

**1 how to use  
this pack –  
an introduction**





**This pack contains all the material that we have produced during the first phase of the Narrowing the Gap project. It is designed to be used by everyone working with or for children and young people and their families across the children's sector – locally, regionally or nationally.**

The pack is set out carefully, with each section leading to the next, allowing readers to 'drill down' from a high level overview of the issues, through the evidence base to the detail of what we believe must be pursued across the whole system, if we are to be successful in narrowing the gap.

**Section two** is essential reading for everyone and sets out an **overview of the Narrowing the Gap project**, what we are doing and why. It tells you where the project has got to, and what can be learnt from the work so far. It also gives a short description of each of the elements of the project to date, which, taken together, gives us some strong messages about the complex whole system change needed to deliver better outcomes for vulnerable children and young people.

**Section three** gives a **summary of what the data tells us** about the gaps in children's outcomes and the gaps in data collection, through an analysis of available data. This was undertaken by **NFER** and is also essential reading for everyone. Those who are interested in the detail behind the summary can access the full report in appendix A.

**Section four** are the critical core hypotheses that we have drawn from the evidence and from extensive work with a wide range of stakeholders. These **10 golden threads** have to be taken together, applied universally and pursued relentlessly to achieve significant change. In other words, they are not a 'pick and mix list' but a recipe for whole system change. These are the keys to change, are of interest to everyone but in particular are essential reading for those responsible for leading and managing services, especially directors of children's services (along with their partners in the local Children's Trust partnership

arrangements).

**Section five** sets out, in five templates, the critical **'building blocks'** that need to be in place to 'make the difference' based on the professional judgement of practitioners and organisations, informed by the NFER reviews. The templates are on the following themes:

- what Children's Centres and other early years settings can do to narrow the gap
- what needs to be in place between schools and other services – extended schools
- what schools can do to narrow the gap
- what constitutes the most effective practice in engaging parents and carers
- how to re-orientate systems, processes and services towards early intervention and prevention.

Each template represents part of the whole system. They are essential reading for leaders and managers of services, as well as for those responsible for driving local policy, strategy and change programmes. They can be read separately so that head teachers, Children's Centre managers or managers across children's services can concentrate on the detail most relevant to them.

An introduction, summarising the headlines from the five templates, helps readers focus on the key messages.

**Section six** provides a **summary of a review of available literature and research by NFER**. This review looked at 800+ pieces of evidence, looked in

detail at 70 and draws out key messages. The full report can be found in appendix B.

**Section seven** provides some **concluding thoughts** for policy-makers and deliverers of children's services alike. It also briefly sets out **the next steps** for the Narrowing the Gap project. It assists readers in thinking about whether they may be able to contribute to the project, through the 'communities of interest' work or through providing material to support the 'call for evidence' (taking place between February and April 2008). It also gives the participating local authorities an understanding of how their vital contribution fits within the overall scope of the project.

**Appendices A and B** – the two full research studies undertaken by NFER.

**Appendix C** – glossary and definitions

**Appendix D** – acknowledgements

## **final comment**

There is, inevitably, some repetition across the different sections of this pack. This is deliberate, as it allows the materials within each section to 'stand alone' and be used, with ease and understanding by different individuals or groups (without needing necessarily to have reference to the full pack).