

London Children's Trusts: Community of Practice

On 19 November, SSRG facilitated a meeting of children's trust managers in London to exchange practice and identify ideas and solutions about moving children's partnerships forward in light of central government policy changes.

The meeting highlighted that partnership arrangements to support improving children's outcomes will continue and that there is strong commitment from councils and their partnerships to do so. This tends to be founded on the principle that the potential to achieve more in partnership than as single agencies should remain clear priority for the local authority as place-shaper and community leader in light of limited resources for all partners.

Given the pace of change where service provision will be promoted by central government as not being the major responsibility of the council, it was felt that partnership working through children's trusts was even more important to ensure that outcomes for children are maintained and improved

There will be different models in London with some councils continuing to pursue locality arrangements. Some partnerships may refocus themselves on early intervention, prevention and/or vulnerable children

With the requirement for the Children's Trust Board to produce a Children and Young People's Plan, there was a feeling that this is still vital as a tool to pull together children and family needs and the quality of life targets that the community and all organisations that support children work towards in the local area. This could now perform a community leader role which sets out the vision and outcomes for improvement. However, any strategy or plan about children was likely to be radically different from previous plans. The aim of the plan will, for some authorities, be to focus on children and families that partners are most concerned about and how to make changes together.

Issues raised about the purpose of future children's partnership arrangements, to be pursued, were:

- That this is an opportunity for flexibility
- There will need to be join-up with the new health and wellbeing boards
- There may be a role to look at the vulnerable and children most at risk of poor outcomes and to mitigate risks
- That child poverty should be an element of future children's partnership arrangements – it's all about children and families
- There may need to be further clarity about the focus of safeguarding children boards – has the scrutiny role that LSCBs were expected to have, worked? Is the focus on child protection or vulnerable children and families?
- That there are a number of duties to co-operate around children and families – local authority will need to be clear how these work with each other efficiently
- It is hoped that the Public Health White Paper helps to shape the interface between children and health and wellbeing. This was in recognition that children's wellbeing is legally defined as the five ECM outcomes but wellbeing from the perspective of health was less defined.
- If the children's trust/partnership focused on vulnerable families, would this duplicate the role of safeguarding children boards where they also have one eye on this group. For example, children whose parents are substance mis-users and whose life chances are at risk

For future consideration:

- Defining and being clear about the 'vulnerable' / 'at risk' population of children and families. This used to be tackled by the former CYPSPs (2001 – 2004 structures around partnership and planning for vulnerable children, under the direction of the Department of Health)
- What would be an exemplar CYPP/Children's/Partnership Strategy?
- Partnerships with and between schools – how to engage schools in the new world against the backdrop of the push from central government to be more independent from the local authority
- The local authority as a catalyst for change in the area e.g. highlighting children's outcomes that are of concern to the whole community, facilitating new forms of service delivery
- Potential duplication between health and wellbeing boards, safeguarding children boards and children's partnerships – this could affect the involvement of universal / new commissioners on the block e.g. GPs and schools
- Involving the 'Big Society' – how can children's partnerships facilitate these?
- Making schools aware and building their capacity to be effective commissioners
- Although most authorities are committed to continuing with partnership arrangements, there may be less thought given to how these will be supported and maintained. There is a slight anxiety around losing the

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