

Improving outcomes for children and young people through partnership in Children's Trusts

A small-scale survey in six local authorities to evaluate the impact of Children's Trusts arrangements on improving outcomes for children and young people

The aim of this survey was to evaluate the impact of Children's Trusts in six local authorities on improving the lives of children and young people, particularly those whose circumstances made them potentially vulnerable. This survey identifies best practice in the work of the six Children's Trusts. Case studies illustrate the links between partnerships through the strategic work of the Children's Trusts and effective practice with individual children and young people.

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Executive summary

The aim of this small-scale survey was to evaluate the impact of Children's Trusts on improving the lives of children and young people, and particularly those whose circumstances make them potentially vulnerable. Inspectors visited six local authorities during the autumn of 2009 and spring of 2010 and held initial discussions with members of the Children's Trusts in those areas.¹ Common themes emerging from these discussions were identified. A further visit was made to each local authority between November 2009 and May 2010 to observe the work of front-line services that engaged directly with children and young people.

The report draws together features common to each of the Children's Trusts in relation to their leadership and management, systems and structures, and self-evaluation. It also evaluates the impact of provision commissioned by the Children's Trusts' strategic partners on improving the lives of potentially vulnerable children and young people in the six authorities. The purpose of this report is to publish the survey's findings on the best practice found.

The key features of the good practice identified in these six local authorities included a history of strong partnership working at a strategic level and highly effective leadership by directors of children's services and lead members. Children and Young People's Plans were clear, focused and designed to have an impact on outcomes. There was a determined commitment to early intervention and prevention, as well as evidence of services being redesigned around the needs of children and their families. There was also a range of integrated services in which professionals were clear about the benefits of joint working.

Good relationships and effective cooperation existed between schools, the local authorities' education and social care services, the police, health services and the voluntary sector. Inspectors found evidence of joint commissioning and planning, especially in meeting the needs of children and families who were at risk of poorer outcomes, although joint funding was still at an early stage of development. Performance management was strong and there was a clear commitment to measuring impact on outcomes that went beyond using established performance indicators. Self-evaluation was robust. It resulted in clear improvement priorities and well-targeted action plans that delivered better outcomes for children and young people.

In all the local authorities visited, the Children's Trust had formalised the links between relevant partners. Considerable progress had been made in establishing terms of reference and arrangements for governance. Shared priorities informed the

¹ Children's Trusts are not in themselves separate entities. Rather, they represent the cooperative working arrangements between partner organisations in a locality. The term 'Children's Trust' used throughout this report refers to these Children's Trust arrangements in the local areas visited.

statements of action in the Children and Young People's Plans in each of the local authorities.

Leaders in these Children's Trusts had established an effective framework for coordinating the work of partners. The good and outstanding leadership provided by local authority children's services in particular was highly influential. In the six authorities visited, inspectors found senior officers of the Children's Trusts to be pragmatic in seeking to accommodate differences in ways of working. Almost always, inspectors found representatives of partner organisations to be strongly committed to the principles of joint work. Nevertheless, the guidance informing the arrangements for Children's Trusts, to which partners were working at the time of the survey visits, was vague about the expectations and accountabilities placed on partners.² At strategic and operational levels, the success of joint working relied heavily on the skills and personal influence of the Chair of the Children's Trust Board and, in particular, of the Director of Children's Services.

Self-evaluation was a strong focus in each of the Children's Trusts visited. It was often difficult to disaggregate the impact of individual initiatives from numerous other influences. The most common measures used to assess impact were national indicators and individual case studies, although the Children's Trusts were looking for other ways to measure impact on outcomes for children and young people.³ The redesign of services following review and evaluation of effectiveness was often a feature of the provision visited by inspectors. There is a link in each of the case studies in this report between the strategic work of the Children's Trust and its effective practice with potentially vulnerable children or young people at the point at which provision is made for them.

Key findings

- In all six local authorities visited, the Children's Trust provided the focal point for strategic work across the services that come into contact with children and young people. The Children's Trusts strongly influenced arrangements for networking at all levels, evidenced by good cooperation, integrated services and joint commissioning and planning.

² *Children's Trusts: statutory guidance on inter-agency cooperation to improve well-being of children, young people and their families*, DCSF, 2008.

<http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/everychildmatters/about/aims/childrenstrusts/childrenstrusts/>

³ The 198 'national indicators' are measures of performance derived from Public Service Agreements and the Department of Local Government's Strategic Objectives. They measure the work of local government, either in its work alone or with local partners. For a list of the indicators, see: *The new performance framework for local authorities and local authority partnerships: single set of national indicators* (07 LGSR 04876), Department for Communities and Local Government, 2007;

www.communities.gov.uk/publications/localgovernment/nationalindicator.

- Status as a Children's Trust formalised already well-established and effective partnerships and strengthened collective commitment and accountability. The Trusts visited had made considerable progress in developing policy, together with the necessary systems and structures for implementation. Shared priorities and agreed joint activities informed the Children and Young People's Plan and a strong emphasis on self-evaluation, performance management and the development of more effective ways of measuring impact on outcomes.
- The proven good and outstanding capacity to improve services for children and young people in these local authorities was crucial in providing a firm foundation for ways of working in wider partnership. The leadership skills of the members of the Children's Trust Boards were paramount in tackling a complex agenda, driving forward change and combining efforts to deliver better outcomes for children and young people.
- The Children's Trusts visited had been responsive to a range of government initiatives by developing ways of providing more integrated front-line services that were linked closely to and responded to local needs.
- The Children's Trust Boards, together with senior officers of partner agencies, showed considerable flexibility and willingness to find common ground from which to move services forward. They showed a strong commitment to early intervention and prevention. They worked effectively in a complex environment which involved different performance targets, priorities and ways of providing services.
- The partners in the Children's Trusts welcomed the greater clarity in statutory guidance about roles and responsibilities but did not think it was essential for developing good and outstanding partnership arrangements. All of them were strongly committed to joint working as the best means of improving outcomes for children and young people.
- All the Children's Trusts visited strongly recognised the need to measure the impact of actions taken to improve the lives of children and young people. National indicators and case studies were the two measures used most frequently to do this.

Children's Trusts in context

1. The development of Children's Trusts was a response to Lord Laming's inquiry into the death of Victoria Climbié in 2000. In his report, he said:

'The single most important change in the future must be the drawing of a clear line of accountability, from top to bottom, without doubt or

ambiguity about who is responsible at every level for the well-being of vulnerable children.⁴

2. As a result, under the Children Act 2004, every local authority was required to enhance the arrangements for cooperation to safeguard children and young people and improve outcomes for them. This was to be achieved by integrating services around their needs.⁵ In creating Children's Trusts, the aim was to improve the life chances of the most vulnerable children and young people by narrowing gaps in each of the five outcome areas identified in Every Child Matters. This was to be achieved by:
 - focusing on prevention and early intervention through the early identification of additional need
 - developing effective integrated working across agencies
 - ensuring effective planning and joint commissioning of services.
3. A Children's Trust is not an entity in itself but comprises all the arrangements and partnerships between organisations that have a role in improving outcomes for children and young people. Organisations that are required to cooperate in the arrangements that are the 'Children's Trust' are termed 'statutory partners' and include the services of the local authority, the primary care trust, the police, schools, further education and sixth-form colleges and Jobcentre Plus. Just as important are the non-statutory partners, for example, third sector organisations. They should be represented in the arrangements for Children's Trusts in a way that best suits local circumstances. Each organisation within the partnership retains its own functions and responsibilities.
4. During the period of the fieldwork for this survey, local authorities and 'relevant partners' were required to have regard to government guidance on Children's Trusts.⁶ The requirement was strengthened in 2009 through the greater emphasis on partnership working, and the responsibility placed on all local authorities to establish a Children's Trust Board.⁷ The 2008 guidance was revised and a draft for consultation circulated to stakeholders during the period of the survey fieldwork. The final (and current) guidance was published in

⁴ *The Victoria Climbié inquiry. Report of an inquiry by Lord Laming* (CM 5730), 2003; www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH_4008654

⁵ The background is set out in Every Child Matters. For further information, see: www.dcsf.gov.uk/everychildmatters/about/aims/childrenstrusts/childrenstrusts/.

⁶ *Children's Trusts: statutory guidance on inter-agency cooperation to improve well-being of children, young people and their families* (DCSF-00943-2008DOM-EN), DCSF, 2008; <http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/everychildmatters/about/aims/childrenstrusts/childrenstrusts/>

⁷ The Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act, 2009 requires each local authority to establish a Children's Trust Board as part of its arrangements to promote cooperation to improve well-being for children. <http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/apprenticeshipsskillschildrenandlearning/>

2010, after the survey fieldwork had been completed.⁸ The Board was placed on a statutory footing from April 2010. Responsibility for developing, publishing and reviewing a local authority's Children and Young People's Plan passed from the local authority to the Board and the first Children and Young People's Plan under these arrangements must be published by April 2011. However, responsibility for implementing the actions within the plan remains firmly with individual partner organisations.

5. The term 'Children's Trust', therefore, describes a system of partner organisations working together with common goals and agreed priorities. The intention is that collectively they should have an impact on the lives of children and young people in a local authority area.

Common characteristics

6. All the Children's Trusts visited for the survey believed that they had benefited from a period of consistent policy: a clear focus on outcomes for children and young people in line with Every Child Matters. The Children's Trusts were major contributors in their broader Local Strategic Partnerships.
7. Partnership working was already well-established within these local authorities before the Children's Trusts were created. Working as a Children's Trust was a natural evolution of what was already happening, so they had an advantage. This appears to be important. Board members in five of the Children's Trusts stressed that the necessary relationships had taken considerable time to grow. They were not altogether convinced that making Children's Trusts a legal requirement would produce effective partnerships more quickly.
8. The Children's Trusts visited were often ambivalent about the need for further statutory support for partnership working. On one hand, they thought further legislation to strengthen Children's Trusts would do no harm in giving weight and accountability to partnership working, especially where some partners were less inclined to cooperate. However, not all the senior officers interviewed believed that a mandatory approach would make a Children's Trust good or outstanding. Board members of the Children's Trusts visited emphasised the importance of winning hearts and minds, of creating a climate and ethos that promoted working together, of building strong relationships, and of working to

⁸ *Children's Trusts: statutory guidance on cooperation arrangements, including the Children's Trust Board and the Children and Young People's Plan; consultation draft*, DCSF, 2009. A final version was published after the fieldwork for this survey was completed: *Children's Trusts: statutory guidance on cooperation arrangements, including the Children's Trust Board and the Children and Young People's Plan*, DCSF, 2010.

<http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/everychildmatters/strategy/managersandleaders/planningandcommissioning/cypp/cypp/>

common ends. Front-line workers often used the word 'trust' to define the climate in which they worked.

9. Status as a Trust served to elevate the importance of partnership working and emphasised the need for joint commissioning. Board members of the different Children's Trusts described the role of the Trust as a 'reference point', 'problem solver', 'barrier remover' and 'the mortar that binds services together'. In the Children's Trusts visited, inspectors found that the theme of the Trust as an enabler ran strongly through the senior and middle leadership of the partner organisations.
10. The formalisation of partnership working influenced the development and delivery of the Children and Young People's Plan. In all the Children's Trusts visited, organisational structures, ways of working, and professional development and training often cut across the boundaries of individual partner organisations. Developing a 'Children's Services workforce', while balancing the need for specialist practitioners and retaining professional integrity, was supported by joint training and induction.
11. In these Children's Trusts, almost all the major partners were committed to working together. Just occasionally, there were partners who preferred autonomy over joint working. When this did occur, the source of non-cooperation was identified as service managers rather than front-line staff.

In one Children's Trust, for example, sexual health training for all front-line staff working with children and young people cut across professional boundaries. The professionals themselves commented on the added benefits of networking and the removal of barriers between different agencies striving towards a common goal.

In another Children's Trust, teachers stressed the benefits derived from working closely with youth workers, police officers on the beat and members of the youth offending teams, co-located in schools. Senior leaders in two of the secondary schools visited in the Children's Trust spoke of the ease of referral to outside agencies since the Children's Trust took the initiative to locate, in each school, proportionate to need, a youth worker with extensive social services contacts.

12. Creating a culture which necessitates the blurring of professional boundaries is not without its challenges.⁹ In one of the local authorities visited, the senior managers talked about integrated services rather than integrated teams. By

⁹ This is also a theme in Ofsted's report on the integration of youth services: *Supporting young people: an evaluation of recent reforms to youth support services in 11 local areas* (090226), Ofsted, 2010; www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/090226.

doing so, they recognised and maintained a commitment to professionals' integrity while stressing the importance of collaboration. In another, a senior officer of a Children's Trust Board commented: 'There is no quick-fix to moving people out of their comfort zone and exposing them to scrutiny and challenge.'

13. In all the Children's Trusts visited, leaders provided a clear vision and communicated this well to stakeholders. The quality of leadership was especially important because published guidance places no statutory obligation on partners in terms of what, when or how they contribute. In four of the six Children's Trusts, the Chair of the Children's Trust Board was an elected member, in the remainder the Chairs were the Chief Executive Officer of the borough and the Director of Children's Services. In all the six local authorities, the Director of Children's Services was highly influential in setting the strategic direction of the Children's Trust Board.
14. The impact of strong leadership was mentioned by staff at all levels in the local authorities visited. It is no coincidence that, in 2008, Ofsted's Annual Performance Assessments judged the capacity to improve, including the management of services for children and young people, as outstanding in four of the local authorities' children's services and good in the other two. Even so, members of one Trust agreed that it was difficult to engage schools if they chose not to participate in initiatives, for example relating to sexual health, relationships and drugs awareness.

In a meeting with representatives of one Children's Trust Board, inspectors noted a strong commitment from senior police officers to partnership working around preventative intervention strategies. In contrast, the representatives of health service partners made a lesser contribution. This was echoed later through the observations of a secondary headteacher who spoke of 'weaker links' with the school nursing service compared with the 'strong relationships' forged between the school, the police and social services.

15. Commissioning was a key focus for the Children's Trusts. All of those visited were developing executive commissioning groups of key staff from representative partners. Achieving the outcomes for children and young people, as stated in their plans, was a matter for all the partners. Decisions on who would do what, and by when, required partners to commit time and resources. The six Children's Trusts had made substantial progress in developing policy and practice, supported by the Government's guidance on joint commissioning; for example, to include performance management and governance within terms of reference and to enable support and challenge for managers and front-line workers.
16. All the Children's Trusts worked to a Children and Young People's Plan that was well-considered and fit for purpose. The most frequent strengths included:

- the use of plain English and succinct prose, making the plan highly readable
 - style and content appropriate to an audience of children, young people and parents, for example, through clear explanations of what was meant by Children and Young People's Plan and Children's Trust, and by including a list of partner organisations
 - a summary of the findings of the inspections of all statutory partners, including hyperlinks to the full reports
 - a contextual description of the characteristics and demography of the area
 - an explanation of how children and young people contributed their ideas, where these had influenced actions taken, and what the Children's Trust had learnt of their further wishes
 - frequent reference to the plan by Children's Trust Board members and service managers who often used it as a working document.
17. Very little of the budget at the disposal of the Children's Trust partners was held centrally. There was little appetite among major budget holders to pool resources. The majority of the work of the Children's Trusts in the local authorities visited was facilitated by aligning the budgets of partner organisations. However, on occasions, a small, separate budget proved extremely helpful in making shortcuts in decision-making at the level of individual children and young people. For example, funds might be used for material needs such as clothing or travel costs and course fees.
18. For the most part, the Children's Trusts remained virtual organisations, although meetings were held. Few staff worked exclusively for the Children's Trust. However, inspectors observed two excellent examples of joint funding specifically to facilitate good communication and greater understanding between partners.

In one of the local authorities, an administrator, appointed by the Children's Trust Board, coordinated communications across more than 40 different voluntary and community organisations. Feedback from the sector's Annual General Meeting showed how exceptionally valuable this support was because it improved efficiency by improving the flow of information.

In another example, the local authority and the primary care trust jointly funded the post of Children's Trust Partnership Manager. The role enabled all members of the Children's Trust to commission bespoke pieces of work at short notice, often around aspects of another partner's work with which they were unfamiliar. The post-holder was also responsible for monitoring the progress of actions agreed by the Children's Trust Board and included within the Children and Young People's Plan, and for keeping the

Children's Trust Board updated regularly. The value of coordinators was explained by one senior officer as providing 'the mortar between the different bricks' in a very complex structure. However, it was clear that the cost of most 'additional' work was picked up by the local authority, as the lead partner in the Trusts.

19. Assessing the impact of Children's Trusts was complex, not least because the Trusts were at an early stage. The most frequently used measures of impact were case studies and national indicators. These had wide-ranging credibility, although officers in the Children's Trusts visited were sometimes wary about drawing firm causal relationships between effectiveness and outcomes as measured by national indicators or, indeed, a single case study. It was often difficult to disaggregate the many strands involved, not least because of the plethora of different databases which were largely unaligned. Nevertheless, inspectors found that the Children's Trusts were working on ways to measure their effectiveness. For example, one was developing an approach to measuring longer-term outcomes based on 'the social return of investment'. This was based on calculating savings from potential future costs, such as a custodial sentence, as a consequence of non-intervention in the case of young people at risk of offending. Case studies were often powerful in demonstrating life-changing impacts on young people and parents.

Case studies

20. In each of the Children's Trusts visited, inspectors observed front-line services at work. They spoke to service managers, staff from a range of partner organisations, children and young people, and their families. In addition, they reviewed a range of documentation, including quantitative measures of progress against performance indicators and case studies which evaluated the impact of provision on outcomes for individual children and young people. The case studies below illustrate the diverse approaches taken by services working together to improve the lives of potentially vulnerable children and young people.

Involving the community and voluntary sectors

Derby City has a rich mix of people from diverse cultures and backgrounds, with over 60 community languages. The city is one of stark contrasts, with pockets of considerable affluence and of deprivation.

The voluntary sector in the city was actively encouraged by the Children's Trust to develop its own associations and networks. Nearly 40 voluntary and community organisations came together to form a Children and Young People's Network. The Children's Trust facilitated communication and the coordination of work across the partners by funding a full-time administrative support worker linked to the network. In doing this, the Children's Trust Board clearly recognised the important contribution that the third sector made towards meeting the needs of children and young people.

In this Children's Trust, voluntary and community organisations played a vital role in supporting the work of statutory services, often working with the most vulnerable young people at times when they were most at risk. A national charity had opened a 'crash pad' where 16- and 17-year-olds who had severe problems in terms of accommodation could find a temporary refuge until they were able to sort out their lives. This was supported by professional staff at the site.

At least one voluntary organisation within the Children's Trust put its workers in the front line, confronting members of criminal gangs who were actively seeking potentially vulnerable young women for prostitution. The workers alerted the police to the gangs' activities and matched the gangs' ill-intentions with their vigilance wherever they sought to operate, for example, outside youth clubs and night clubs.

The Children's Trust had recognised the distinctiveness of the sector's contribution and, in particular, the absence of the stigma sometimes associated in the minds of young people with support from statutory

bodies. In practice, the sector often worked under contract, commissioned by the Children's Trust partners. Some of the voluntary organisations operating within the Children's Trust were household names, such as Barnardo's, the YMCA and Action for Children. They were often successful in bidding for government projects through grant funding, and often used their own resources to support projects at Trust level. The voluntary sector, like the Children's Trust, was engaged in trying to quantify the difference that it made. Reports shown to inspectors showed case studies to be the most effective way of communicating the quality of the sector's contribution. However, the sector was looking increasingly at quantitative outcomes or using national indicators and local targets in evaluations of impact.

Alongside work in the front line, the voluntary sector was often closely involved with preventative work with young people: for example, providing awareness courses in communities and primary schools, training volunteers and building skills for future employment. It provided counselling services in schools, although not all the schools were reported to be receptive. Front-line workers commented to inspectors that they still came across school leaders who would not accept that their students faced the problems that were the focus of the work of these voluntary organisations.

Effective partnership for the voluntary sector meant having a clear line of communication to the Executive Board of the Children's Trust and contributing to developing and reviewing the Children and Young People's Plan. As one chair of a voluntary organisation explained, 'Our organisation is part of the family.' Whatever the challenges faced on behalf of children and young people, it was very clear that the voluntary sector organisations working within the Children's Trust were optimistic about partnership working. A local chair of trustees of a national charity wrote in her 2009 Annual Report: 'For me, the outstanding feature of this year has been the sense of everything coming together, with a coherence and vitality that underlies and fuels that confidence in our future.' Effective partnership between the Children's Trust and the sector underpinned such optimism.

Supporting young people at risk of exclusion

Darlington local authority covers a compact geographical area with a predominantly White British population and higher than average levels of deprivation. Here the Children's Trust has been influential in shaping the strategic approach to implementing 'Safer Schools' partnerships across secondary schools.¹⁰ Placed permanently in one of the secondary schools, an officer from the youth services acted as the coordinator for the work of a team in the area, including the school's pastoral staff and a police community support officer. The coordinator had links to the necessary people in the support services that dealt with drugs and alcohol support – which the school itself did not. The school's senior leaders acknowledged the influence of the Children's Trust in 'joining things up whereas before it felt like bits-and-bobs here and there'. They considered that the most important contribution of the Trust was in managing the project to ensure its sustainability.

In another school, professionals from the youth offending service, police and youth services were similarly co-located, either full-time or as daily or weekly visitors. All these professionals knew one another, the school's pastoral staff and the young people very well, particularly the small group identified as most at risk of permanent exclusion. These staff were young and mostly from the local community, a fact which they identified as key in establishing credibility with young people who were sometimes difficult to engage. Inspectors were struck by the ease with which the young people engaged with the adults, two of whom were in police uniform. Mutual respect was evident. The young people, aged 13 to 15, showed real enthusiasm as they gave inspectors a running commentary on a slideshow depicting themselves and some of the adults involved in a range of activities including a football tournament, mountain biking, camping, music events, and a local youth club. One of the adults commented: 'These young people don't care whether I'm a youth worker or she's a police officer; they just want something to do.' The headteacher stressed the vital importance of such relationships in ensuring success: 'It has to be the right police person, for example, not just anybody.' She expanded: 'One of the police women wore civvies at first, because initially some of the students that we really wanted to reach had a deep distrust of the police.' The headteacher saw the Children's Trust as the main driver of

¹⁰ The Safer Schools Partnership Guidance requires a formal agreement between a school or partnership of schools and the police to work together to keep young people safe, reduce crime and fear of crime, and improve behaviour in schools and their communities. For further information, see *Safer schools partnership guidance* (DCSF-00500-2009), DCSF, 2009; <http://publications.teachernet.gov.uk/default.aspx?PageFunction=productdetails&PageMode=publications&ProductId=DCSF-00500-2009>.

this successful initiative and welcomed the balance that had been achieved between a strategic approach and retaining flexibility at school level. In this school, particularly, the sharp and sustained decline in fixed-term and permanent exclusions came soon after setting up the multi-agency team at the school.

All the adults, in their different roles, understood the importance of measuring impact. Case studies provided compelling evidence of the positive impact on the lives of some of the most vulnerable young people in the local authority. The number of first-time entrants to the youth justice system had reduced. In all three of the secondary schools visited, attendance had improved, exclusions showed a declining trend, as did call-outs to deal with disruptive behaviour in lessons. As indicators of impact, these measures were convincing, although the schools stressed that their own initiatives had been influential. The Children's Trust's contribution was in establishing a framework within which front-line workers from a wide range of organisations wrapped services around individual children and, in doing so, made a difference to their lives.

Integrating services for disabled children

A clear thread linked the vision of York's Children's Trust to its work with disabled children and their families. This is an area of relative affluence serving around 40,000 children and young people up to the age of 19. Pupils' attainment at all key stages is above average. Widespread consultation and review, through which disabled children and young people made their views clear, preceded the setting of strategic priorities. Above all, these children held 'an overwhelming desire to be treated the same as their peers, with equal access to all the services and facilities available to their non-disabled counterparts'. This view was clearly reflected in the Children and Young People's Plan as a priority to 'provide more things for children and young people to do and places for them to go'. The opening of a youth club specifically for disabled young people was a direct consequence of this priority.

The Children's Trust recognised the key role played by the parents of disabled children and young people and successfully included them in the processes of developing and evaluating provision. The Children's Trust Board funded a 'parent forum' to ensure effective communication. In addition, the Board had employed a project officer who, for example, developed training for the whole of the children's services workforce and professionals from partner organisations to ensure that they understood the needs and aspirations of disabled children and their families well. Attendance at such training was integrated into induction programmes for new staff. In part, the training was provided by parent volunteers. Parents were well represented on the wide range of committees set up by the

Children's Trust to oversee the implementation of plans specific to improving outcomes for disabled young people.

Work across different agencies was very well established between professionals serving the needs of disabled children and their families. Developing a team to oversee transitions as part of moving into adult life was work in progress, building on existing good relationships between professionals in health, social care and education. Services for children's and adults' social care were co-located. Families identified this as being enormously beneficial in reducing travel time and costs because they had access to a wide range of professionals under one roof. Staff developing health action plans for children felt that multi-agency working made them better informed and therefore more effective than when they worked with the families of disabled children in isolation from other services. Some of the professionals from the many agencies involved said that time to attend meetings was sometimes a pressure, but they valued highly the relationships forged with colleagues from different disciplines. Some of the many professionals involved worked across different Children's Trusts and made favourable comparisons between partnership working within this Children's Trust and the frustrations of practising in areas where multi-agency working was not as well established.

The appointment of a manager to a central coordinating role had proved essential to ensure efficient communications, planning and delivery of such a complex service. Professionals from the various agencies, strategic leaders at Children's Trust level, and individual children and their families all agreed that the role was a critical point of contact.

Raising the aspirations and well-being of teenage parents

Inspectors visited the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, a densely populated, inner-city locality with relatively polarised areas of affluence and deprivation. Over 50% of resident children and young people are privately educated. Over half of pupils in maintained secondary schools come from minority ethnic backgrounds.

In ensuring delivery of the Teenage Pregnancy strategy, representatives of stakeholders on the Children's Trust Board saw their collective role as 'a high-level problem-solver'. Senior managers of services contributing to the strategy considered that the Children's Trust had 'brought a maturity to integrated working because partners better understand the wider agenda'. An improvement plan for the Teenage Pregnancy Service had measurable success criteria and milestones and, from the manager responsible for its implementation a clear line of accountability extended to the Board. The challenge of coordinating the joint commissioning for a project with so

many strands and involving so many organisations was enormous. The Children's Trust provided the thread that held it all together.

Preventative work with teenage parents aged from 13 to 19 was a focus of the Break 4 U programme. Run by the Connexions service, two drop-in centres hosted professionals from up to 11 partner organisations, including health, housing, further education, victim support and children's information services. The aim was to re-engage young people in education, employment and training and to prevent second pregnancies. Inspectors visited one centre, a welcoming building located in an estate of high-density housing. For the young mothers present and, later in the evening, the young fathers, the centre offered a place to meet other young parents, learn and develop new skills and gain accreditation. Duke of Edinburgh awards had been adapted well and were popular; many other courses were offered on the site. The education and training programme had been shaped following consultation with 25 young parents following their experiences the previous year.

Several young mothers proudly showed inspectors their photo-diaries of a camping expedition and their creative fashion designs. Their confidence and aspirations demonstrated that, for these young people, the aims of the project had been met. Staff understood the importance of being able to demonstrate the impact of this project, but said: 'How do you measure soft outcomes? The mums are here because they want to be.' Nevertheless, they kept records of attendance, accreditation and progression.

At the time of the visit, the local area agreement target for the proportion of teenage mothers aged 16 to 18 in education, employment or training, had been surpassed. In 2008–09, of 33 young parents enrolled, 12 completed their bronze Duke of Edinburgh award, with the same number achieving silver; 10 gained a first-aid qualification, four gained a youth worker qualification, and six were enrolled on English for Speakers of Other Languages courses. The clients' view of impact was best summed up in the words of one young mother: 'I'm the result of this project at its best. I've qualified as a youth worker and now work part-time. I love it – it's turned my life around. Tell them that!'

Developing integrated service teams

The work of Derby City's Children's Trust in developing strategic partnerships has been extended successfully to front-line teams in local areas. As a pilot project, workers from the council, the primary care trust and the Connexions service were located together in one area of the city. Professionals included in this came from family support, youth, and education welfare services. Personal advisers from the Connexions service, health visitors, nursery nurses and school nurses completed these teams. The Children's Trust carefully evaluated the project before considering whether to extend the approach to other areas in the city. The perceived benefits were:

- the better understanding that staff gained about the contribution made by each service
- quicker and easier sharing of information, resulting in quicker intervention
- the capacity to meet a wider range of needs because the services were coordinated better
- the more efficient direction of families to the relevant services.

Measurable improvements were recorded in 90% of the national indicators linked to education, social care and health within the locality, although the Trust was wary of attributing a causal relationship. Successes included:

- fewer children needing a second child protection plan
- more teenagers in education, employment and training
- a lower incidence of childhood obesity
- improved school attendance
- wider participation by young people in positive activities.

For the front-line professionals, the most important outcome was that the right people were now getting the right services. They believed that, contrary to their expectations at the start of the project, professional identities were strengthened and barriers eroded. Most importantly, they commented on the improved flow of information to enable them to support families. Front-line workers reported that the development of good relationships between professionals working to common objectives was fundamental to what they had achieved.

The gestation period for co-location was much longer than anticipated: two years as opposed to the planned six months. The logistics of co-location had proved difficult to resolve. Problems with accommodation, administrative support, record-keeping, and information and communication technology services all resulted in significant delays. Integrated teams posed new challenges for team managers. As well as

managing multi-agency teams, they had to find time to develop relationships with other key partners, in this case, schools and general practitioners. Using what it had learned from robust review and evaluation, the Children's Trust was proceeding cautiously with the roll-out of such teams across the city. Front-line workers and service users involved in the pilot work told inspectors they had no wish to move back to 'professional silos'. The Trust was convinced that the complexities and undoubted challenges of integrated working were justified by the improved outcomes for children, young people and their families.

Managing risk for vulnerable children and young people

Northumberland local authority covers some 2,000 square miles. Many people live in rural locations, including isolated villages. The vast majority are White British and around 70,000 residents are under 20 years of age. Areas of significant social deprivation border areas of relative affluence. Inspectors found effective practice in the use of information derived from monitoring, review and evaluation to inform a new approach to service management and delivery.

The Families and Children's Trust Board had identified:

- an increasing number of referrals that led to no further action
- a need to reduce the rate of re-referrals
- an imbalance in the workload between different locality teams of professionals from social care, education and health services.

To tackle these concerns, the Families and Children's Trust teams in the most deprived locality were realigned, so that one specialist 'initial response team' handled all initial referrals relating to potentially vulnerable children or young people. The intention was to achieve greater consistency around risk thresholds when referring children and young people to dedicated services. At a strategic level, the Families and Children's Trust Board and the Safeguarding Children Board had produced joint guidance on thresholds in order to support front-line staff in achieving consistency.

A clearly written document, *The framework for working with children and young people within integrated Families and Children's Trust teams* supported the professionals involved. Those involved understood the rationale for change well. One commented: 'Understanding each other's roles gives greater confidence. It's important to have open discussion. As a newly qualified social worker, I find that really valuable.'

The work of the realigned teams was being carefully monitored against key quantitative indicators and also against the softer measures of impact, for example by using questionnaires to gauge the views of users of the

services. Although the work was at an early stage, adults from the families who were receiving support from the new teams were very positive when they described their experiences to inspectors. In particular, the adults valued having access to a range of specialist support services under one roof and within easy reach of home.

This strong emphasis on good communication and shared purpose was seen again in the work of a multi-agency risk management group. This forum considered the progress of a small but significant group of young people who were at high risk of harm because of their own behaviour. Meeting every three weeks, the forum was attended by managers of services including health, social care, police, youth offending, and the third sector. A guidance document clearly explained the purpose of the group and members' responsibilities. A framework ensured a coordinated approach to assessing risk. Each young person was given a risk score and, until this dropped below a collectively agreed threshold, she or he would remain on the 'risk log' held by the Head of Family Support Services. This senior officer was the direct link to the Families and Children's Trust Board.

Inspectors observed the risk management group in one of its sessions and were struck by how well each young person was known to all those around the table. Checks were made to ensure that actions identified at the previous meeting had been rigorously followed up. Further actions, including the names of staff responsible for implementation, were formally recorded. This forum promoted the sharing of information effectively. Inspectors saw how it enabled professionals to discuss their definitions of the type of risk, understand what interventions were needed, provide guidance and support to one another, and assisted individuals to provide evidence for the decisions they were making. The notion of 'a single accountability', set out by the strategic partners at the level of the Children's Trust Board, was evident in the work of the risk management group. Since its inception, and over a period of around 12 months, the group had reduced substantially the level of risk faced by 35 young people whose names had been on the risk log for an average of 10 weeks.

Greater impact through integrating youth support services

The Children's Trust arrangements in Kingston-upon-Thames were supporting good progress in achieving national and local priorities. Around 40% of children are from minority ethnic backgrounds and around a quarter are learning to speak English as an additional language.

Kingston's Integrated Youth Support Service (IYSS) was set up as part of the Every Child Matters agenda in 2004. The Children's Trust arrangements placed the IYSS delivery framework at the heart of the Children and Young People's Plan for 2009–13. The delivery plan for the IYSS spelt out how each team within it would contribute to improving emotional and physical well-being; transition into adult life; protection from abuse; and overcoming barriers for the most disadvantaged and potentially vulnerable young people.

Inspectors visited a range of services and projects. They held discussions with key staff, service managers and young people and found partnership across universal services to be well-established. A thread could be followed from the Children's Trust Board to the point at which services were provided. Good links were evident between the police, schools, nursing services and, increasingly, adult services. Youth workers, for instance, told inspectors that, three or four years previously, they had not been able to gain access easily to young people through their schools. Now the youth service 'tour bus' was welcome in almost all the secondary schools and offered a range of on-site support and guidance. The youth workers' passion and enthusiasm were almost tangible.

Front-line workers across a range of services had a good understanding about the need to provide evidence of quantitative and qualitative measures of success, for example, through national indicators. However, not for the first time, the concept of IYSS as a social investment for the future was mentioned. The staff recognised that they needed a more refined measure of 'softer' outcomes to capture its impact fully. Targeted and specialist youth services had a history of partnership in Kingston. Now these services were part of the IYSS umbrella and aligned more closely with universal services such as the Connexions service.

Multi-agency working promoted a cultural change that was welcomed by front-line workers. They undertook joint induction training and, under the Children's Trust arrangements, benefited more frequently from shadowing the work of others. Understanding of other services improved, barriers were eroded and young people benefited directly from a better-informed workforce. Inter-agency relationships continued to develop. Kingston University, for example, provided mentors for looked after children and

young people who had learning difficulties and/or disabilities so that they could have access to degree courses. At all times, the IYSS tried to work with families while also maintaining respect for the wishes of young people.

The relationship between the IYSS and the police was strengthened under the Children's Trust arrangements, illustrated by the Youth Clinic. When a young person was apprehended and arrested, she or he was bailed to appear at a meeting at the Youth Clinic, if this was deemed to be the appropriate course of action. Ultimately, the police had the right to charge the young person at the clinic but preferred to work with the IYSS team and involve the family. The project saw success in managing the dichotomy between criminalising young people and preventing crime. In the large majority of cases, the outcome was successful. Communication between the police and secondary schools also benefited from a police officer who sat on the secondary collaborative group and a senior police officer's presence on the joint commissioning groups for substance misuse and for homelessness.

More young people than ever were participating in positive activities in Kingston; teenage conceptions were reducing; indicators of substance misuse were moving in the right direction; the number of first-time entrants to the youth justice system and recidivism had declined; and the number of young people not in education, employment or training continued to decrease.

The Children's Trust had increased the emphasis on the common objectives held by partner agencies and enhanced cooperation.

Notes

The aim of the survey was to judge the impact of Children's Trusts on improving outcomes for potentially vulnerable children and young people.

Between autumn 2009 and spring 2010, Her Majesty's Inspectors visited six local authorities that had an established Children's Trust. The sample of authorities was chosen to include those where children's services had been judged good or outstanding in improving outcomes for children and young people in the 2008 annual performance assessments. Inspectors held discussions with 42 representatives across the six Children's Trust Boards, including, in each case, the Chair of the Board and the Director of Children's Services. Inspectors also scrutinised a range of documentation, including the Children and Young People's Plan in each local authority.

Between November 2009 and May 2010, inspectors visited each local authority again to observe the work of front-line services provided by partner organisations in the

Children's Trust. In each case, the work seen was focused on a specific group of children, young people or both and involved the collaboration of professionals from more than one service. Inspectors held discussions with 62 service managers, 147 front-line staff, 56 children and young people, and 40 parents and carers. Inspectors analysed a range of documentation including terms of reference, guidance and framework documents, and case studies that related to individual children and young people.

Further information

Publications by Ofsted

Outstanding local authority children's services 2009 (100040), Ofsted, 2010; www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/100040.

Supporting young people – an evaluation of recent reforms to youth support services in 11 local areas (090226), Ofsted, 2010; www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/090226.

Other publications

Are we there yet? Improving governance and resource management in children's trusts, Audit Commission, 2008; http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk/localgov/nationalstudies/arewethereyet/Pages/Default_copy.aspx

Children's Trusts: statutory guidance on cooperation arrangements, including the Children's Trust Board and the Children and Young People's Plan; consultation draft, DCSF, 2009; www.education.gov.uk/consultations/downloadableDocs/CT%20stat%20guid%20and%20regs_received%2013%20Nov_FINAL.pdf.

Children's Trusts: statutory guidance on cooperation arrangements, including the Children's Trust Board and the Children and Young People's Plan, DCSF, 2010; www.dcsf.gov.uk/everychildmatters/about/aims/childrenstrusts/childrenstrusts/.

The developing relationship between youth offending teams and Children's Trusts, Youth Justice Board, 2008; www.yjb.gov.uk/publications/Resources/Downloads/Developing_relationship_between_YOTs_and_Childrens_Trusts.pdf.

Working together to safeguard children: a guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children, DfES, 2006; www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH_4007781.

Annex: Local authorities visited

Darlington

Derby City

Kensington and Chelsea

Kingston upon Thames

Northumberland

York