

why?

Fact sheet 9

Why Children's Trusts?

What is a Children's Trust?

Children's Trusts exist to improve outcomes for all children and young people in a local area. Essentially, they are partnerships led by local authorities in order to commission, plan, fund and deliver children's services. They establish what services are being provided locally and what services are still needed in order to coherently address the needs of children and young people in the area. They cover all aspects of local services for children, from the development of the overall strategy to the delivery of front-line services.

Children's Trusts are not separate organisations in their own right and each partner retains its own responsibilities.

How do Children's Trusts fit with Every Child Matters?

Children's Trusts are the key instrument for improving the situation of children and young people across all five of the Every Child Matters outcomes - being healthy, staying safe, enjoying life and achieving at school and beyond, making a positive contribution to society and achieving economic well-being.

Who are the partners in a Children's Trust?

Local authorities, represented by the Director of Children's Services and the Lead Member for Children's Services, head Children's Trusts. Some agencies have a 'duty to cooperate' – to be an official partner of the Children's Trust – which is set out in law. These include strategic health authorities, primary care trusts (PCTs), police authorities, local probation boards, youth offending teams, Connexions partnerships and district councils.

The Children, Skills and Learning Bill going through Parliament during 2009 will extend the existing duty to cooperate to include all maintained schools, academies, FE and sixth-form colleges and Jobcentre Plus Centres. Government also recommends that Children's Trusts include other local partners such as voluntary and community sector organisations, although there is no statutory duty to do so.

How are Children's Trusts structured?

Different Children's Trusts work in different ways, depending on local circumstances. Most have a Board, and the Children, Skills and Learning Bill, if passed, will make it the law to have one. The Board has local responsibility for co-ordinating services, including producing a strategic Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP). It should ensure that the CYPP is consistent with the local strategic vision.

The Board should feed into the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) and engage with the other thematic partnerships of the LSP.

There will often be subgroups or working groups that feed into the thinking and decisions of the Children's Trust Board, for example an early years or youth offending group that brings together practitioners and decision makers from different agencies and sectors. These groups are often more concerned with the practical aspects of developing and improving services for particular children and young people.

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How do Children's Trusts work locally?

Children's Trusts develop the local strategy for delivering better services in order to improve the lives of children, young people and families. 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 that work holistically around the child. They should also promote strong joint planning and commissioning of services.

Local Strategic Partnership (LSP)

The Children's Trust is a thematic partnership within the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP), which is a non-statutory, multi-agency body that aims to bring public, voluntary, community and private sectors together at a local level. The Children's Trust, as part of the LSP, makes sure that children and young people's issues are fully integrated into those of the wider community. The Children's Trust should inform and influence the work of the LSP as it relates to children, young people and families.

Local Area Agreement (LAA)

The Children's Trust is central to identifying, agreeing and implementing priorities in the Local Area Agreement that relate to children and young people. The Children's Trust should identify and champion children and young people's interests as part of the process. The LAA contains the targets and the Children and Young People's Plan sets out the strategy for achieving those targets, including setting out the responsibilities of each partner.

Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB)

The Local Safeguarding Children Board is responsible for co-ordinating work to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. The Children's Trust should consult the LSCB on issues that affect how children are safeguarded. The LSCB must also be consulted during the development of the Children and Young People's Plan.

How can the VCS influence the decisions made by the Children's Trust?

In most cases there will be at least one voluntary and community sector (VCS) representative that sits on the Children's Trust Board and its subgroups. It is important to know who your representative is and how you can feed your voice and that of the children and young people who use your service into local decision making. If you do not know who your representative is, contact your council for voluntary services or voluntary action centre. You may also be able to ask the Director of Children's Services who represents the VCS on the Children's Trust and other strategic fora.

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