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This is the first in a series of articles highlighting the Every Child Matters (ECM) agenda. The series commences here with an overview of the agenda. Future articles will go on to provide case studies of the implementation of ECM within the outdoor sector and a case study of a young person's perspective. The aim is to provide an introduction to ECM, with more detailed information available at www.everychildmatters.gov.uk

Every Child Matters

by Lucy Maynard

History of Every Child Matters

Victoria Climbié was 8 years old when she died in 2000. She had suffered abuse and neglect that included being left for days on end in a bath tub, hands tied behind her back, sleeping in her own excrement. The pathologist stated that there were 128 separate injuries on Victoria's body and that no part of her body was spared. Victoria's aunt, Marie Therese Kouao and her boyfriend Carl Manning were convicted of her murder. In 2003 Lord Laming led an independent review into the events leading to Victoria's death. His report stated that there were 12 different occasions where there was an opportunity to save Victoria. The family were known to four different local authority social service departments, two hospitals, two police child protection teams and a family centre. In short, Victoria slipped through the net between services.

From the Laming report the government's Every Child Matters Green Paper was compiled in 2003. However, the changes build on much of the research and thinking of policies the government had been developing over recent years. Therefore, the policy was much more complex than a knee jerk response to the public inquiry and child protection issues. Moreover, it was the ideal opportunity for introducing wide-ranging and radical changes. The government policy was legally underpinned when it was made law in the 2004 Children Act. All services for children and young people in an area (or local authority) are brought together into Children's trusts and have a duty to cooperate under the new Children Act. This involved the statutory duty of children's services and the involvement of the voluntary and community sector.

Change for Children

In its simplest form ECM proposed changes to services, bringing them closer together so as there were fewer gaps for children like Victoria to slip through. But it is far more reaching than this and has implications in every aspect of young people's well-being:

"This means that the organisations involved with providing services to children – from hospitals and schools, to police and voluntary groups – will be teaming up in new ways, sharing information and working together, to protect children and young people from harm and help them achieve what they want to in life. Children and young people will have far more say about issues that affect them as individuals and collectively"

DfES (2004).

What may be familiar to this audience is the focus on the whole child, and enable a more holistic approach to a number of 'outcomes' for children, improving their overall well-being. Well-being is the term used within the Act and is broken down into five outcomes (figure 1). It proposes increased commitment to child-centred approaches to children's care. It seeks to address the rights of the child to improved life chances but also their right to a voice in decisions. This could be seen to build upon government policies where child development was seen as key and where children were conceptualised primarily as future citizens requiring both safeguarding and investment. Indeed ECM can be seen as building upon and superseding previous citizenship and personal, social and health education (PSHE) initiatives, but with much greater emphasis on the whole child.

A more specific proposal for 13-19 year olds was launched in the government's Green Paper 'Youth Matters' (2005) and 'Youth Matters: Next Steps' (2006). This sets the vision for empowering young people, giving them somewhere to go, something to do and someone to talk to.



1. BE HEALTHY

- Physically healthy
- Mentally and emotionally healthy
- Sexually healthy
- Healthy lifestyles
- Choose not to take illegal drugs

2. STAY SAFE

- Safe from maltreatment, neglect, violence and sexual exploitation
- Safe from accidental injury or death
- Safe from bullying and discrimination
- Safe from crime and anti-social behaviour in and out of school
- Have security, stability and are cared for

3. ENJOY AND ACHIEVE

- Ready for school
- Attend and enjoy school
- Achieve stretching national educational standards at primary school
- Achieve personal and social development and enjoy recreation
- Achieve stretching national educational standards at secondary school

4. MAKE A POSITIVE CONTRIBUTION

- Engage in decision making and support community and environment
- Engage in law abiding and positive behaviour in and out of school
- Develop positive relationships and choose not to bully and discriminate
- Develop self-confidence and successfully deal with significant life changes and challenges
- Develop enterprising behaviour

5. ACHIEVE ECONOMIC WELL-BEING

- Engage in further education, employment or training on leaving school
- Ready for employment
- Live in decent homes and sustainable communities
- Access to transport and material goods
- Live in households free from low income



Policy into Practice

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Through partnership work and experiential, holistic, person centred philosophies, which are threaded throughout its practice, the outdoor sector has a key role to play in its own contributions to enhancing young people's well-being. **In the next in this series of articles about ECM, we will explore a case study of how one organisation has been implementing this key agenda.**

ECM is billed to bring huge change in children's and young people's services.

ECM is billed to bring huge change in children's and young people's services. Indicators show that ECM is more than a flavour of the month and therefore should be welcomed and taken as a bench mark in work with children and young people. This is evidenced further by ECM being the principal policy driver behind the creation of the new Department of Children, Schools and Families (formerly DfES). Aligning the outdoor sectors multifaceted practice with the outcomes framework, as well as all children's services and children's trusts, seems appropriate in a joint professional commitment to improved children's and young people's well-being. ■

FURTHER READING

- Children Act (2004) London, HMSO.
- DfES (2003) Every Child Matters Green Paper.
- DfES (2004) Every Child Matters: Next Steps.
- DfES (2005) Youth Matters Green Paper.
- Laming, H. (2003) The Victoria Climbié Inquiry. (Available at: www.victoria-climbié-inquiry.org.uk)

AUTHOR'S NOTES

Lucy Maynard is a Doctoral student within the University of Cumbria's School of Outdoor Studies, Ambleside (formerly St Martin's College). Her PhD research explores the implementation of the Every Child Matters agenda, focussing on the voices of young people in understanding their experiences. The primary research partner is the Brathay Hall Trust.

PHOTOGRAPHS

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