

What is a Children's Trust?



department for
children, schools and families

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This document explains what Children's Trusts are, what they do and how they will be strengthened.

1. The Children's Plan set out the Government's aim to make this the best place in the world to grow up. This means making sure that all children, wherever they live, whatever their background, whatever their age, have their needs met so that they are healthy; stay safe; enjoy life and achieve well at school and beyond; make a positive contribution to society; and achieve economic wellbeing. The role of each Children's Trust is to turn this vision into reality. In particular, Children's Trusts will play a central role in bringing together all the services needed to ensure all children are safeguarded. This document explains what Children's Trusts are, what they do and how they are being strengthened to ensure they can play that role effectively.

What are Children's Trusts?

2. Children's Trusts are local partnerships which bring together the organisations responsible for services for children, young people and families in a shared commitment to improving children's lives. It is local authorities – through their Directors of Children's Services and Lead Members for Children's Services – which lead Children's Trusts, but they work closely with the other local agencies with a legal duty to be part of the Trust: strategic health authorities, primary care trusts (PCTs),

police authorities, local probation boards, youth offending teams, Connexions partnerships, the Learning and Skills Council for England and district councils. We recommend that Children's Trusts also include other important local partners like schools, colleges and third sector organisations, as well as other local authority services like adult social care and housing.

3. The term "Children's Trust" applies to the whole system of children's services, covering the work of partner agencies at every level, from the development of the overall strategy to the delivery of front-line services. But Children's Trusts are not separate organisations in their own right. Each partner retains its own responsibilities, while working together to join up services.
4. Children's Trusts are managed in different ways. Most have formal Boards with representatives from all the partners (often including schools). Some – especially in larger authorities – are made up of a number of small local partnerships which



frequently link to clusters of schools, so that schools are linked into the wider services to support the wellbeing of all children.

In its first year, the Kent Children's Trust (KCT) tested a number of local partnership arrangements to find the best model for local planning and service delivery across the local authority area. As a result of their research, in September 2008 KCT set up 23 Local Children's Services Partnerships. Each partnership reports to KCT and works in a particular community. The Kent Children's Trust in turn reports to the Kent Partnership - the Local Strategic Partnership for Kent. The Local Children's Services Partnerships have been drawn up to put KCT's vision into action in their community. They aim to bring together all public and voluntary services, drawing on the strengths of all partners to assess need, make plans and provide services to improve the lives of local children, young people and their families.

What do Children's Trusts do?

- Children's Trusts develop the local strategy for improving children's lives by delivering better services, including their health and wellbeing. Different Children's Trusts work in different ways, depending on local circumstances. They focus on particular issues, like reducing under-achievement in early years or improving access to services for disabled children, and on new ways of working, like co-location of services and multi-agency "teams around the child". They promote strong joint planning and commissioning of services, especially by the local authority and the local primary care trust – which are at the heart of the Children's Trust.
- All Children's Trusts should focus on a number of key priorities – which should be informed by their Joint Strategic Needs Assessment and clearly set out in their Children & Young People's Plan – including:
 - identifying children and young people at risk of failure or harm, and intervening early to make sure children are safe and can thrive;
 - narrowing the gap – especially in educational attainment – between vulnerable children and young

people (like children in care) and others, while also improving the lives of all children; and

- reducing child poverty.

They should do this by:

- listening to the views of children and young people – as well as their parents and carers – about what services they need and what are available, and involving them (and their parents and carers) in delivering them;
- promoting joint working between all professionals working with children and young people;
- ensuring effective commissioning (ie planning and delivery) of services for children and young people – based on a robust analysis of their needs – and using resources flexibly and creatively (for instance by aligning or pooling budgets); and
- overcoming unnecessary barriers to sharing and using information.

Shropshire Children's Trust has set up five multi-agency teams across the county to identify children with additional needs and to provide the help they need. Each team is based at a school or community setting, and offers support to all the schools in their area. The team includes senior primary mental health workers, education welfare officers, and substance misuse practitioners. They can access support from other professionals, including school nurses, children's centre staff and the police. Through their work, members of the multi-agency teams gain a greater awareness of the support services available and build links with them. As a result, there is now evidence that children with additional needs gain access to the support they need more quickly and easily.

Strengthening Children's Trusts

- Since the publication of the *Every Child Matters* framework in 2003, Children's Trusts have made good progress in working together more closely to support children and young people and meet their needs. But we know we need to go further. Services are not always as joined up as they could be. In some places there is still too little emphasis on early intervention and prevention. Organisational barriers and competing priorities can still get in the way. Too few

schools in particular feel they are getting the specialist support they need.

8. That is why the Children's Plan commits the Government to strengthening Children's Trusts so that they deliver real, measurable improvements for all children and young people in every local area, and have in place by 2010 consistent high quality arrangements to identify all children who need additional help and intervene early to support them.
9. To deliver on the Children's Plan commitment – and following consultation – we have already revised the statutory guidance on Children's Trusts to clarify their current purpose and role. We also intend to legislate to:
 - extend the number of Children's Trust partners to include maintained schools, Academies, sixth form and further education colleges, and Job Centre Plus;
 - make the Children's Trust Board a statutory body, so that it can have specific functions; and
 - give the Board legal responsibility for producing and securing delivery of the Children & Young People's Plan (CYPP) – which describes how a Children's Trust will improve children's lives in a particular local area – so that it is "owned" by the full Children's Trust partnership.

Closer joint working

10. The strongest Children's Trusts already have clear joint working relationships with other services like health, schools, youth justice and the third sector. We recommend for instance that representatives from the local PCT with expertise in and accountability for children's health should sit on the Children's Trust Board. Extending the number of formal partners, making the Board statutory and



giving all Children's Trust partners ownership of the CYPP will strengthen these partnerships.

North East Lincolnshire Council and the Primary Care Trust have worked together closely to develop arrangements which have resulted in the Primary Care Trust becoming a "Care Trust Plus" and the children's community health services transferring to the Council as part of the Children's Trust. Joint teams have been developed which bring together the delivery of health, social care and education services. The council now has an integrated management team with joint posts that sit across both the Care Trust Plus and the Council - a key factor in developing this model successfully. The Children's Trust is headed by the Executive Director of Children's Services. Priorities are identified through the Children and Young People's Plan and monitored on a monthly basis by the Children's Trust performance board, which is made up of representatives from all partner agencies.

11. At the heart of the Children's Plan is the vision of a 21st century school – a school that achieves high standards, as well as supporting the wider development of all children and young people in their area. Schools cannot achieve this on their own, which is why we believe they should be part of the Children's Trust. We want schools to be able to exert real influence at the planning stage, and in turn to receive the services and support their children need.
12. Youth Offending Teams work closely with Children's Trusts, and youth justice services work closely with those who commission and provide services for children and young people. This helps to ensure that children in the youth justice system receive the support they need – and that young people who have offended or who are at risk of offending are not cut off from support just when they need an integrated service most.

Local Strategic Partnerships and Local Area Agreements

13. The Children's Trust sits within the wider Local Strategic Partnership. LSPs, which operate at local authority level, bring together the public, private, community and

voluntary sectors and are responsible for establishing a vision for an area and for agreeing priorities for improvement in the local area agreement (LAA). The Children's Trust is central to identifying and agreeing LAA targets that relate to children and young people. The LAA contains the targets and the Children and Young People's Plan sets out the strategy for achieving them, including the responsibilities of each partner. The PCT Operational Plan sets out the PCT's contribution.

Local Area Agreements set out local areas' improvement priorities. In drawing up its LAA, each area agrees with central Government what its key priorities are and what related targets should be set. The work of Barking & Dagenham's Children's Trust is closely tied in with its LAA. The Trust owns the local CYPP, which describes how the local partner organisations will work together to improve the lives of children and young people. When the LAA was drawn up, the Trust confirmed the top five priorities of the CYPP, which were subsequently included in the LAA. The Children's Trust leads the work to implement one of the LAA targets - increasing young people's participation in positive activities - and is a key partner for all other targets which relate to children and young people. As a result, the Barking & Dagenham Children's Trust has ensured that the LAA and CYPP have the same focus on improving the lives of all children, young people and families in the area.

14. Keeping children safe is the top priority for Children's Trusts – as it is for Government. Children's Trusts should therefore work closely with – and be clear how they relate to – the Local Safeguarding Children Board, which is responsible for co-ordinating work to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. The same applies to other local partnerships like the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership, which is responsible for co-ordinating work to reduce crime in the local area.

The challenge

15. So the challenge for all local agencies – local authorities, PCTs, schools, the police and others – is to work together to ensure that every child has his/her needs met in every

area of the country. This means the Children's Trust and its partner organisations:

- understanding – and acting on – the needs of all the children, young people and families in its area;
- knowing how to meet those needs, for instance by bringing together the right organisations and people (eg GPs and headteachers) and pooling or aligning resources;
- making sure that those working in front line services, including Sure Start children's centres, schools and community health teams, are receiving the support they need to help children and families;
- being publicly accountable to local families and communities for what is being achieved;
- and in doing so, always acting to put children's needs before organisational structures.

Where can I get more information and support?

16. Revised statutory guidance on Children's Trusts, guidance on the role of the local authority Lead Member for Children's Services and the Director of Children's Services, and guidance on the Children & Young People's Plan are available at www.everychildmatters.gov.uk.
17. There is also support available for improving children's services in each local area:
 - The new Centre for Excellence and Outcomes in Children and Young People's Services, launched in July 2008, will support Children's Trusts in improving outcomes for children, young people and their families by bringing together the best evidence of what works and building their capacity to apply the lessons to their local circumstances.
 - The new Commissioning Support Programme will provide Children's Trusts with help from the beginning of 2009 to address practical challenges on commissioning services for children and young people. This will be fully in line with the approach the Government is taking to children's health and well-being through the World Class Commissioning programme for the NHS.



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