

## **C4EO Brief No 1 (September 2008)**

### **Welcome!**

This is the first newsletter from the Centre for Excellence and Outcomes in Children and Young People's Services (C4EO). It aims to keep you updated with the Centre's latest activities and will be published on a regular basis.



### **Early Years Sector Specialists**

Sector Specialists are professionals drawn from across the children's sector who have an expertise and a track record of achievement in a particular C4EO theme. They will be available on request to help local authorities and their Children's Trust partners to improve outcomes for children and young people locally. This article details how the system will work. **Read more about Early Years Sector Specialists.**



### **Early days on early years, but growing fast!**

Sue Owen, Director of Well-being at the National Children's Bureau, is the Early Years Theme Lead for C4EO. She explains how the work that the Centre is doing on early years will empower and support professionals to deliver services, which will improve outcomes for those who use them. **Read more about early days on early years, but growing fast!.**



### **Updates**

Details of C4EO's governance arrangements, biographies of its new staff and the latest news from Narrowing the Gap. **Read more about C4EO updates.**

### **Calendar**

Key dates for the next seven months. Click here to **Read more about key dates for C4EO.**

## Early Years Sector Specialists

Sector Specialists are professionals drawn from across the children's sector who have an expertise and a track record of achievement in a particular C4EO theme. They will be available on request to help local authorities and their Children's Trust partners to improve outcomes for children and young people locally. The Centre is using Sector Specialists - acknowledging the significant expertise and experience in outcome improvement that already exists within the sector. They are not another field force! Rather, C4EO will accredit these specialists to work as 'peer mentors'. They will be trained to understand how to use the evidence, collected by C4EO on 'what works', and the evidence-based tools and approaches that can achieve better outcomes in their particular field of children's services.

Sector Specialists will be available to support colleagues to understand and overcome local challenges that are preventing them from achieving better outcomes for their local populations. It is known that professionals learn most effectively when new knowledge is shared in a range of ways and comes with help to put it into practice. So this one-to-one contact from an expert peer is an important element of the Centre's offer to local authorities and their partner agencies.

Two Sector Specialists are being recruited per theme for each of the nine Government Office regions. This makes a total of 18 Sector Specialists for each theme. The Early Years Theme is the first one for which Sector Specialists are being sought. Specialists may come from all parts of the children's sector – health, social care, voluntary sector, youth justice, education and so on. The key competencies required are:

- a recognised expertise in early years work and an appreciation of the challenges involved
- a track record of achieving outcome improvement in early years services locally
- a strategic understanding of the 'whole system' and the complexity of the early years context

In addition, the Centre is looking for a range of generic skills such as an ability to analyse and diagnose problems; an aptitude for transferring knowledge; and a capacity for helping others develop by providing a supportive, valuing and non-judgmental environment. Potential recruits will also need the active endorsement of their Director of Children's Services (DCS), chief executive or equivalent, who must be prepared to release them from their 'day job' for an agreed period (backfill funds will be provided).

Sector Specialists will work mainly within their region on time-limited assignments requested by DCSs, perhaps with individual colleagues, a forum of professionals or a cross-agency group. The Centre is looking for people who can be released for the equivalent of two to three days a month over an 18-month period.

Those who become Sector Specialists will benefit from excellent professional training and development, gain valuable experience in other agencies and, in so doing, develop their knowledge base and skills. People who have worked as peer mentors in this way frequently report that the opportunity was immensely rewarding – as well as career enhancing.

There will also be benefits for those organisations releasing Sector Specialists, including giving their local achievements acknowledgement on a national platform and securing access to support on priorities where they may be doing less well (there is a 'quid pro quo' element to this approach); and developing one of their key staff members who will bring valuable expertise back to them.

The Centre will 'capture' the learning generated from the Sector Specialists' assignments and feed this into the knowledge base for that particular theme. This learning may well include examples of local promising practice; new knowledge from implementing change; or practical resources that the Sector Specialists develop while supporting colleagues.

It is hoped that, through this sector-led approach to outcome improvement, the Centre will leave a valuable legacy of 'change agents' working within children's services.

If you are interested in becoming a Sector Specialist on early years then an **information pack** is available on the website.

If you would like to discuss the role contact Sue Rowley 077588 12391.

## Early days on early years, but growing fast!

*Sue Owen, Director of Well-being at the National Children's Bureau, is the Early Years Theme Lead for C4EO. She explains how the work the Centre is doing on early years will empower and support professionals to deliver services which will improve outcomes for those who use them.*

The best way to bring about change is from within localities, being responsive to local conditions and taking account of local contexts. C4EO wants to empower that approach by giving people the knowledge and tools to bring about improvements in the context of their local conditions.

Early Years is the first theme that C4EO is looking at. We know that outcomes for many children in their early years are variable and affected by a variety of factors such as poverty or parenting. Evidence suggests that the way in which services are delivered to younger children and their families can have an impact on these outcomes.

The Early Years priorities are:

- improving development outcomes for children through effective practice in integrating early years services
- improving children's attainment through a better quality of family-based support for early learning
- narrowing the gap in outcomes for children from the most excluded families through inclusive practice in early years settings.

These priorities arose from research, which indicated they are important factors affecting children's achievement and well-being. The process being put in place in C4EO will give us access to the best research and practice on these issues and help local authorities to decide which strategies will be most effective in their particular circumstances.

Professionals have long sought to learn what works by looking at what other people have done. This is hardly new, but often what works for someone in one place may not work for others in different areas because of differences in geography, demography or local circumstances.

## **So what makes the work of C4EO different from what people have done in the past?**

The first difference is that C4EO is conducting comprehensive reviews of evidence on 'what works' for each priority. This evidence will include everything from academic articles to tools, strategies and plans that professionals have used to improve outcomes in a local area.

The second key difference is that the knowledge will be accessible to everyone from a single point – with the C4EO website acting as a one-stop shop. This information will be put into accessible formats and products targeted at different audiences, available for anyone to access whenever they want. We aim to make the progress mapping tool, which searches for the information we have collected, as responsive as possible to people's requests.

A third difference is that this knowledge will be updated on a regular basis throughout the next three years and will take advantage of new information as it is published.

The final difference is that C4EO will actively use the information collected to offer support, to local authorities and their Children's Trust partners, to apply it to their services. A programme of regional workshops, Sector Specialists and tailored support will aim to bring a human dimension to the transfer of knowledge, enabling people to learn from others about what has worked for them rather than just reading it from the web or a book.

For the early years professional, they will benefit from our ability to provide the best information they can use to assess local early years work and to inform change where necessary so as to improve outcomes, quickly and conveniently. C4EO will not produce 'magic bullets' but it will give people the tools to make change in their local context and at their own pace.

## **So how far have we got with the early years theme?**

The Centre has only existed since early July but since then much has been achieved. A theme advisory group is meeting. This group gives advice and guidance to the Centre to develop the work programme. It includes recognised experts from the University of London, Peterborough City Council, Ofsted and the Children's Workforce Development Council.

In October we will publish the three scoping reviews, one for each of the three Early Years Theme priorities, which will look at the availability of evidence. Over the next two months we will be recruiting, accrediting and training Early Years Sector Specialists to work with local authorities and their partners. Finally, we will publish reviews of the evidence for each priority in January 2008 and make them available to the public on our website.

We will publish the three scoping reviews for each of the three early years priorities which will look at the availability of evidence on 31 October. Over the

next two months we will be recruiting, training and accrediting early years sector specialists to work with local authorities and their partners. Finally we will publish the results of the review of all the evidence on 30 January 2008 and make it available to the public on our website.

**Sue Owen** is currently Director of the Well-being Department at the National Children's Bureau and was previously Director of the Early Childhood Unit there. In the past she has held a number of posts in the early childhood field including Early Years Lead Officer for Humberside County Council, Information Officer for the National Childminding Association, Playgroup Adviser for Manchester City Council, and Deputy Director of the Early Years National Training Organisation.

Sue's latest book is *Authentic Relationships in Group Care for Infants and Toddlers: RIE principles into practice* (co-edited with Stephanie Petrie). Her doctoral dissertation was on the development of professionalism in childminding.

For more information on the Early Years Theme, please contact Sue Owen at NCB via [sowen@ncb.org.uk](mailto:sowen@ncb.org.uk).

## Updates

### Governance arrangements

C4EO's Director is advised by a **Programme Board**, which meets quarterly and held its first meeting on 9 September. The Board is made up of the Centre's core and strategic partners, together with representatives from key stakeholders including; the Association of Directors of Children's Services (ADCS), the Department for Children, Schools and Families, the Local Government Association, Ofsted, NHS Confederation, and the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives. It is chaired by ADCS President, Dr Maggie Atkinson.

The programme board is advised by two panels to ensure that its work fully reflects the needs and views of people who use its services:

- **the Children's and Young People's Panel**, which is managed by NCB and is made up of up to 15 children and young people aged 10 to 18
- **the Parents' and Carers' Panel**, which is managed by the Family & Parenting Institute

Recruitment to both panels is currently underway and they are due to meet shortly.

### Staffing

The Centre is delighted to announce that the following staff will be starting in October.

#### **Helen Goody, Assistant Director for Theme Co-ordination**

Helen has worked for Kent County Council for the past three years as a Joint Commissioning Officer with a responsibility for planning and commissioning preventative and early intervention services for children and young people with a range of partners. She has also had a change management role influencing the development of local children's services partnerships in Kent. Before that, Helen was a Programme Manager for integrated children's services at the Local Government Association and in particular, worked with national partners to influence the development of Every Child Matters and the Children Act 2004.

#### **Heather Rushton, Assistant Director, Programme and Performance Management**

Heather has recently been Children's Services Adviser in the East Midlands. Prior to that Heather was Director for School Improvement in Bradford, building on significant local authority experience.

## Narrowing the Gap

**Narrowing the Gap (NtG)** is a two-year programme hosted by the Local Government Association, supported by the Improvement and Development Agency and funded by the Department for Children, Schools and Families. Its aim is to narrow the gap in outcomes between vulnerable and excluded children and others, against a context of improving outcomes for all. From July this year, the programme has been integrated within the work of C4EO.

It focuses on identifying how to secure improved and sustained outcomes for children and their families with a particular focus on vulnerable groups. The products of Years 1 and 2 of NtG will contribute to the evidence of C4EO. The collaborative, sector-led methodology of NtG has and will continue to inform the development of C4EO. The C4EO Programme Board will oversee the NtG programme during Year 2 of the project.

Five key lines of enquiry were identified within the NtG programme, with three of these being covered within the first 12 months (Year 1). These were:

1. How to create and sustain the right links between schools, children's centres and children's services
2. How to engage and support parents and carers in helping children to succeed
3. How to use new systems and processes brought into being by Every Child Matters to orientate services more towards prevention and early intervention

The themes for Year 2 of the programme focus on:

4. How to strengthen and align local leadership and governance arrangements – both professional and political
5. How to strengthen systems for developing local leaders to deliver improved services based on an understanding of what works

## Calendar – key C4EO dates for the next seven months

Date	Event
September/October 2008	Recruitment of Early Years Theme Sector Specialists.
October 2008	Early Years scoping review placed on the C4EO website. This will outline the terms of reference for the Early Years knowledge reviews on each of the three priorities in the Early Years theme.
November 2008	Accreditation and training of the Early Years Sector Specialists.
December 2008/January 2009	Recruitment of Disability Theme Sector Specialists.
22 January 2008	Early Years Knowledge Workshop – Yorkshire and the Humber region.
27 January 2008	Early Years Knowledge Workshop – North West region.
29 January 2008	Early Years Knowledge Workshop – North East region.
January 2008	Disability Theme scoping report placed on the C4EO website.
January 2008	Publication of the first knowledge review for the Early Years Theme on the C4EO website.
3 February 2008	Early Years Knowledge Workshop – West Midlands region.
5 February 2008	Early Years Knowledge Workshop – East Midlands region.
10 February 2008	Early Years Knowledge Workshop – East region.
12 February 2008	Early Years Knowledge Workshop – London.
24 February 2008	Early Years Knowledge Workshop – South East region.
26 February 2008	Early Years Knowledge Workshop – South West region.
March 2009	Accreditation and training of Disability Theme Sector Specialists.
April 2009	Publication of the scoping review for the Vulnerable Children Theme.

## About C4EO

C4EO was launched on 10 July 2008 at the Manchester conference of the Association of Directors of Children Services. The Centre will identify and coordinate local, regional and national evidence of 'what works', to create a single and comprehensive picture of effective practice in delivering children's services. Using this information, C4EO will offer support to local authorities and their Children's Trust partners, working with them to improve outcomes for children, young people and their families.

The Centre will focus its work on six national themes identified in Every Child Matters. These are: early years; disability; vulnerable children (particularly children in care); parents, carers and families; youth; and schools and communities.

The Centre is also conducting two other pieces of work:

- primary disability research into two areas – the effectiveness and costs of different modes of delivering behaviour management interventions to parents of disabled children and the effectiveness and costs of early identification and intervention for sleep problems
- a cross-cutting theme review on child poverty in the spring of 2009.

C4EO is working with a consortium of core partners: National Children's Bureau, National Foundation for Educational Research, Research in Practice, and the Social Care Institute for Excellence. The Centre is also supported by a number of strategic partners, including the Improvement and Development Agency, the Family & Parenting Institute, the National Youth Agency, and the Institute of Education. There will be close and ongoing cooperation with the Association of Directors of Children's Services, the Local Government Association, the NHS Confederation, the Society of Chief Executives, Ofsted and the regional Government Offices.

C4EO is funded by the Department for Children, Schools and Families.

For more information please visit <http://www.C4EO.org.uk>

## For more information

For general enquiries email: [contactus@C4EO.org.uk](mailto:contactus@C4EO.org.uk)

C4EO's administrative base is located at NCB headquarters in London. All correspondence for the Centre should be addressed to:

C4EO  
8 Wakley Street  
London  
EC1V 7QE  
Tel: 020 7843 6358