

Every Child Matters in Great Yarmouth

In 2003, the Government published a green paper called Every Child Matters. This formed part of the response to the report into the death of Victoria Climbié, a young girl who was abused and murdered by her great aunt and the man with whom they lived. The aim of Every Child Matters was to bring improvements to the way in which agencies safeguard and promote the welfare of children and for every child, whatever their background or their circumstances, to have the support they need to:

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

These are the five outcomes that all agencies involved with children and young people are working towards.

The Children Act 2004

Following the Every Child Matters consultation, the Government published Every Child Matters: the Next Steps, and passed the Children Act 2004. The Act provides legislation for developing more effective and accessible services focused around the needs of children, young people and families. The Act requires Children's Service Authorities, such as Norfolk County Council, to coordinate all the services provided by statutory, voluntary or private providers for children and young people aged 0 to 19 (0 to 25 for care leavers and children and young people with disabilities) as part of an integrated children's service.

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 in life. Over the next few years, every local authority will be working with its partners, through children's trusts, to deliver more effective joined up services.

The Role of District Councils

Section 11 of the Children Act 2004 places a duty on key agencies including District Councils. The duty means that the agencies must ensure;

- That their functions are discharged having regard to the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children
- That the services they contract out to others are provided having regard to that need

District Councils and the other named agencies have a “duty to co-operate” to improve children’s well-being. The Children’s Service Authority will lead and promote co-operation through the establishment of local Children’s Trusts.

Great Yarmouth Borough Council and Every Child Matters

Although it is Norfolk County Council that is directly responsible for Childrens Services, Great Yarmouth Borough Council is at the forefront of implementing the changes outlined in Every Child Matters:

- The Norfolk Local Area Agreement (LAA) plans ways in which to deliver national outcomes in a way that reflects local priorities and work towards delivering the 5 Every Child Matters outcomes faster and better.
- We are part of the Norfolk Children and Young Peoples Partnership made up of all the key partners involved in delivering services to children in the county.
- We are part of the Local Safeguarding Children’s Board, which replaces the Area Child Protection Committee and has responsibility for the “staying safe” element of the five outcomes.
- We are also part of the Children and Young People’s Partnership for the Eastern Area which is responsible for the delivery of the five key outcomes within the Great Yarmouth boundaries.
- The Council has developed a child protection policy and procedures which will ensure that any concerns regarding the the welfare of children made to council staff will be taken seriously and dealt with appropriately.
- Staff who have direct contact with children and families are being trained to be aware of the signs of abuse and neglect.
- Appropriate staff are also being trained on the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) which is the way in which all agencies will assess the needs of children and young people who need additional help for them to meet the five outcomes of Every Child Matters.
- The Council is working with its partners, such as Childrens Services, The Police and the Voluntary Sector to ensure that information is appropriately shared and the appropriate interventions are made.

Improving the lives of children and young people in Great Yarmouth

The Council has always been responsible for areas of work which directly impact on the lives of children, such as housing, the environment, sport and play, administration of benefits. The Local Area Agreement and our involvement in the Children and Young People’s partnership will lead to a more joined up strategic approach to service delivery. In particular;

- Staff who work directly with children and families, such as Housing Estate Managers, will ensure that any concerns that they have about the welfare of a child are properly reported. Similarly, where they identify a family as being “in need” of help this will be properly dealt with through the “Common Assessment Framework” and through continual development of the partnership working culture.
- Our Housing Strategy will look to address the needs of children and young people. For example, the development of the Bretts Centre will deliver housing support, life skills support and resettlement for up to 13 young persons aged 16 and up to prepare them for independent living
- Our work on anti-social behaviour and crime reduction will recognise that children and young people can be victims of crime and anti-social behaviour and in a very small number of instances perpetrators. When perpetrators, or those at risk of becoming perpetrators, are identified we will work with our partners to ensure that there is intervention as early as possible to give support to both the young person and their parents to help them to make a more positive contribution.
- Planning For the Next Generation, the Council’s play strategy, developed with its partners, looks at how play can contribute to the five outcomes.
- Similarly, the Council has been at the centre of the Great Yarmouth Sports Partnership, which has been recognised as a model of good practice. The partnership uses sport as a way of addressing broader issues such as health improvement, education and learning, community regeneration, crime diversion and social exclusion.
- We will ensure that we fulfill our obligations under the Licensing and Gambling Acts with reference to the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children
- Revenues and Benefits, Welfare Rights and Housing Management will work together with other partners to maximise the incomes of families in the borough and ensure that where families are experiencing financial difficulties they get the help and support that they need.
- Our community engagement strategy will address the need to involve children, young people and their families in order to inform decision-making and develop services to help improve the quality of life for all in the Borough.

Working Together

Great Yarmouth has a strong history of partnership working on children's issues and the Council has pledged its commitment to ensuring that it continues. Put simply, we share a common vision with our partners and have signed up to collectively improve the outcomes for children and young people in the borough.

“We believe that all children and young people have the right to be **healthy, happy** and **safe**; to be **loved, valued** and **respected**; and to have **high aspirations** for their future.”