

Children's Trusts:

Statutory guidance on inter-agency cooperation to improve well-being of children, young people and their families



department for
children, schools and families

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Section 1: Children's Trusts: Driving Step Changes in Delivery

Introduction

- 1.1 *Every Child Matters (2003)* launched a programme of systemic change to improve outcomes for every child, and reflected wide agreement about what those outcomes should be: that all children should be healthy, stay safe, enjoy and achieve, make a positive contribution and enjoy economic well-being. It recognised however that improvements could only be sustained where agencies worked together much more effectively to design and deliver integrated services around the needs of children and young people.
- 1.2 The National Outcomes Framework, developed as a narrative to support the implementation of *Every Child Matters*, was a driver for professional unification around this agenda for change. The revised framework, released on 3 April, presents a comprehensive overview of national indicators and performance measures. It provides the basis for robust discussions within Children's Trusts about:
- whether the lives of children, young people, their families and carers are improving; and
 - the performance of local services and their contribution to improving population outcomes.
- The new framework also illustrates an alignment between the 2020 goals of the Children's Plan, Public Service Agreements and the National Indicator Set.
- 1.3 *The Children Act (2004)* provided the legislative underpinning for *Every Child Matters*. This requires each local authority to appoint a Director of Children's Services and designate a Lead Member for Children's Services to have responsibility for education and children's social services, to work with partners to produce a single Children and Young People's Plan and to create a Local Safeguarding Children Board. It also requires local authorities and their "relevant partners", under section 10, to cooperate to improve children's wellbeing. This duty remains in force.
- 1.4 Guidance on this "duty to cooperate", issued under section 10 and to which all local authorities and "relevant partners" must have regard, was issued in 2005. This explained that acting in accordance with the duty, and with the spirit and intention of *Every Child Matters*, implied putting in place "children's trust arrangements" which put improved outcomes for children and young people at the centre of all activity. The terms "Children's Trusts" and "Children's Trust

arrangements” refer not simply to strategic partnership boards but to the totality of change needed to deliver better and more responsive integrated services.

- 1.5 This vision of Children’s Trusts won wide acceptance, as did the recognition that, although progress needed to be made in all areas across all aspects of Children’s Trust development, local authorities and their partners should have the flexibility to tailor local arrangements to local circumstances and priorities, in ways which enable them to respond most effectively to the needs of children, parents and families in their areas.
- 1.6 In the past few years local partners in many areas have made significant improvements in the extent and impact of partnership working through Children’s Trusts. Real progress has been made in implementing the structural and systemic changes needed to drive improved outcomes. This has been variable across the country, however, and the cultural changes needed to drive these changes through to demonstrable improvements in outcomes have yet to be sufficiently embedded.
- 1.7 This guidance, issued under section 10 of the Children Act 2004, reflects the experience of developing Children’s Trust arrangements since the publication of *Every Child Matters*, progress in the implementation of the vision it contained and the development of new policies and programmes to support the drive for better outcomes for young people. In particular, it stresses the importance of robust and effective arrangements under the section 10 “duty to cooperate” in implementing the vision of *The Children’s Plan: Building Bright Futures*.
- 1.8 This guidance supplements the *Statutory guidance on inter-agency cooperation to improve wellbeing of children: children’s trusts (2005)*. It updates and clarifies this earlier guidance, placing greater emphasis on driving improved outcomes and promoting cultural change, as the main structural changes should by now be substantially in place.

Children’s Trusts: the next ten years

- 1.9 The Children’s Plan sets the aim of making this country the best place in the world for our children and young people to grow up. It is underpinned by five core principles¹ and sets out the Government’s plans for the next ten years under each of the Department for Children, Schools and Families’ strategic objectives. Local authorities have a vital role in leading strategic partnerships under the Children’s Trust arrangements to see that national priorities are appropriately translated into local delivery plans, drawing on the National Indicator Set and the Vital Signs in ways which reflect local circumstances. This is of particular importance for many public health agendas which by their nature tend to have wide-ranging implications for many different stakeholders and where real impact will only be achieved where there is a coordinated and comprehensive approach across sectors involving agencies from the public, private, independent and third sectors.

¹ The principles are: government does not bring up children, parents do; all children have the potential to succeed according to their efforts and abilities (rather than background and circumstances); children and young people need to enjoy their childhood; services need to be shaped by and responsive to children, young people and families; and it is always better to prevent failure than tackle a crisis later.

- 1.10** The *Children's Plan* makes clear that this implies a "new leadership role for Children's Trusts in every area". It sets high expectations for Children's Trusts – to deliver measurable improvements for all children and young people and, in support of this, to have in place by 2010 "consistent, high quality arrangements to provide identification and early intervention for all children and young people who need additional help". It emphasises the crucial role of local authorities in driving change.
- 1.11** This is not simply a matter of bringing the operation and effectiveness of Children's Trust arrangements in all areas up to the standards of the best. It implies, rather, a step change in aspiration and impact, so that Children's Trusts in every area are visibly and demonstrably improving outcomes and, as a result, the lives and prospects of children, young people, parents and families in their local area. Children's Trust arrangements must not be an "add on"; they must be central to the redoubled efforts of all partners to improve outcomes and narrow gaps. The only way preventative and early intervention work will be successful is if the Children's Trust becomes the mainstream service.
- 1.12** This means that the arrangements established under section 10 of the *Children Act (2004)* need to drive and sustain Children's Trusts and in doing so:
- place a clear and measurably effective emphasis on narrowing the outcome gaps between children from disadvantaged backgrounds, for example children in care, and their peers, while improving outcomes for all;
 - focus rigorously on prevention and the early identification of children with additional needs, including those at risk of falling into anti-social behaviour or crime, by working closely with all partners, including the police and youth justice agencies;
 - involve and empower parents, and become more responsive to children and young people themselves;
 - ensure effective planning and commissioning of services and the flexible use of pooled budgets;
 - drive effective integrated working between all professionals working with children and young people; and
 - overcome unnecessary barriers to sharing and using information systematically.

Children's Trust and Schools

- 1.13** The step change expected of Children's Trusts must include a step change in the involvement of schools² in Children's Trust arrangements. All schools, including Academies, should contribute to and in turn be strongly supported by local Trust arrangements which ensure shared ownership of all outcomes of all children in an area. Children's Trusts must be seen to

² Schools are not 'relevant partners' section 10 (1) (b) but 'other bodies' section 10(1)(c) Children Act 04. 'Relevant partners' are District Councils, Police and Police Authorities, Strategic Health Authorities and Primary Care Trusts, National Offender Management Service (NOMS) – Probation Service, Youth Offending Teams, Agencies responsible for providing services under section 114 of the Learning and Skills Act 2000 – The Connexions Service and the Learning and Skills Council.

support, and where necessary drive, effective collaboration between schools, and between schools and other agencies. Equally schools must be able to help shape the planning and commissioning of services and play a central part in the work of the Children's Trust board. Accountability must flow in both directions: from each individual school to the Children's Trust for the part they play in narrowing gaps and improving outcomes for all children, and from the Children's Trust for the support it gives to individual schools in raising standards, developing distinctive visions and giving practical effect to their new duty to promote the well-being of all their pupils.

Essential Features of Children's Trusts

- 1.14** These are challenging objectives. But they reflect and build upon the excellent progress that many local authorities and their partners have already made on a range of issues, and on widely shared aspirations for improving the lives of all children. There is a clear line of sight from *Every Child Matters* to the new challenges and commitments in the *Children's Plan*.
- 1.15** This vision also remains true to the basic model of a Children's Trust – the “duty to cooperate” in action – outlined in the original *Statutory guidance on inter-agency cooperation to improve the wellbeing of children: children's trusts*. This says that the essential features of a Children's Trust are:
- a child-centred, outcome-led vision: a compelling outcome-led vision for all children and young people, clearly informed by their views and those of their families;
 - integrated front line delivery organised around the child, young person or family rather than professional boundaries or existing agencies;
 - integrated processes: effective joint working sustained by a shared language and shared processes;
 - integrated strategy: joint planning and commissioning, pooled budgets; and
 - inter-agency governance, with robust arrangements for inter-agency cooperation.
- 1.16** Section 2 of this guidance discusses in more detail the vision and priorities in the *Children's Plan* as they relate to Children's Trusts. Section 3 discusses the progress of Children's Trusts against the each of these five “essential features”, identifies the challenges that now need to be addressed and gives guidance on how the priorities in the *Children's Plan* can be driven forward across the various levels of the Children's Trust arrangements.

Section 2: Children's Trusts and the Children's Plan

- 2.1** *The Children's Plan* puts the needs of families, children and young people at the centre of everything we do. This means that more than ever before families will be at the centre of excellent, integrated services which address those needs. Children's Trusts are at the forefront of delivering this high ambition and have been given a clear leadership role in every area to drive these reforms through.
- 2.2** Schools must, in turn, be at the heart of Children's Trust arrangements, as partners at the strategic level and as drivers of front line delivery; responding effectively to their new duty to promote well-being will only be possible through their full engagement with the work of the Children's Trust in their area. Strong school level indicators are being developed to help schools, local partners and Children's Trust boards measure each school's contribution to the well-being of local children and how, working together, this can be improved.

Happy and Healthy

- 2.3** Good physical mental and emotional health is not only a key outcome in its own right, but has a crucial influence on each child's future across the whole spectrum from the early years onwards. Children who get a good start in life and are physically and mentally healthy in their early years arrive at school ready to learn and are more likely to make the most of their opportunities. Not only do all children deserve to be as healthy as possible today, but a healthy start in life and acquiring healthy lifestyle habits also help to minimise the risk of acute and chronic conditions in adulthood. Tackling childhood obesity, for instance, helps head off later problems such as asthma, diabetes, cardio-vascular disease and some cancers. It is, therefore, essential that all partners³ in the Children's Trust, including of course schools, work together to promote good health (which involves promoting healthy living, including sensible eating and physical activity) and prevent ill health for all local children and young people whether they are well, sick or belong to a vulnerable group such as children in care or disabled children.
- 2.4** In particular Primary Care Trusts and local authorities need to work in partnership to achieve their common goals. The NHS Operating Framework 2008-09 identifies child health as a priority but PCTs can only effectively address this in concert with local authorities. Working through the

³ Partners here includes the named 'relevant partners' and the 'other bodies' in section 10 (1) CA 04.

Children's Trust, partners should assess the type and level of need⁴ and ensure that appropriate action is included in PCT plans, the Children and Young People's Plan, the Local Area Agreement and NHS contracts. PCT performance will be assessed against a set of indicators – the Vital Signs – which comprehensively cover children's health and complement the National Indicator Set against which the Local Authority and its partners will be performance managed through the new local performance framework outlined in the 2006 local government White Paper, *Strong and Prosperous Communities*.

Safe and Sound

2.5 Children's safety is fundamental to their broader well-being. Relentless focus on protecting the most vulnerable gives lessons that can be extended to improving safeguarding for all children. Local authorities have an important role in keeping track of all children missing education and have a duty to follow up on them and ensure they get a suitable education. Through Children's Trusts local authorities should work in partnership with schools and relevant agencies, such as the police and Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships, to promote safe environments so children and young people are protected, but also allowed opportunities to experience risk and develop their independence. Chief among the relevant services are transport, leisure and housing: this means actively engaging either district councils or other departments within the top tier authority. Children's Trust partners should consider children's safeguarding needs across the whole partnership and champion children's interests in the wider Local Strategic Partnership. These include combating bullying, tackling emissions and noise from traffic, access to quality green spaces, and opportunities for outdoor play and safe places for teenagers to meet.

Excellence and Equity

2.6 *The Children's Plan* says that every young person should achieve their potential and enjoy their time in education. In order to meet the 2020 goal for Early Years⁵ and the 2011 goals for educational achievement⁶, the attainment of some specific groups who are currently underperforming, such as children in care, must be improved. This means schools and children's centres having the timely support of specialist services, including mental health, speech and language therapy. So schools have to be active partners in the planning and delivery arrangements under the Children's Trust, helping to define the priorities for their local area and agreeing how the whole pattern of local services best fits together to meet needs. It may be more appropriate for clusters of schools to work with the local authority and other partners through the Children's Trust to explore how to address specific needs across the area and help tailor their education provision to the needs of the local community. But however this is secured, it is essential that schools are fully engaged as partners in the Children's Trust.

⁴ See also Guidance on Joint Strategic Needs Assessment at www.dh.gov.uk/publications.

⁵ By 2020 every child should be ready for success in school with at least 90% developing well across all areas of the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile by age 5.

⁶ The Prime Minister's ambition is that no secondary school in the country should have less than 30% of pupils achieving 5 A*-C GCSEs including English and maths by 2011.

Leadership and Collaboration

- 2.7** An extremely important factor in delivering our aspirations for children is a world class workforce able to provide highly personalised support. Effective and knowledgeable leaders and managers are needed throughout all areas of practice where the outcomes of children, young people and families are affected. In the forefront of this are Directors of Children's Services and their leadership teams and those partner organisations which form the Children's Trust arrangements in each locality. Alongside the *Building Brighter Futures: next steps for the children's workforce* we are publishing a professional development framework for leaders and managers to provide a basis for the professional development of leaders across all Children's Trust partners.
- 2.8** Local authorities must take swift and decisive action to prevent schools from failing and reverse failure quickly when it happens. We also expect local authorities to challenge schools who are not sufficiently improving their pupils' performance including those who are coasting. The Prime Minister has said that by 2011 there will be no secondary school with fewer than 30% of its pupils not getting good GCSE results. Children's Trusts have a role in helping to bring this about by, for example, commissioning integrated services that remove barriers to an individual's learning. But this is not enough in itself. Raising standards of attainment and preventing and tackling school failure must be seen as a shared responsibility of all Children's Trust partners. With the full involvement of all schools, including Academies, in Trust arrangements, each Children's Trust board should take collective ownership of the strategy for challenging and supporting schools that are underperforming.

Staying on

- 2.9** By 2015 all young people should be in education or training to 18 and beyond, entering employment with the right skills to enable them to prosper. Diplomas and Apprenticeships will increase the learning options available to 14-19 year olds and help tackle concerns about the broader functional and personal learning and thinking skills of learners. Funding for 16-19 learning will be transferred from the Learning and Skills Council to local authorities. Managing this transfer and ensuring the local area has the right education and training provision will need to be achieved through the Children's Trust, of which the Learning and Skills Council continues to be a 'relevant partner'⁷.
- 2.10** Access to good quality, comprehensive and impartial information advice and guidance is a key to helping young people stay on in learning and achieve. Responsibility for commissioning information, advice and guidance (IAG) services for young people and the funding that goes with that responsibility has been transferred to local authorities. *Quality Standards for Young People's Information Advice and Guidance*, issued in October 2007, defines the services that local authorities, working with their Children's Trust partners, are expected to commission and manage.

⁷ The Learning and Skills Council for England is listed as a relevant partner to whom the 'duty to cooperate' applies in section 10 (4) (g) of the Children Act 2004.

On the right track

- 2.11** Young people also need good IAG to help them find answers to questions and tackle issues that can arise in their personal lives. Local authorities are expected to integrate IAG services with the wider youth support services they manage and to ensure that all young people receive the IAG they need on personal well-being and financial capability. Children's Trusts should provide oversight and support and help ensure that IAG services are well integrated with careers education in schools and colleges.
- 2.12** The teenage years are important in a young person's preparation for adult life. Young people should feel valued and have their achievements recognised and celebrated. The Children's Trust has an important role in promoting positive activities for young people and creating environments where young people can meet friends and socialise in safety. For example the Children's Trust should make a reality of the commitment that by 2011 all young people will have access to three hours of sport in addition to the two hours they have during the school day. Risk taking is a normal part of growing up, but the Children's Trust should be alive to the need to take action to help young people manage those risks better.
- 2.13** As corporate parents local authorities should work with their partners, especially district councils, to consider how to improve access to positive activities for children in care, including free access to their leisure facilities. Following legislation, we intend to set out how participation in positive leisure activities should form part of the care plan for all children and young people in care.

Reducing young people's substance misuse

- 2.14** Patterns of drug, alcohol and volatile substance misuse by young people vary greatly from place to place, so it is important to move towards a more flexible and locally needs-led approach. To facilitate this, funding⁸ will be going to all local authorities through the area-based grant and to PCTs through the Pooled Treatment Budget. Evidence shows that the young people most at risk of misusing substances are often from vulnerable groups, such as those in care or who truant from school and come from the most disadvantaged backgrounds. They have common predictive factors with a range of other poor outcomes for young people including, those who commit crimes, fail at school or have mental health problems. There are also strong links between alcohol misuse, teenage pregnancy and disorder offences. Often the best way to address these problems is to unify the management of different programmes by pooling resources through Targeted Youth Support.
- 2.15** The Government's new drug strategy *Protecting Families and Communities*, and the forthcoming Youth Alcohol Action Plan (due in spring 2008) support the ambition to reduce the prevalence of young people misusing drugs, alcohol and volatile substances (glue, gas, and solvents). This will need to be taken forward at local level by ensuring that the issue is brought within a much more integrated delivery approach to identification and early intervention⁹. The Children's Trust has a powerful role in aligning all such areas of work strategically through the Children and Young People's Plan and facilitating better partnership working across the piece. This includes:

⁸ For the next three years.

⁹ This is a departure from previous practice where the Drug Action Team would take the lead.

- helping schools to play their essential role through both the delivering high quality drug education and identifying problems at an early stage, from either a young person's own use or that of a parent or carer;
- encouraging a greater focus on substance misuse issues within children's workforce development; and
- pooling resources through Targeted Youth Support and Positive Activities to focus on the young people from vulnerable groups who are most at risk.

Cohesive and resilient communities

2.16 The Children's Trust provides a means to help create more cohesive, safer communities in which young people can share a sense of belonging and appreciation of those from other cultures and backgrounds. A new duty has been placed on schools to promote community cohesion and local authorities need to work with schools to support them to deliver it. Through its local Children's Trust schools can develop a richer picture of the community of which the school is a part and make links with other partners and with other schools in the area which may have pupils drawn from different communities or sections of the community. Children's Trusts can also help schools to identify opportunities to promote interaction between children and families from different backgrounds by, for example, making their grounds and facilities available to the community outside of school hours.

2.17 In all areas, especially where vulnerability to extremism is particularly high, the Children's Trust should aim to ensure that schools and other services for children and young people are fully integrated into multi-agency work taking place at a local level to contribute to the PREVENT strategy¹⁰.

Tackling poverty

2.18 Poverty blights children's lives and has far-reaching effects on all outcomes, which is why the Government has committed to halving child poverty by 2010 and eradicating it by 2020. Poverty is not just about low income. Other factors include access to high-quality health care and social services, child care – an important enabler of parental employment – family support, decent housing and transport and the quality of the local amenities, including cultural and leisure facilities. The partnership arrangements necessary to take a strategic approach to tackling this wide range of issues should be embedded within the Children's Trust. Links with the wider Local Strategic Partnership will enable partners to focus on issues such as economic development and job creation, especially for the hard to reach; securing sufficient childcare for working parents; skills and training and community regeneration.

¹⁰ For additional information see <http://security.homeoffice.gov.uk/counter-terrorism-strategy/>

Section 3: Driving Change through Children's Trusts

- 3.1** The *Statutory Guidance on Inter-Agency Cooperation to improve wellbeing of children: children's trusts* (2005) states that the essential features of a Children's Trust comprise a focus on the child or young person together with cooperation arrangements and integrated systems that reach every organisational level, from the front line to the overarching strategic governance arrangements. It also states that all these essential features need to be in place and working together for outcomes to improve significantly. Evidence and experience suggest that this model of integration at every organisational level is the right one, but that there is still much more to do.
- 3.2** We now have a good understanding of what works and where the challenges are. Evidence from a range of sources shows steady progress, but with some areas making better progress than others. Advances in data and intelligence collecting, increasingly through the National Indicator Set, will sharpen focus on measuring improvement in outcomes. But to deliver the results necessary for a world class system requires a step change in progress, including consistent, high quality arrangements for identification of additional needs and early intervention.
- 3.3** There are some real challenges to making change happen. The Centre for Excellence and Outcomes in Children and Young People's Services (CfEO) is being set up to help local authorities and their partners¹¹ take forward their plans. The CfEO will identify, co-ordinate and disseminate national, regional and local knowledge and evidence about how outcomes, and services, for children and young people are improving. It is intended that the development of a single Centre for Excellence and Outcomes in children's services will align with the National Improvement and Efficiency Strategy in a way that complements activity and builds capacity rather than adding burdens.
- 3.4** It is time for a major drive to improve delivery, not simply to bring all areas to the level of Children's Trusts at their current best, but to set and achieve new benchmarks of success. In particular Children's Trusts must begin to show relatively faster rates of improvement in the outcomes for vulnerable and disadvantaged groups, such as children in care, against a background of improved outcomes for all, and to close the gap between the most vulnerable

¹¹ This means all partners engaged in local children's services delivery not just the statutory 'relevant partners'.

and the majority of children. The next section looks in more detail at each of the ‘essential features’ of a Children’s Trust through which these changes will be delivered, identifies key challenges and gives guidance on how the priorities in the *Children’s Plan* can be driven forward.

- 3.5** We know that such a drive for improvement is particularly needed to reduce youth crime, including through tackling its causes rather than its symptoms. The Government has laid the foundations for this through its new Public Service Agreements, particularly through the PSA to increase the number of young people on the path to success, and its associated indicator to reduce the number of first time entrants to the youth justice system.
- 3.6** The Government is building on this by reviewing its approach to youth crime, including examining how local partners can act more effectively to prevent youth crime and reduce levels of re-offending. This will culminate this summer in the publication of a Youth Crime Action Plan and a Green Paper on the resettlement of young offenders. These will set out new action and strategic priorities to reduce youth crime, including how Children’s Trusts and other partners can work together more effectively.

Child, Parent and Family Focused

- 3.7** The Children’s Plan is clear that parents, not governments, bring up children, although sometimes parents and other carers can feel overwhelmed. That is why ‘partnership with parents’ is a unifying theme of the *Children’s Plan*. Sometimes parents need information, advice or help to do the best for their children, and sometimes they don’t ask for it. Children’s Trust partners need to be able to engage with parents, as well as children and young people, in ways that reach each family and each family member, including fathers. The Children’s Trust should undertake high quality consultation with parents¹² and consider innovative ways of identifying and speaking to hard to reach and hard to help parents, involving community groups and community assets to support outreach as necessary. This work should involve and empower children, young people and their families and be integrated into ongoing work to empower and engage the wider community.
- 3.8** Specifically, parents and carers should be consulted during the preparation of the local Children and Young People’s Plan¹³. This should not be a “one-off” event but regular engagement to help evaluate progress and seek advice on what services are needed as well as the quality of those already offered. There should also be a clear framework for ensuring families know where to find the support and information they need and that they are treated as partners whenever they engage with professionals. The *Children’s Plan* commits to allocate £34 million over the next three years to provide two expert parenting advisers in every local authority. The Children’s Trust needs ensure this additional resource is used effectively within the wider local strategy.

¹² This is underpinned by section 10(3) of the Children Act 2004, which requires local authorities to ‘have regard’ to the importance of parents and other carers.

¹³ The Children and young people’s Plan (England) Regulations 2005.

Integrated Frontline Delivery

3.9 For every child to have access to the services they need when they need them specialist services have to be better integrated with universal settings. This enables a more comprehensive approach to prevention and early intervention to be taken, better cooperation between agencies, with a single point of contact, and practitioners working effectively with families, recognising that it is the actions of families that have the greatest impact on outcomes. To achieve this aim means practitioners working together as an integrated workforce, characterised by professional respect and mutual trust, cutting across institutional boundaries to fit services around the needs of children. This will involve working in teams made up people from a range of professional backgrounds. The Children's Trust should be at the centre of a cultural shift which unites all people working with children and young people around a common purpose, language and identity, while keeping the strong and distinctive professional ethos of different practitioners. It should enhance inter-professional trust and greater willingness to work outside traditional service areas and shared information.

Workforce Strategy

3.10 The Department is developing a children's workforce action plan *Building Brighter Futures: next steps for the children's workforce*, which will set out what we mean by integrated working and how we plan to support progress and develop a workforce with the knowledge, skills and leadership to make integrated front line working a reality across all children's services. The Children's Trust needs to take a leading role in driving this work forward underpinning the Children and Young People's Plan by developing a local workforce strategy. This should cover the whole sector, including schools and health bodies, and embed a culture of integrated working.

Co-location

3.11 Children's Trusts need to develop stronger systems of prevention and early intervention, where different children's services work together effectively, increasingly co-located and integrated within universal settings.

3.12 There should be clear processes and pathways for engaging and working with more specialist services where additional needs are identified, and accessible, multi-agency arrangements for allocating resource and delivering joined up services to address those needs. For example a co-located multi-agency team of practitioners could be established in and around universal settings, such as a Children's Centre or an extended school. Children's Centres that are jointly planned and managed by local authorities and their partners¹⁴ are more likely to provide the kind of holistic parent and child-centred services that parents need and expect. Many Children's Trusts will need to reconfigure their existing services and commission new ones to provide practitioners to support the needs identified in universal settings.

¹⁴ These are all partners, not the statutory 'relevant partners'.

- 3.13** Co-locating different groups of professionals through, for instance, one-stop shops, facilitates more integrated ways of working, with significant benefits to children young people and their families, helps to avoid stigma and encourages service take-up. The key is coordinating service delivery – persuading different parties to collaborate to reduce duplication of effort, minimise multiple supplier interfaces and coordinate contract management, and generating valuable efficiencies as a result.
- 3.14** Children’s Trust partners should work together to make the most of the significant amounts of capital investment available to improve local facilities and seek opportunities for co-locating services. The Trust school model may also provide schools with the structure and flexibilities to build sustainable locally managed co-location partnerships. Children’s Trusts need to be closely involved in helping to deliver the commitment that by 2010 all schools will need to provide access to a range of extended services, and that Children’s Centres will be increasingly working in partnership with other settings and primary schools to drive up quality of provision and ease transitions. From next year Children’s Centres in the most disadvantaged areas will also have two outreach posts to target those children and families who continue to miss out. Children’s Trusts will also have a key role to play in ensuring that by the end of 2008 every area should have Targeted Youth Support arrangements in place for early identification and support of vulnerable young people.

Integrated Processes

- 3.15** The Children’s Trust should take a lead to provide and support activities designed to build confidence, to empower practitioners to use their professional judgement in decisions related to information, and to foster trust and professional understanding between the services. Processes such as the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) and the lead professional role should be fully embedded. The cross government guidance *Information Sharing: Practitioners’ Guide*, provides advice on when and how practitioners can share information legally and professionally¹⁵.
- 3.16** A range of approaches is required to support the diverse needs of children. ContactPoint, the electronic enablement of the Common Assessment Framework (eCAF) and the Integrated Children’s Systems (ICS) each has a separate, specific purpose, but all support integrated working. Together they will help enable practitioners from different agencies or areas to agree the right package of support for each child.
- 3.17** ContactPoint will provide a quick way for people working with children to find out who else is working with the same child. It will include basic information about every child in England from birth to their 18th birthday and contact details on parents or carers and practitioners or other services working with that child. ContactPoint will be subject to stringent security controls with access limited to people with the appropriate training who have undergone security checks and who need it to do their jobs. It should be available from late 2008.

¹⁵ *Information Sharing: Practitioners’ Guide* can be found at www.ecm.gov.uk/informationsharing

- 3.18** CAF is a standardised approach to conducting an assessment of a child's additional needs. It can be used by trained practitioners across children's services in England. The national eCAF system is the e-enablement of this process and will allow a trained, authorised practitioner to create and share a CAF securely. Subject to explicit informed consent, practitioners from different areas will be given appropriate access to the key information they need to enable them to deliver appropriate services for the child or young person. Deployment of the national eCAF system is expected to begin from 2009 and it will be subject to stringent security controls.
- 3.19** ICS is a system primarily to help social care practitioners supporting looked after children and other children in need by providing a single approach to collecting, recording and using relevant case information efficiently and effectively. ICS is not an IT system *per se* but a business process to help practitioners follow legal requirements and good practice. It is currently being rolled out.

Integrated Strategy

- 3.20** Strategic planning and commissioning arrangements are central to the cultural change that is required across all services. These should be based on a thorough knowledge of the needs of local families, children and young people, and a clear vision of the quality of childhood to which the local area aspires and of the ways different services can best deliver improvements.

Children and Young People's Plan

- 3.21** The Children and Young People's Plan¹⁶ continues to be the key document which covers, in one place, all services for families, children and young people within a single strategic and overarching vision of the local area. Children's Trust partners should be closely involved in its development and ensure their own plans are fully aligned with it. The Children's Trust should sign off the CYPP, ensure that it is published, refreshed, evaluated and reviewed as necessary, and drive the operating plans which underpin it. The CYPP should be consistent with the Sustainable Community Strategy and inform and be informed by it.

The Local Area Agreement and Sustainable Community Strategy

- 3.22** Children's Trusts must have a central and visible role in implementing, monitoring and refreshing the Local Area Agreements, in a way that is consistent with reviewing and implementing the CYPP. The Children's Trust will agree, monitor and drive the children and young people elements of the Local Area Agreement, which should, in turn, be wholly consistent with priorities in the CYPP. Both will feed into and deliver the overarching local authority Sustainable Community Strategy.
- 3.23** To do this, the Children's Trust will need to draw on and develop a data rich approach to strategic and operational planning which includes monitoring progress against the National

¹⁶ See section 17 Children Act 2004; SI 2005 no. 2149 and SI 2007 no. 57.

Indicator Set, using the Local Authority Interactive Tool, collecting and analysing local data and developing data of its own (for example on children not on a school roll).

Joint Commissioning

- 3.24** A Children's Trust is, in part, a commissioning partnership, commissioning from self determining providers. Joint planning and commissioning is a key means by which the Children's Trust partners come together to make a reality of the duty to co-operate and drive cultural change.
- 3.25** Commissioning is much more than contracting and procurement. The commissioning cycle for all strategic partners encompasses:
- A strategic needs assessment – engaging with children and families, understanding their needs and taking a sophisticated approach to the use of data;
 - Planning and service design – identifying what services need to be put in place to promote preventative solutions, and how to develop holistic services which can address the totality of each child's needs;
 - Deciding on how to deliver and with whom – identifying which organisations are well placed to deliver services and contracting, or putting service level agreements in place so that all parties are clear about deliverables; and then
 - Reviewing and challenging the fitness for purpose of services and providers and monitoring their impact on outcomes.
- 3.26** Commissioning and joint commissioning can operate at a variety of levels within the system:
- Strategic – this includes regional and sub regional collaboration for specialist services and whole service commissioning by the Children's Trust for a local area;
 - Locality – multi-agency teams operating in a locality, commissioning by school clusters etc; and
 - Individual – lead professional commissioning and individualised budgets and packets of support.
- 3.27** Close collaborative working between local authorities and their PCT partners is essential here. This is an area where a step change in ambition and impact is clearly required to enable Children's Trusts to deliver improved outcomes as effectively as is needed. Preparing a joint (health and local authority) strategic needs assessment is now a statutory requirement¹⁷ for those bodies and shared performance indicators for child health make locally determined shared or pooled budgets increasingly relevant and often essential. All Children's Trust partners, including those in the private, voluntary and independent sectors, should pursue commissioning activities jointly and pool budgets wherever possible to shape local services to meet the needs of children and families. Practice guidance on establishing joint funding

¹⁷ Section 116 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act (2007) refers. See also Guidance on Joint Strategic needs Assessment (2007) www.dh.gov.uk/publications

arrangements, including aligned budgets and pooled budgets is available from www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/strategy/planningandcommissioning/jointfunding/

- 3.28** This commissioning cycle should apply whether the services are delivered by in-house teams, other public sector organisations the third or private sectors, or a combination of these. Commissioning can embrace partnership working, joint ventures, grant-giving, co-production with communities, or individualised budgets. However, if a Children’s Trust is to be capable of championing the needs of local children and families it must be clear about its role as both commissioner of services in the interest of the community and as a provider of some of those services. Whatever organisational role is put in place there must be in all cases clear mechanisms for commissioners to hold in-house provider functions to account for delivery.

Commissioning Education and Training

- 3.29** Schools are important partners in Children’s Trusts and have a key role to play in a flexible, diverse and responsive system. They now have a duty to promote the well-being of their pupils and the *Children’s Plan* commits to the development of school level well-being indicators. The vision of a 21st century school set out in the Children’s Plan is of a school which not only provides excellent teaching and learning, but also acts as a vital community resource. As commissioner of school places the local authority should enable and broker the partnerships which make this vision a reality. The new responsibility for post 16 learning means that authorities must also commission a range of provision from schools, colleges and other training providers to meet the needs of every young person up to the age of 18.
- 3.30** As well as participating in local authority-wide partnerships, schools are commissioning bodies in their own right – both individually and in collaboration with other schools and community partners. Local authorities should plan strategically, in consultation with their partners, the most appropriate level for services to be commissioned, to support schools in effective commissioning and to encourage the development of a vibrant supply side.
- 3.31** Where schools commission services themselves they will use their own budgets and expertise to identify what most suits the particular needs of their pupils. Wherever possible they should exercise their commissioning role as part of the wider partnership, aligning budgets with that of the local authorities and its partners in response to a shared understanding of need. The local authority should develop the market of school services, provide schools with advice and encourage them to work together to secure economies of scale and to share expertise and experience.
- 3.32** The Schools White Paper *Higher Standards, Better Schools for All* and the subsequent Education and Inspections Act 2006 set out a new role for local authorities as strategic commissioners of schools. The new legal framework underpinning this role includes duties for local authorities to secure diversity in the provision of schools and increase opportunities for parental choice; to ensure fair access to educational opportunity; and to consider carefully the views of parents on educational provision. The legal framework that is put in place for the local authority role

as commissioners of 16-19 provision from colleges and training providers will need to take account of this principle.

Inter-Agency Governance

3.33 The first statutory guidance on the duty to cooperate said that the cornerstone of Children's Trusts must be:

"a strong integrated governing board or structure representing all key delivery partners at senior level, determined to drive whole-system change through clear leadership and effective local change programmes ... this will require sophisticated leadership of a high order to secure a genuinely joint outcome-focused vision, full engagement of all key partners, and clear lines of accountability".

It is certainly not the case that this description is yet applicable to all or indeed most Children's Trusts. Where existing arrangements fall short of this – admittedly very challenging – goal, the strengthening of governance arrangements should be an urgent priority.

3.34 A Children's Trust cannot be effective overall unless its board gives clear strategic direction is prepared to take hard decisions to see them through – collectively and as the leaders of individual services – and is genuinely attuned and responsive to the needs of children and young people and parents. An effective Children's Trust board will systematically monitor and evaluate results, challenge itself and others where progress is slow and be sensitive and responsive to the practicalities of front line delivery.

Health Partners

3.35 Children's Trusts are partnerships between local services for children and young people and their families. Few Children's Trusts will have identical partners but in every area the Primary Care Trust (PCT) is a partner and will have a key role to play since good health is essential to securing the full spectrum of good outcomes for children and young people. The partnership between the local authority and the PCT is, in fact, the driving partnership for the Children's Trust. The NHS is the provider of certain universal services for families with pre-school children and a major contributor to services which deal with a wide range of issues central to family life and childhood. Professionals such as health visitors and GPs are key players, so it is essential that the NHS is firmly embedded in the Children's Trust governance arrangements. It is increasingly the case that neither a PCT nor a local authority will be able to deliver its own priorities without the active cooperation of the other. The strengthening relationship between these two major partners is the engine which will drive the Children's Trust board to where it needs to be to deliver world class provision in the local area.

3.36 In order to make a reality of this partnership local authorities and PCTs should adopt the following good practice that we can see emerging across the country:

- specific agreement by Directors of Children's Services and their PCT counterparts that the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment is a proper and adequate reflection of the needs of children and young people in the area;

- joint development and sign-off of local Children and Young People’s Plans and relevant PCT plans;
- budget transparency, and an agreed process in each locality for aligning or pooling budgets, building on the *Youth Matters* Green Paper requirement for local authorities and PCTs to pool budgets on prevention;
- an agreed local approach to joint commissioning at the local authority/PCT level which provides a framework for practice-based commissioning, or commissioning by schools. (The precise models might vary to suit local circumstances but would be likely to involve a joint commissioning body of some sort.)
- joint reflection, as part of the Local Area Agreement process, about progress on key children’s health issues in the area – with joint scrutiny of feedback from children, young people and parents; and
- Government Offices and Strategic Health Authorities taking joint responsibility for ensuring those processes are working in every area.

The Third and Private Sectors

3.37 Although governance arrangements and budget pooling will need to have close engagement from the main statutory agencies, Children’s Trusts are also about including a wide range of other agencies with an interest in improving outcomes for families, children and young people. The formal duty to cooperate extends only to the local authority’s strategic ‘relevant partners’ and not to these ‘other bodies’, but this does not mean they should be excluded from strategic decision making and governance arrangements. Crucially, voluntary and community sector organisations and private sector bodies should be closely engaged.

3.38 Many third sector organisations do have the capacity to engage, but others for a variety of reasons may struggle. The local authority needs to assess the situation and act proactively, through the Voluntary Sector Forum for example, to engage smaller organisations in the governance of the Children’s Trust. The third and private sector agencies have a great contribution to make. The Government has, for example, recently announced its intention to offer young people five hours of culture a week; third sector agencies will be essential to its delivery. They can often reach vulnerable groups and help identify unmet need which would otherwise be invisible. The private sector may provide a significant proportion of all full day-care for younger children. It is essential they are represented at the strategic governance and planning levels as well as at the delivery and front line levels.

Front line providers, including schools

3.39 The Children’s Trust board needs also to ensure that the voice of front line providers is clearly heard by and directly influences those taking decisions on the strategic direction of the Trust, the content of the Children and Young People’s Plan and Local Area Agreement, and the commissioning and resource allocation these then drive.

- 3.40** This is particularly true of schools. Just as individual schools need to work together and with other local agencies within their own neighbourhoods, so at the strategic level schools themselves need to have real involvement in the process of agreeing priorities and commissioning services. There has to be strong accountability in both directions, with Children’s Trusts more accountable for all services for children but accountable in turn to schools and other front line providers for the decisions they take and the support they provide.
- 3.41** At present the involvement of schools at the strategic level in Children’s Trusts is clearly patchy. The local authority and its strategic partners will need to think creatively with schools, including Academies, about how the engagement and influence of schools can be fixed within the system. Direct schools’ representation on the board is one obvious approach, but systems need to be found – possibly through Schools Forums – for ensuring that the concerns and contributions of all schools are properly channelled. Most schools are already involved in varieties of area collaborative arrangements (Schools Clusters, Neighbourhood Forums etc) and it may be fruitful to position such bodies clearly within a Children’s Trust “family tree”.

District Councils

- 3.42** In two tier areas district councils have a very large part to play in delivery, particularly in respect of community-based facilities in dispersed areas. It is important in two tier areas that district councils are fully engaged and are fully accountable for services in which they have an interest. Children’s Trusts should engage effectively with all the district councils in their area and not assume that one district represents all of the others.

Other partnerships

- 3.43** Children’s Trusts should work with and, where appropriate support other partnerships and programmes relating to children, young people and their families. In particular the Children’s Trust should support the school behaviour partnerships through which schools collaborate with one another and their local authority to plan, commission and manage provision for disruptive or disaffected pupils with an emphasis on early intervention and prevention and reducing rates of permanent exclusion and persistent absence. Other partnerships and agencies with which Children’s Trusts need to connect include City Challenges, National Strategies, the National Secondary Challenge, Building Schools for the Future Partnerships for Schools and Crime and Disorder Partnerships.
- 3.44** It is equally important to ensure that other authority-wide partnerships relating to children, young people and families are clearly positioned in relation to the Children’s Trust board, influencing board decisions and the overall direction of travel but in turn operating within the framework set by the board. Three partnerships are particularly significant here:

i) 0-7 partnerships

3.45 Improving transition between early years settings and primary schools requires a better focus on 0-7 year olds. Many areas have cluster arrangements bringing together their local children's centres and primary schools, but these are not always fully integrated into the Children's Trust arrangements. DCSF is planning to pilot 0-7 partnerships which are specifically positioned within existing Children's Trusts. The intention is for a locality-based partnership to complement rather than duplicate the role of the Children's Trust as a whole. The 0-7 partnerships could promote better transitions through joint planning and commissioning of services; pooling budgets; co-locating services and feedback to the wider Children's Trust. Further advice, including the relationship with the Children's Trust, will be provided once the pilots are underway.

ii) 14-19 partnerships

3.46 Local collaboration is also essential to deliver the 14-19 reform priorities including the Diploma entitlement and the raised participation age to 17 from 2013 and 18 from 2015. 14-19 partnerships are the focus for this collaboration; they will need to develop local strategies and plans to deliver 14-19 learning which support the Children's Trust in ensuring each local area has the right education and training provision. In addition, in a major move towards better integrated young people's services, the Education and Skills Bill (currently before Parliament) proposes that the statutory responsibility for delivering the Connexions Services be transferred to local authorities. The handover of funding has already been completed. The development of 14-19 partnerships has placed the quality of learning and careers IAG under new scrutiny and reinforced the role of schools and colleges working with their partners to provide better support. This in turn gives Children's Trusts the basis on which to engage much more purposefully in the drive to reform the quality of provision and support for young people at 14-19.

3.47 Whilst each 14-19 partnership will be organised to suit local circumstances it would be good practice for it to have a strategic core made up of key local decision makers. A clear relationship with the Children's Trust is essential for the 14-19 Partnership to feed into the work of the Local Strategic Partnership.

iii) Local Safeguarding Children Boards

3.48 The Local Safeguarding Children Board plays the leading role in a local area to improve the safety of children and young people. Its role is to coordinate what is done by each person or body represented on the Board in order to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in the local area and to ensure the effectiveness of all such work. The Local Authority, including Director of Children's Services, and other Children's Trusts partners will be represented on the LSCB, but it will form an independent view of the quality of local safeguarding activity and provide challenge when necessary. This means the LSCB must have a clear and distinct identity.

3.49 The LSCB will cooperate with other local partnerships, including the Children’s Trust, as an independent body to promote effective safeguarding and welfare for all children in the local area. It should contribute to and influence safeguarding decisions of the Children’s Trust and its broader children’s trust commissioning and delivery arrangements.

Local Strategic Partnerships

3.50 Finally, it is of course vital that the Children’s Trust is firmly positioned within the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP). The latter provides the forum for setting the strategic vision for a local area (contained in the Sustainable Community Strategy) and for agreeing the priorities for improvement in the Local Area Agreement and associated targets. It provides the means through which children and young people’s issues can be fully integrated into concerns of the wider community. The Children’s Trust is responsible for informing and influencing the work of the LSP as it relates to children, young people and families, and for identifying and championing children and young people’s interests within the process of agreeing and implementing targets in the Local Area Agreement. It should ensure that the Children and Young People’s Plan is fully consistent with the strategic vision and Sustainable Community Strategy and helps drive its delivery.

3.51 The Children’s Trust also has a key role in influencing, through the Local Strategic Partnership, infrastructure planning at local and regional level to ensure that facilities for children, young people and their families are embedded into the developing local housing, regeneration and transport plans. The *Children’s Plan* has committed the Department to run capital programmes for early years, schools, youth and 14-19 diploma provisions in a simple, coherent and consistent manner to help local agencies increase co-location.

Youth Offending Teams

3.52 Local collaboration is vital in preventing and tackling youth offending, as shown by the multi-agency nature of Youth Offending Teams (YOTs). They are made up of representatives from the police, Probation Service, social services, health, education, drugs and alcohol misuse and housing officers. YOTs are able to provide a bridge between the criminal justice system and the wider services for children and young people. The YOT identifies the needs of each young offender by assessing them with a national assessment. It identifies the specific problems that make the young person offend as well as measuring the risk they pose to others. This enables the YOT to identify suitable programmes to address the needs of the young person with the intention of preventing further offending. YOTs are one of the statutory ‘relevant partners’ in Children’s Trusts and often have formalised accountability arrangements with them, and whichever body has community safety responsibilities.

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