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National College
for Leadership of Schools
and Children's Services

Children's services

National Leadership Qualities Framework for Directors of Children's Services

March 2010

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Foreword

In December 2008 the DCSF published the 2020 Children and Young People's Workforce Strategy. This strategy, set out a change programme for all those working with children and young people, including a commitment to a 'new development programme which will offer structured training and support to every director of children's services (DCS) and to those stepping up to that role' (para 3.8). The National College for Leadership of Schools and Children's Services was charged with taking this work forward, in partnership with the Association of Directors of Children's Services and the Children's Workforce Development Council.

All three organisations are committed to developing the national DCS leadership provision and, since agreeing to the extended remit, the National College has established an inclusive partnership approach not only with its partner organisations but also its wider stakeholders including the third sector.

This framework is part of that commitment and represents a tangible outcome from the partnership arrangements which have been established by the National College in order to deliver the highest quality leadership development for those leading and managing services for children, young people and their families.

It has been informed by an extensive consultative process which has involved stakeholders from across children's services who have provided an authoritative view of what lies at the heart of successful leadership in children's services.

As a result, the framework describes the underpinning leadership attributes, knowledge and skills which are required of DCSs in order for them to understand and manage better the complexity and accountability of the role and be highly inspirational and effective leaders.

Through its focus and simplicity we are confident that the framework will serve as an effective development template across the children's workforce which will promote greater understanding between and across services and organisations. We hope that it will become the benchmark for the development of future directors as well as providing those currently in post with the means by which to measure their progress as they continue to learn and grow in this most important role.

Finally, the government commitment to support a national leadership programme for current and future directors of children's services is both timely and welcome as it will undoubtedly act as a stimulus for greater coherence in succession planning and career progression for future generations of those aspiring to senior leadership roles in services for children, young people and their families.



Jane Haywood
Chief Executive
Children's Workforce
Development Council



Marion Davis
President
Association of Directors of
Children's Services



Steve Munby
Chief Executive
National College for Leadership of
Schools and Children's Services

Introduction

The role of the director of children's services is arguably unique in the public sector. Certainly, it is the only one with its own associated statutory guidance which not only describes the role but also defines clearly its relationship both to national legislation and local accountability. The guidance describes the role as:

"The director of children's services (DCS) is tasked with improving the well-being of all children and young people in the local area across all five Every Child Matters (ECM) outcomes, and ensuring that outcome gaps between the most disadvantaged children and their peers are reduced. This can only be achieved through strategic leadership of high quality services in which the local authority (LA) and its partners in the Children's Trust work together and focus clearly on the needs of the child, young person and family.

The DCS is a senior officer within the LA with the corporate responsibilities inherent in that position, and reports to the chief executive. Each DCS should be a system leader, change maker and professional champion for all children, young people and their families in the locality. The DCS is ultimately accountable, through the chief executive, to the local council.

This role involves orchestrating and leading a wide range of activities, people and agencies, many of which the DCS does not manage directly, in a joint local effort to improve outcomes and narrow gaps for

children and young people. The broad purpose of the DCS role is to provide a clear line of accountability for children's services, promote leadership in improving outcomes for all children, and secure the provision of services which address children's and young people's needs.

The scope of the DCS's interest in the lives of all children, young people and families in the local area spans from the national perspective (driving the ambition of the Children's Plan and ECM) to each individual child. The DCS role is about championing all children, including the most disadvantaged and vulnerable, and making improving children's well-being a key priority of the LA. Real improvements, however, can be achieved only through the partnership working of the Children's Trust, facilitated by the DCS. This requires leadership, a child-centred approach, innovation, creative thinking and meticulous use of data and other information."

(Statutory Guidance: The Roles and Responsibilities of the Lead Member for Children's Services and the Director of Children's Services. DCSF, 2009)

This leadership framework aims to make functional sense of the aspirations outlined in the statutory guidance together with providing the developmental context for DCSs to benchmark their knowledge, skills and behaviours against a set of functional statements which serve to define their responsibilities within the context of their local delivery.

The framework aims to complement the formative documents from the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF), The Children's Workforce Development Council (CWDC), The Centre for Excellence in Outcomes (C4EO), The Department of Health (DoH), Audit Commission and the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) which have helped to shape and define the development of children's services since the Children Act in 2004. It builds upon the acquired experience and knowledge gained through these publications and in particular, it seeks to augment the skills, knowledge and behaviours defined in the Common Core and Championing Children by providing a specific focus on the leadership characteristics for the successful delivery of services to children, young people and families.

Championing Children was designed to promote a common understanding about the distinctive and different skills, behaviours and knowledge required by all managers of children's services who are responsible for multi-agency, multi-professional teams.

It highlighted seven aspects of management and leadership, which, in the main, mapped directly onto either the Leadership and Management Standards or the Common Core for the front-line children's workforce. They focus on the skills and behaviours associated with leading change, establishing relationships and developing teams, and on acquiring knowledge. All of these are reflected in this framework.

The Common Core of Skills and Knowledge reflects a set of common values for practitioners that promote equality, respect diversity and challenge stereotypes, helping to improve the life chances of all children and young people and to provide more effective and integrated services. It also acknowledges the rights of children and young people, and the role parents, carers and families play in helping children and young people achieve the outcomes identified in ECM. This framework aims to support these values by placing moral purpose and integrity at the heart of the leadership attributes.

As the 2020 Children and Young People Workforce Strategy outlines, 'The ECM reforms have brought together responsibility for education and children's social services under a single DCS – creating a single line of accountability for LA services to children and a strong local figure with responsibility for driving partnership across the Children's Trust. It is critical that people in these roles, and their successors, are skilled in setting a clear vision and direction for the local workforce, in bridging cultures and in ensuring that local systems and practice are effective and robust'. This framework is designed to help in this process by providing a clear set of leadership attributes, skills and knowledge drawn from the experiences of those first charged with developing integrated working practices and informed by the most recent leadership and service delivery developments within the children's services sector.

The framework also has one final purpose: namely to act as a sister document to the National Professional Development Framework for Leaders and Managers of Children's Services upon which it has heavily drawn. Used jointly, and with appropriate reference to the 2020 Workforce Strategy these documents should provide those wishing to develop the leadership characteristics of senior and middle managers of children's services in LAs, health and the private and third sectors with sufficient direction and scope to define suitable exemplars of practice. Achieving this will provide a coherent direction of travel for those starting their careers in children's services, enabling them to signpost their career development, take responsibility for their personal and professional growth and receive the systemic and organisational support they will need to become the future leaders of services for children, young people and their families.

National Leadership Qualities Framework for Directors of Children's Services

Purpose

The primary aim of the framework is to:

- define the key knowledge, skills and attributes needed by a DCS so he or she can provide effective leadership across children's services and so achieve improved outcomes for children, young people and their families

The framework should therefore support, inform and challenge a DCS and serve to provide the developmental context for the DCSs and their teams to work in delivering services for children, young people and their families.

It is recommended the leadership framework should also be used to:

- support DCSs in their work and in their performance management process
- clearly identify the statutory responsibilities of the DCS role
- inform job descriptions and person specifications
- influence and promote leadership behaviours linked to effectiveness
- support continuous professional development for leaders at different levels within children's services (for example, the development of 360 tools, mentoring work with newly appointed DCSs, executive coaching etc)
- inform the assessment framework for the Aspirant Directors' of Children's Services Programme and the other elements of the DCS leadership provision developed by the National College
- support career progression throughout the children and young people's workforce

The approach

The approach consists of a central core of key leadership attributes and skills. These are considered to be integral to all aspects of a DCS role and also shown by leadership research to be related to highly effective leadership performance. They are central to, and supported by, areas of knowledge which represent the functional aspects of the director of children's services role organised into four areas of strategic leadership.

Leadership attributes

Eight attributes have been drawn from relevant documents and research covering leadership qualities in the public and private sectors. The eight are shown below. In this context the definition of an attribute is "what leaders have the capacity to do" and whilst difficult to measure, research demonstrates key attributes play a significant role in highly effective leadership.

The attributes are:

- **moral purpose**
- **integrity**
- **insight**
- **innovation**
- **self-awareness**
- **resilience**
- **adaptability and flexibility**
- **courage and passion**

Leadership skills

At the heart of DCS strategic leadership is a passionate commitment to champion and safeguard children, young people and their families. Orchestrating and leading a wide range of activities, people and agencies and combining innovative and creative thinking with meticulous use of data and other information, DCSs' leadership should ensure effective delivery of partnership working and integrated service provision which places the service user at the centre of practice and delivery.

More specifically, DCSs should have the ability to:

- develop and embed vision and values for children's services
- communicate clearly, openly and persuasively in order to influence outcomes
- negotiate and manage ambiguity
- work collaboratively and in partnership with stakeholders
- create a culture of inter-agency working
- demonstrate sector leadership
- involve service users in the planning, delivery and monitoring of services
- manage key relationships across a range of partners
- create a learning organisation and encourage reflective practice
- manage performance analysis and subsequent service improvement
- set clear, measurable, aspirational and inspirational goals
- analyse and use evidence and data intelligently
- build and motivate effective, high-performing and inter-disciplinary teams
- plan, manage and embed change within a complex environment
- assess and analyse future challenges
- strategically plan for future service delivery
- promote effective workforce development

Areas of strategic leadership: knowing the business

The provision of high quality services that improve outcomes for all children, young people and their families is central to the role of the DCS. This includes working with the Children's Trust partners, health sector agencies, schools and further education colleges and with work-based and third sector providers in order to ensure that there are effective arrangements for service provision for early years, school improvement and the delivery of 14-19 education including the transition into adulthood. Critical also is the safeguarding and well-being of all children and young people and support for looked after children across all services. As corporate parents, DCSs and lead members play a unique role in the lives of looked after children. Improving outcomes and the care experience for these children requires strong leadership from DCSs so that the whole council and Children Trust partners work together on issues that affect looked after children.

Effective DCSs, working closely with the lead member, also promote early intervention and prevention and seek a reduction in child poverty alongside an improvement in the health and well-being of all children and young people.

DCSs are responsible for ensuring LA children's services are effective, provide value for money and are readily accessible to children, young people and their families.

A high quality, appropriately skilled workforce and adequately resourced services are critical and DCSs should build capacity across the children's workforce and ensure resources are deployed to maximum effect and seek to achieve excellence for service users. An effective, well-trained and committed workforce is central to improving outcomes for children, young people and families.

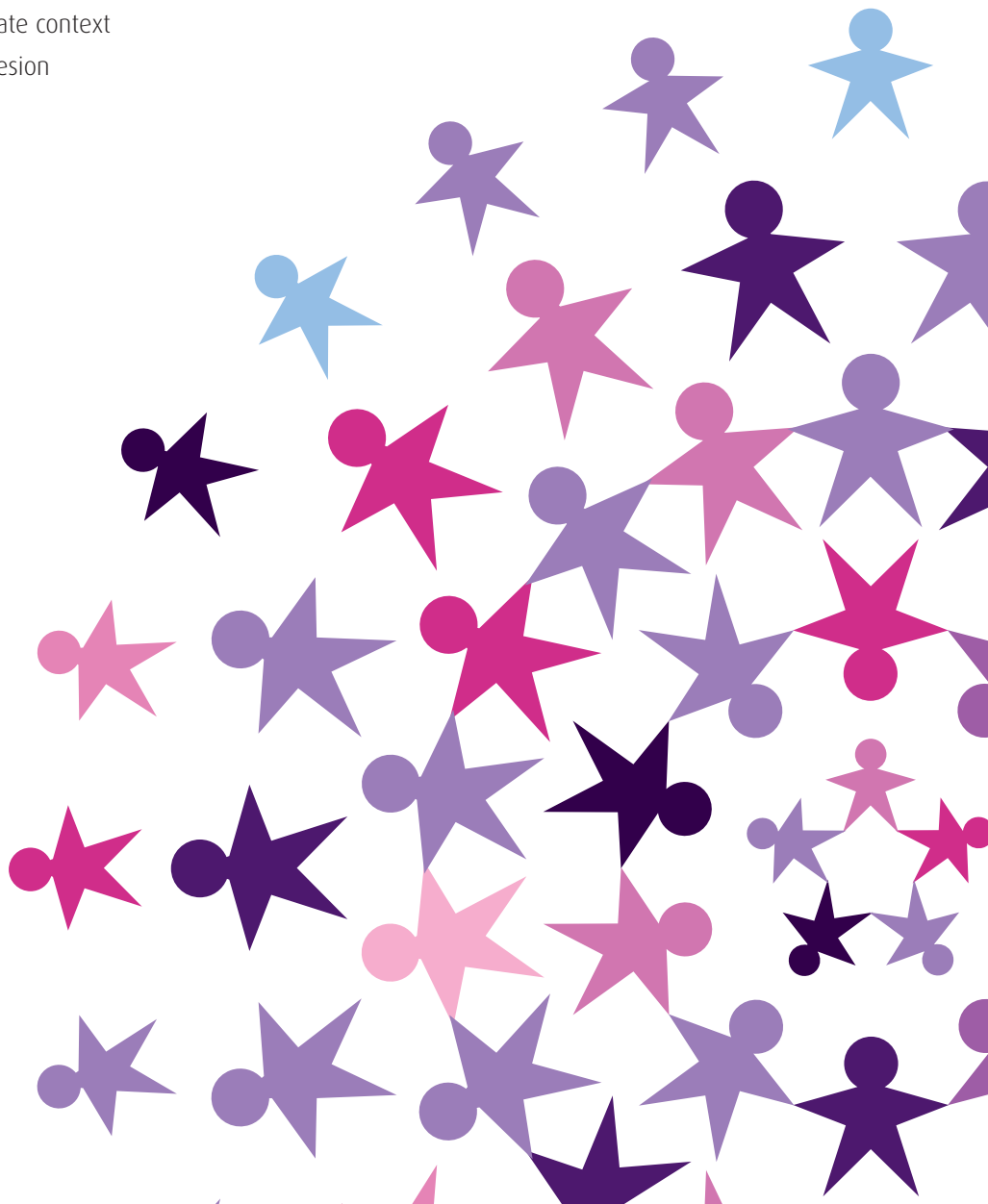
To help achieve these aims four knowledge areas have been identified which, collectively, cover the functional aspects of a director of children's services' role which in turn define and contribute to improving outcomes for children, young people and families. These areas have emerged following a review of relevant formal documentation, discussion with DCSs and reviewing work undertaken for the Directors of Children's Services Leadership Programme at the National College. The areas are intended to represent the functional aspects of a DCS role with the recognition that there will be some cross-over between areas.

The areas are:

- Integrated service delivery
- Partnership working
- Managing the political and corporate context
- Community engagement and cohesion

These areas have been further sub-divided to reflect the content modules of the Director of Children's Services Leadership Programme and are shown in the diagram at the end of this document.

Each area will specify the knowledge required for effective delivery. Successful directors of children's services are responsive to their contexts and maintain a strategic overview that integrates their work into a coherent whole, so it is important to regard the four areas as interdependent.



a. Integrated service delivery

At the heart of ECM lies the commitment to integrated working. In practice, there is a significant difference between integrated services and integrated service delivery and it is the DCS who has the responsibility for the development and oversight of the locally agreed model. This will require knowledge of the many aspects of integrated working, including data management, the common assessment framework, extended services and multi-agency locality team building. It requires close

working relationships with the lead member and the chief executive, the engagement of the wider statutory partners – the youth offending service, the police, health, children’s centres and schools together with services users themselves all working together to improve outcomes for children, young people and families.

Functional areas:

Resource planning and management

Commissioning, procuring and contracting services
Ensuring effective financial management across children’s services
Planning and delivering effective human resource management across children’s services
Achieving integrated management and information systems
Securing effective services for vulnerable groups of children and young people including looked after children

Quality assurance

Managing services for value for money and quality service delivery
Embedding outcomes-focused performance management and interventions
Ensuring governance structures for effective outcomes
Working with the regulators to improve performance
Promoting innovation and risk management
Ensuring challenge and support for improved pupil performance
Monitoring practice and quality assurance processes for the safety and well-being of children and young people

Developing integrated practice

Building and leading a skilled and confident integrated workforce
Managing diversity and inclusion
Promoting organisational and locality team work and delivery
Enabling client-centred service delivery
Enhancing the role of the voluntary and community sector in making safeguarding everybody’s business

b. Partnership working

In order to strengthen co-operation across all key services, (public, private and third sector) DCSs play a key role in creating and sustaining effective local partnerships. DCSs also aim to develop and strengthen the Children's Trust Board and wider co-operation arrangements and work closely with the Local Strategic Partnership. Through partnership working the strategic objectives

in the Children's and Young People's Plan will be embedded across children's services, enabling all members of the Children's Trust including third sector partners to demonstrate shared accountability.

Functional areas:

Governance

Leading and developing effective Children's Trusts arrangements including the Children's Trust Board
Maximising duty to co-operate and partnership relationships
Understanding the governance arrangements of all partners
Aligning the Children's Trust Board and the Local Strategic Partnership
Understanding the role of the Strategic Health Authority and the Primary Care Trust
Overseeing school organisation, governance and leadership, including robust and effective partnerships between schools

Culture

Planning, leading and managing transition and change
Developing and promoting new models of service delivery
Agreeing common language, communication and working practices across agencies
Developing partnership working arrangements for improved outcomes
Understanding services for children in the National Health Service
Understanding and managing the relationship between the LA and schools, including commissioning services for children and young people

Practice

Planning co-operation arrangements across the Children's Trust – ensuring coherence
Promoting the role and effective contribution of the third sector
Managing data across partnerships
Pooling budgets to enhance provision
Facilitating the role of the Primary Care Trust
Engaging schools in the safeguarding and well-being of children and young people

c. Managing the political and corporate context

The DCS, as a member of the council corporate management team, is accountable through the chief executive to the local council and therefore responsible for contributing to local priorities. The DCS should work effectively with the designated lead member as both are champions of children – working to achieve improved outcomes through better partnership working, integrated planning and mediating potential sources of conflict.

This involves commissioning and delivering a full range of services. Working in a professional and managerial sphere, the DCS should deliver the systems and processes agreed by the council whilst, at the same time, meeting their statutory responsibilities for children and young people.

Functional areas:

Contributing to the corporate role

Understanding the role of the DCS as defined by the statutory guidance
Being a champion for children, young people and families across the council
Understanding the principles of scrutiny and corporate accountability
Contributing to the council's efficiency and value for money priorities
Securing cross-council commitment to children's safety and well-being
Ensuring effective multi-agency child protection procedures
Securing effective services for social care and education through an appropriately skilled and experienced children's services management team

Managing the political interface

Understanding propriety and standards in the democratic process
Demonstrating accountability to services users
Managing local priorities and the relationship between local, regional and national government
Advising the council on the strategic planning and operational delivery of services to children, young people and families

d. Community engagement and cohesion

The DCS is central to the leadership role of the LA in empowering the community to improve outcomes at locality level. The role of the LA in leading and empowering its communities, harnessing community resources and the relationship of the Children's Trust with local and regional strategic partnerships are all pivotal to improving the lives of children, young people and families

and achieving community cohesion. These are all aspects of the DCS role in addition to being the champion for children, young people and families both across the council and the local area as a whole.

Functional areas:

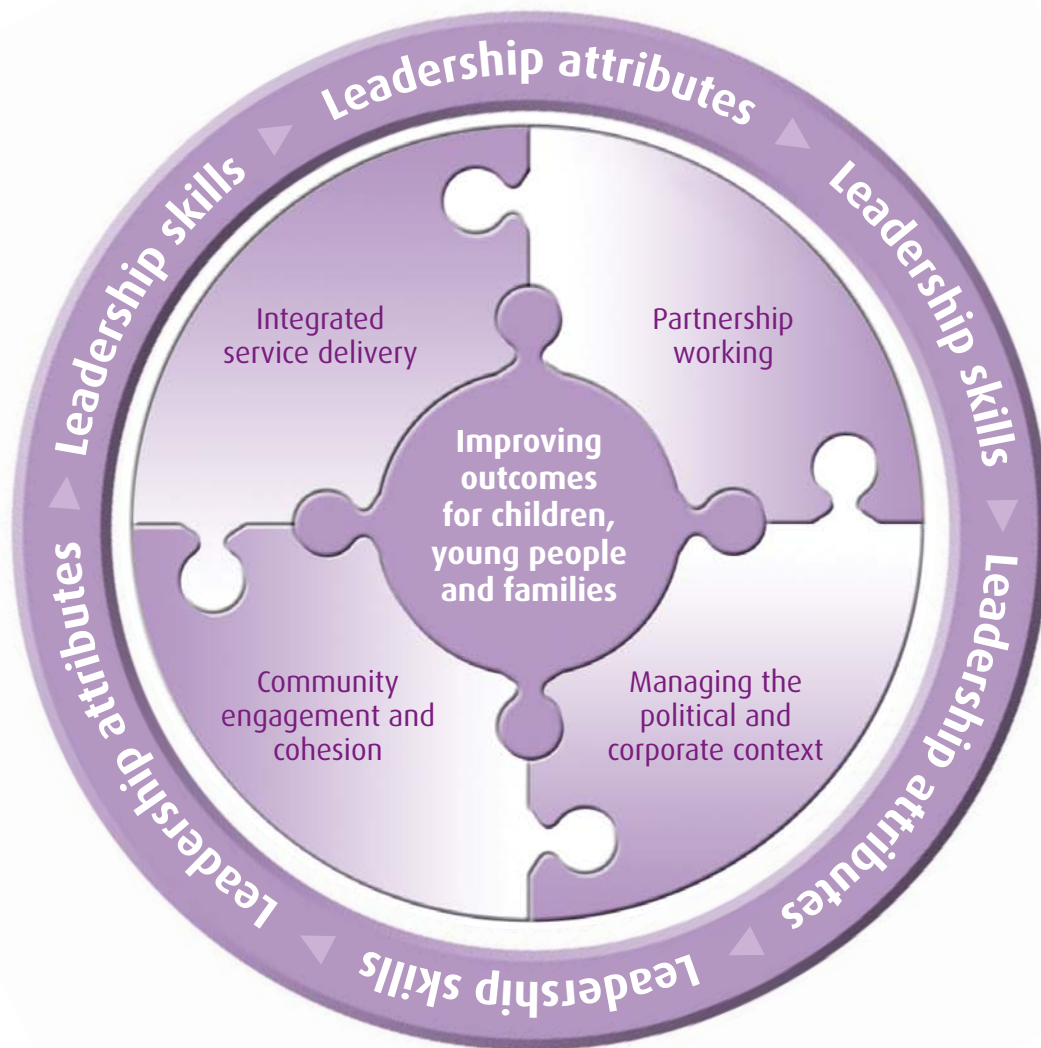
Community leadership

Reconciling political priorities with community needs
Developing the culture of community leadership and the associated skillset
Harnessing community resources
Being a champion for children, young people and families across the local area as a whole
Managing inter-community tensions
Driving a culture of aspiration for all children, young people and families
Promoting health services within children's centres and extended services in order to improve community health outcomes

Governance and cohesion

Promoting the role of the LA in understanding, leading and empowering its communities
Leading the effective contribution of children's services to the local area agreement
Promoting the engagement of children and young people in community cohesion
Working with families, aligning children and adult services

Annex 1: The DCS Leadership Qualities Framework Model



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The National College for Leadership of Schools and Children's Services is committed to excellence and dedicated to inclusiveness. We exist to develop and inspire great leaders of schools, early years settings and children's services. We share the same ambition – to make a positive difference to the lives of children and young people.

Membership of the National College gives access to unrivalled development and networking opportunities, professional support and leadership resources.

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Triumph Road
Nottingham NG8 1DH
T 0845 609 0009
F 0115 872 2001
E enquiries@nationalcollege.org.uk
www.nationalcollege.org.uk

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