aim to provide a 'one-stop shop' for professionals to access the very latest information, resources and data. They have been designed to:
 - enable professionals to compare data on children's services in a range of flexible ways
 - benchmark a given Local Authority's performance with other authorities, regions or national averages
 - identify where change is needed
 - act as a guide and evaluate improvements to systems and services.

They also aim to promote the better use of data and evidence to challenge and plan change to practice and service delivery as well as being tailored to people's own use, contribute to, as well as disseminate, knowledge.

- **Materials and publications:** A range of materials and publications will be produced to support the Centre's work on each theme. These will be freely available and include evidence of 'what works' gathered from the knowledge reviews.

Supporting the sector to improve outcomes

The Centre will offer support to Local Authorities and their Children's Trust partners to help develop their capacity to deliver better outcomes for children and young people. The capacity building work will be led by Research in Practice. A menu of opportunities is offered:

- **Sector Specialists:** A group of peer advisers will be accredited and trained by the Centre before being deployed to provide support to Local Authorities and other agencies. The aim is to create a group of 'expert' peers to support improvement on each C4EO priority theme using the evidence, research and effective practice of 'what works', which C4EO has collated. The Association of Directors of Children's Services (ADCS) regional groups, with their Government Offices, will have ownership of this model of sector-led improvement and be critical partners in identifying, recruiting and deploying the Sector Specialists drawn from, and working with, each region.
- **Tailored support:** The programme of tailored support to Local Authorities and their partners will be provided in response to requests, with no obligation to participate, drawing on the bank of Sector Specialists. The model will operate on a 'quid pro quo' basis whereby Local Authorities are encouraged to release their own experts to act as specialists on priorities where they demonstrate highly effective practice. In return, they can apply for support on priorities where they feel they need it. Typical offers of help may include, for example: assistance with developing a local improvement plan; facilitation of a local 'Turning the Curve' exercise; help with using evidence-based audit tools; or the development of a local progress map to assess their own policy, performance and practice.
- **Regional knowledge workshops:** A workshop will be held on each C4EO theme in each of the nine Government Office regions for all themes except Child Poverty. This theme will have only three workshops. At these knowledge workshops, the information from the knowledge reviews will be shared with Local Authorities and their partners along with examples of promising local practice.
- **Progression events:** Several months after the knowledge workshops and the tailored support have begun, regional progression events will be held to update Local Authorities and their partners on emerging new knowledge gathered from the updated knowledge reviews. Local Authorities and Children's Trusts will be encouraged to share their own progress and learn from local improvement activity by identifying local priorities and needs.
- **Online "Communities of Practice":** These are web-based 'virtual networks' to support the exchange of knowledge, and resources that will help catalyse and sustain work around the eight themes.

Measuring C4EO's effectiveness

The Centre's work programme includes a substantial self-evaluation element, which is being led by the NCB, on C4EO's behalf. The evaluation will assess the contribution of C4EO to improving outcomes for children, young people and families and will involve assessment of:

- the perceived quality and effectiveness of the Centre's activities, in improving services for children and young people
- whether children, young people and families are experiencing better outcomes.

Progress will be measured against a series of key performance indicators (KPIs) to monitor the effectiveness of C4EO's activities in: establishing the Centre; synthesising knowledge; disseminating key messages; building capacity to improve children's services; reaching the intended audiences; and influencing systems change.

The evaluation methods will include:

- collection of management and monitoring information
- short assessment forms following up Centre events and outputs
- an annual survey of Directors of Children's Services
- interviews with national and regional stakeholder organisations and analysis of policy documents to assess the Centre's wider influence
- trend analysis of key outcomes for children, young people and families at national, regional and local levels.

Further information

For more information visit www.C4EO.org.uk

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