



**NEW DEAL
FOR TEACHERS**

POLITICAL BRIEFING

Education and the healthcare system

Lessons learned...

A fundamental policy lesson of 2000-2010 was that the wellbeing and future life chances of children and young people were best secured by all children and young people's services working in constructive, sustainable and well-resourced partnerships.

The public inquiry into the tragic death of Victoria Climbié in 2000 highlighted the fact that it is only through the establishment of such partnerships that children can best be protected. However, this exploration of the value of multi-agency collaboration also confirmed that the interests of every child were best served by services working together. It became increasingly understood that all services, across the health, education, social care, welfare, youth and community and criminal justice sectors, had a critical role to play in realising the strategic ambition for England to be the best place in the world for children to grow up.

This policy was crystallised in the 2003 Green Paper, *Every Child Matters*, which provided the basis on which to design education policies around the needs of the whole child, while emphasising the importance of developing a 'team around the child'. From the introduction of Sure Start Children's Centres, designed to support the health, education and other needs of young children and their families, to coherent national systems for information sharing, *Every Child Matters* proceeded on the basis that no one service on its own could secure the wellbeing of all children and that all must work together.

...were then unlearned

As a result of deliberate policy choices from May 2010, this emerging, evidence-based and multi-agency approach was dismantled. The then Secretary of State for Education, Michael Gove, described *Every Child Matters* as 'meddlesome' and took apart the collaborative structure of services that had been developed over the preceding decade.

Compounding these issues, reductions in investment in wider children's services meant that not only was partnership working less incentivised, but also that services on which children and their families relied, particularly the most vulnerable, faced ever-increasing challenges.

While such policies have had a detrimental impact across the children's services sector as a whole, it is understandable that there has been significant focus on the impact of these reforms on health services for children and on children's lives at school.

In particular, much attention has rightly fallen on the increasing numbers of children and young people with mental health concerns, who require support from specialist practitioners and services.

Children experiencing poor mental health often face barriers to achieving and succeeding at school, as well as detrimental impacts on their wider quality of life. Underinvestment in NHS services for such children has had a profound effect. A report from the Children's Commissioner for England confirmed that in 2022/23, more than a quarter of a million (270,300) children and young people were still waiting for mental health support after being referred to NHS Children and Young People's Mental Health Services (CYPMHS).

The report stressed that too many children were still waiting longer than necessary to access the help they needed (in 2022/23, nearly 40,000 children experienced a wait of over two years) and that wide variations existed in the availability of services across different areas.

The impact of underinvestment and arrangements for multi-agency working are also evident in respect of support for children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). The SEND system in England places local authorities under a legal duty to ensure integration between education provision and health provision *‘where this would promote wellbeing and improve the quality of provision for disabled young people and those with SEN’*. However, because of policy reforms in the 2010s, local authorities have no powers to enforce such collaboration.

Local health services, themselves under significant financial pressure, have a great deal of discretion in determining the extent to which they will engage with local authorities and other services and the extent of funding they will provide. As the Government itself accepted in its 2022 SEND and Alternative Provision Green Paper, this discretion has resulted in inconsistent levels of provision across the country and is creating barriers to the assessment and addressing of need.

Towards a more positive future for children’s health and other services

The evidence of the last 14 years highlights the fact that it is only through investing sufficiently in services for children, including in education and health services, that all needs can be met and that every child will have the opportunity to thrive. This experience also highlights the deep flaws in a policy approach that fails to recognise that it is only by working together that services for children can support children and their families effectively.

The children’s services landscape of today is very different to the one inherited by the Coalition Government in 2010. It will not be possible, or even desirable, to seek to replicate specific policies of 2000-2010 in the second half of the 2020s. However, some principles learned from that period endure and should form the basis of a new approach. These principles include:

- establishing arrangements, backed by a statutory framework and adequate support, that ensure that health, education and other services for children work together, with minimum expectations of the areas of activity that such collaboration should involve; and
- ensuring that health services for children and young people are resourced adequately and that such provision is prioritised in overall health service financial and workforce planning.

About us

NASUWT is The Teachers’ Union and is the voice of the teaching profession.

Our aim is to improve and protect the status, morale and working conditions of the teaching profession so that teachers and headteachers can provide the best education and support to children and young people.



**MAKE CHANGE
HAPPEN**

We are committed to ensuring that teachers and headteachers are recognised and rewarded as highly skilled professionals with working conditions that enable them to focus on their core role of leading teaching and learning.

Further information

For further information, please email campaigns@mail.nasuwt.org.uk

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