

Meeting:	<b>Overview and Scrutiny Committee</b>
Date:	<b>21st April 2009</b>
Subject:	<b>Children's Trust</b>
Responsible Officer:	<b>Paul Clark, Corporate Director of Children's Services</b>
Portfolio Holder:	<b>Councillor Christine Bednell, Portfolio Holder for Children's Services</b>
Exempt:	<b>No</b>
Enclosures:	<b>None</b>

## **Section 1 – Summary and Recommendations**

### **1.0 Introduction:**

This report sets out the key recommendations of a Children's Trust and the work in progress to deliver it.

**Recommendations** – Report for Information

**Reason for recommendation:** to inform Councillors of progress on this issue.

## **Section 2**

### **2.0 Report**

The Children's Trust enables and ensures agencies work together for the benefit of children and families in their area. In Harrow, the existing CYPSP, a successful organisation, will together with a Children's Trust board become the formal Children's Trust, which conducts needs assessment and ensures delivery of our priorities.

The CYPSP, hereafter called **The Harrow Children's Trust**, has a wide membership of approximately thirty persons. This group at the frontline embeds the Children's Plan in reality.

## 2.1 Children's Trust: key issues in the Government guidance:

- The local Children's Trust is the embodiment of the local partnership between all commissioners and current and potential providers of services for children, young people and their families. It exists to help make a reality of our commitment to make Britain the best place in the world for children to grow up; improving their prospects for the future and redressing inequalities between the most disadvantaged children and their peers.
- The Children's Trust is in part a planning body that informs commissioning decisions and ensures (through a range of sometimes agency-specific approaches) that front line services work together to improve outcomes. It is underpinned by the duties in section 10 (1) and (5) of the Children Act 2004 on local authorities and their 'relevant partners' to cooperate in the making of arrangements to improve well-being for local children. Well-being is defined as the five Every Child Matters outcomes: that all children should be healthy, stay safe, enjoy and achieve, make a positive contribution and enjoy economic well-being.
- In practise this means better integrated and outcome focused ways of working on a whole range of issues. These are some examples:
  - o Having a specialist early intervention and prevention service organised around a central hub which both enables information to be shared and acts as the central referral point for all children and young people identified as having additional needs.
  - o Having strategy in place to reduce child poverty which includes targeting the most marginalised families and, through local schools, raising aspirations and attainment of the whole family.
  - o Using a multi-agency team, working through the local Children's Centre, to address the needs of children underachieving at the Early Years Foundation Stage.

There are many variations but the aim is the same – to work across professional and agency boundaries to tackle complex problems proactively to make a real difference to the experience and life chances of children, young people and their families.

- Lord Laming's recent report, *The protection of Children in England: A progress report March 2009* (TSO) outlines specific arrangements for Children's Trusts and improvements in collaboration with regard to keeping children safe. This report recommends that the Children's Trust Board and the LSCB are not chaired by the same person.

## 3.0 Membership

The new Children's Trust Board will be made up of leaders at the highest level in our agencies. The Chief Executive of the Council, the Chief executive of the Primary Care Trust, the Borough Commander and the Chief executive of Harrow Association of Voluntary services. We also aspire to having young people represented.

## **4.0 A Children's Trust board**

The Children's Trust Board is the small group of most senior leaders that ensure the advice of the Trust is turned into effective spending (commissioning) decisions.

The board will meet only 3 times each year to:

- Agree the Children's plan and outline resource and spending plan.
- Review at mid-year point the progress and any adjustment to spend.
- End of year to sign off completed work and the process for next years priorities.

The government guidance sets this out as:

- The role of the Children's Trust Board is to put in place the five 'essential features' of the Children's Trust. This means:
  - o Developing and promulgating a child and family-centred, outcome-led vision for all children and young people via the CYPP, clearly informed by their views and those of their parents and the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment;
  - o Putting in place robust arrangements for inter-agency governance (through the Children's Trust Board);
  - o Developing integrated strategy; joint planning and commissioning; pooled and aligned budgets; and the Children and Young People's Plan;
  - o Supporting this via integrated processes; effective joint working sustained by a shared language and shared processes; and
  - o Developing and promoting integrated front line delivery organised around the child, young person or family rather than professional or institutional boundaries.
  - o Champion the needs of children as a priority at all times.
  - o Work together to support, enhance and empower local agencies to combine their resources where based on the evidence of local needs together agencies can have greater impact.

The formal terms of reference of the Children's Trust Board are to be finalised with the partner agencies, following the release of government guidance.

## **5.0 The Children's Trust: The emerging structure**

The Children's Trust will be made up of the Children's Trust Board and the Children and Young People Strategic Partnership.

The board will develop the commissioning element of the Children's Trust and the CYPSP will work to develop locally agreed priorities, the Children and Young People's plan and ensure effective multi-agency delivery and information sharing.

Together, this forms the infrastructure of the Children's Trust. This formal partnership system will report to the HSP as a thematic element of the HSP.

## **6.0 Options for political support:**

In order to achieve minimum disruption to the workload of politicians and to ensure best use of available time, the following principles can be applied;

- We need to ensure a proportionate and equitable balance of representation of agencies, so as not to overload one group with politicians and leave the remaining groups without support.
- We need to move swiftly to a fair and equitable decision so that they can be incorporated into our negotiations with partners as early as possible.
- We need to present a clear and visible democratic system.
- The input from politicians needs to be consistent with the governance arrangements of the new Children's Trust.

## **Children's' Trust Board and Voting**

The children's trust board will agree on final arrangements for voting as part of the multi-agency negotiations process. Membership of the Children's trust board will extend to Police, the Voluntary Sector and Children and young people, as well as the primary care trust and the Local Authority.

All joint commissioning arrangements will be supported by detailed legal agreements, so that any area of contention or dispute is eliminated before reaching the Board.

Board members will be prepared and briefed in advance of all meetings. This will help to anticipate disagreement, and allow for resolution in advance of the meeting.

The Board chair will lead the group to develop consensus about decisions and this will be successful in most cases.

In rare exceptions, where agencies are not in agreement, the status quo will remain. Agencies will not have authority to vote to spend others money without their agreement.

The portfolio holder, and the Director of Children's services will work with the representatives in dispute to negotiate an agreement.

This may include consultation with the Children and Young People Strategic partnership and /or creating a stakeholders group to support the decision-making.

### **Why Change is Needed**

Over the last two years there have been a number of government guidance documents.

Most recently following the 'Laming Review' government has stated it will produce further guidance in the 'Spring'.

### **The Harrow approach is to:**

- Build on existing strong partnership arrangements.
- Minimise meetings and bureaucracy and focus on clear support for the delivery of the Children's Plan (copy of the draft is an appendix).
- Involve portfolio holders in the Children's Trust – large multi-agency meeting (CYPSP)
  - Small Children's Trust Board
- Focus on practical delivery arrangements, e.g.:
  - Co-location of staff
  - Spending money in an aligned way
  - Agree priorities and combined action to deliver them
  - Consistent focus on outcomes for children

### **Resources**

All activity will be within existing resources. The trust is funded by all agencies contributing in cash, kind, staff and enthusiasm.

## **Section 3 - Contact Details and Background Papers**

**Contact:** Betty Lynch, Strategic Development Manager, 020 8424 1370  
[betty.lynch@harrow.gov.uk](mailto:betty.lynch@harrow.gov.uk)

Background Papers:

- Children's Trust Guidance
- Laming Report
- CYP Plan (draft)

If appropriate, does the report include the following considerations?

1.	Consultation	YES / NO
2.	Corporate Priorities	YES / NO