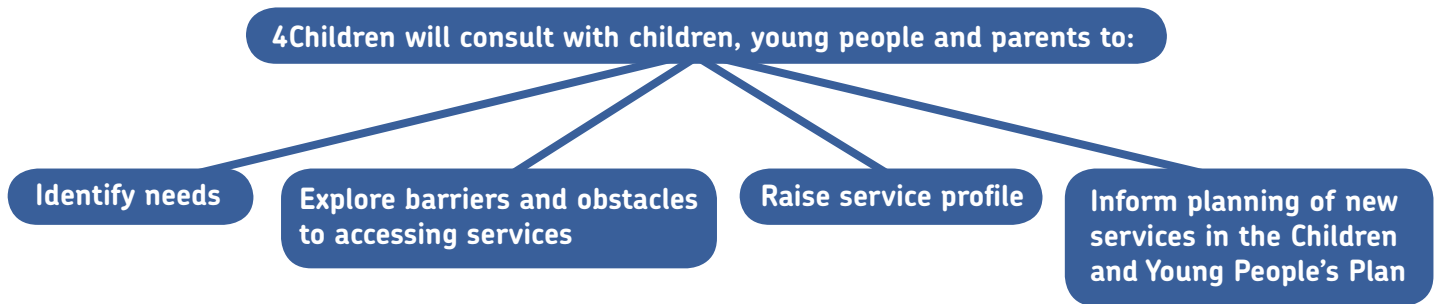


Assess and analyse needs

The Childcare Bill confirms the vital role of local authorities as strategic leaders, working in partnership across all sectors to shape the future delivery of early childhood services, raising quality of provision and improving outcomes for all children.

The needs of children and their parents are at the heart of the proposed legislation, with local authorities as the champions of parents and children. Effective planning processes and service design depend on an accurate assessment of needs,

and inform all children's service strategies and the Children and Young People's Plan. To fulfil the new duty to secure, as far as reasonably practicable, sufficient childcare to meet the requirement of working parents (particularly parents on low incomes or who have a disabled child), local authorities are expected to carry out an initial assessment to determine how much, what types and in what patterns childcare is needed. A full assessment would be repeated at least every three years in line with guidance.



Consultation with children, parents/carers and families

Consultancy 4Children will design interview schedules and undertake qualitative research including focus groups with parents/carers, families and children to identify their views about:

- demand for services
- socio-economic data and labour market patterns, including working hours
- the requirements of all children aged up to 14 and up to 16 for disabled children
- the views of children
- cultural issues
- affordability issues
- quality issues

Consultation with children's services, providers and community

Consultancy 4Children will survey public, private and voluntary providers including schools, day nurseries, health and family support services and children's centres about current needs, provision and affordability, including take up of tax credits. We will also take into account national and local data and analysis.

Analysis and reporting

Consultancy 4Children will analyse evidence and make recommendations based on:

Sampling and access: how parents/carers, schools and providers were identified and engaged to ensure that communities whose take up of services in the past has been low were included

Demographic and institutional breakdown of those consulted

Ethical guidelines observed

Findings of the consultation, including issues of access, affordability, quality, culture and services required

Conclusions and recommendations

Use of analysis to inform planning

Developing parent and child participation strategies

Consultancy 4Children works to understand the needs of children and families and involve them in service design through:

- Benchmarking and identifying good practice
- Running focused and creative workshops with children, families and providers and evaluating their responses
- Feeding back recommendations

4Children's recent consultations on the needs of children and parents include:

- Consulting children and young people using drama workshops, poster painting and video, in partnership with Young Voice, as part of a Bullying Prevention project for Camden Children's Fund. The project involved 200 young people in holiday playschemes and schools in Camden in designing a bullying prevention campaign in 2004. We also ran a training course for street wardens, playworkers, police, local authority staff and others, presented the children and young people's findings, and produced two summary reports – for young people and adults.
- A commission for the Department for Education and Skills to identify the views of a range of children and young people, aged 3–19, from different backgrounds and different areas of England, on key concerns for the children's workforce.
- Consulting parents in Basingstoke and Deane about the childcare they need.
- A two year Children's Participation Project, commissioned by West Sussex Children's Fund, consulting with children and young people and building their participation into decision making across all services (2004-06).