

Cabinet – 21 March 2007

Progress in implementing Walsall's Children's Trust arrangements

Portfolio: Councillor Zahid Ali, Children's services

Service: Children's Services

Wards: All

Key decisions: Yes

Forward plan: Yes

Summary of report

Walsall's Children's Trust is our response to the government's policy to improve children's services at a local level. The Children's Trust is one of 17 local projects, being delivered under the Change for Children programme, designed to encourage services to join up their thinking and the way in which services are delivered.

Walsall established children's Trust arrangements in 2005 and since this time has developed a number of partnership arrangements across the borough based on a multi-disciplinary/multi-agency approach. However, we have prioritised the area of joint commissioning and have established a team which signals our intention to move towards more formal arrangements for joint planning, joint commissioning and joint governance arrangements across the Children's Trust Partnership Board.

Recommendations

That Cabinet note progress made towards establishing Children's Trust arrangements in Walsall.

Resource and legal considerations

The developments in joint commissioning and partnership working are designed to deliver cost effective services which meet children's needs and improve outcomes. The developments will meet the requirements of the Children Act in relation to the Children's Trust arrangements in Walsall.

Citizen impact

The implication of 'Change for Children' will contribute to all five outcomes of Every Child Matters for the children and young people and their families in Walsall. Service delivery will have a key focus on local areas and key stakeholders in local areas, such as LNPs, Schools, etc will be an important part of the programme.

Community safety

The 'Change for Children' programme is designed to improve the contribution and achievements and safety of children, young people and their families in Walsall and so will improve wider community safety.

Environmental impact

The implication of 'Change for Children' will supplement current progress on neighbourhood needs analysis and contribute towards the wider regeneration of Walsall's environment.

Performance and risk management issues

Walsall children's trust arrangements adopt the corporate project methodology and include the appropriate risk management.

Equality implications

'Change for Children', including the Joint Commissioning team, will lead to recommendations and developments that will impact directly on the health, social care and learning of children and young people and their families in Walsall. There is a focus to improve life chances of vulnerable groups and areas of recognised disadvantage.

Consultation

The Children's Trust Commissioning Team will be developing a strategy which ensures the engagement of children and young people, key stakeholders and partners in the preferred models for service commissioning and delivery.

Vision 2008

The report supports the Council vision to ensure children are safe and secure, that Walsall is a healthy and caring place that we listen to what children and young people want and encourage people to feel proud of Walsall. It also supports actions detailed in the Children and Young People's Plan.

Background papers

Children and Young People's Plan, April 2006.

Transforming Children's Services in Walsall, August 2006

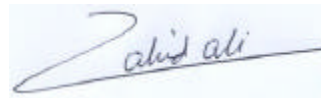
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David Brown
Executive Director

12 March 2007



Councillor Zahid Ali
Portfolio holder

12 March 2007

1. Background

- 1.1 Children's Trusts arrangements have been established in Walsall since 2005, and have significantly contributed towards the improvement of outcomes for Walsall children. The trust describes the partnership arrangements which support integration of service planning and delivery as part of the 'Every Child Matters' change for children programme. We are now in the second stage of Trust development, designed to ensure that the policies, procedures and working practices support integrated service delivery and that Children Services meet the requirements in advance of the JAR due in 2008.
- 1.2 We are currently working with partners to facilitate the establishment of the key functions which will form the hub of a Joint Commissioning Team within Children's Trust arrangements.
- 1.3 This team and the associated work programme described below, is being developed as one of the 17 projects being delivered as part of Walsall's Change for Children Programme. They are:
- Joint Needs Assessment and Information Analysis Function
 - A Joint Commissioning Function underpinned by a joint strategy
 - Co-ordinating the review and production of the Children and Young People's Plan
 - Ensuring governance arrangements are 'fit for purpose'
 - The establishment of a partnership Performance Management Framework
 - A quality Consultation/Participation strategy in line with the 'Hear by right' standard to be delivered across the partnership.

2. Joint needs assessment and analysis function

- 2.1 The partnership has secured short term resources from WBSP to support the creation of a post within the Children's Trust to lead on the development and implementation of a comprehensive needs assessment/analysis for all children and young people's services. This is a key role within the Joint Commissioning Team as it will underpin much of the work relating to direct commissioning and procurement of children's services.
- 2.2 We will ensure the work programme is built on the priorities of the Children's Trust Partnership Board, taking into consideration work which is current, to avoid duplication, and to respond to gaps in information based upon an identification of need.
- 2.3 The needs analysis will inform the review of our Children and Young Peoples Plan as required by Ofsted in the annual performance assessment.
- 2.4 There is an intention to collaborate closely with partners and we have secured ongoing commitment from the WBSP in relation to the Shared Partnership Information Resource (SPIR). We also have a commitment from our colleagues within the tPCT via the public health function and from Education Walsall in driving this resource as a means of providing a single source of information on which decisions relating to the needs of children and young people, particularly

our most vulnerable, can better inform our decision making processes and prioritisation.

3. Joint Commissioning function

- 3.1 In order to deliver integrated planning and strategy there is an expectation that a commissioning approach will be adopted by the Children's Trust and that commissioning of services will be undertaken jointly and be supported by aligned and pooled budgets where appropriate and where they can demonstrate better outcomes for children. The Children Act 2004 contains enabling provision to support this approach.
- 3.2 Key senior managers will lead the development of this work supported by Directors from across the Partnership including Education Walsall, the Primary Care Trust and the Voluntary and Community Sector.
- 3.3 In scoping the initial approach, we will be exploring best practice including that already taken across the partnership in Walsall and developing test sites across the borough.
- 3.4 The commissioning strategy will enrich the procurement and delivery of services by ensuring alignment of both mainstream budgets and grants to strategic objectives and set a robust framework for the partners. This will establish a change in the relationship between those who are specifying and commissioning services and those who will be delivering on their behalf, based around the concept of 'evidence based' commissioning.

4. Coordinating the review and production of the Children and Young People's Plan – (Support role)

- 4.1 Although still in draft, the Ofsted guidance signalled major changes to the APA process and JAR content and methodology. Whilst not all the guidance has yet been published the key changes focus upon the review of the Children and Young People's plan which will now be developed as part of an enhanced and formal review process outlined within the amended guidance from the 2007 APA process.
- 4.2 The Children's Trust Commissioning Team will provide support to senior managers and Directors across the partnership to bringing the plan to fruition.
- 4.3 A project plan will be developed which captures the partnerships view and options for taking this work forward. This document will outline the common understanding of the tasks ahead and will include a critical path analysis which highlights key milestones for delivering against an agreed timeframe.

5. Integrated Governance Arrangements

- 5.1 The published guidance for the development of Children's Trust arrangements indicates a need for the partnership to implement robust Governance arrangements. In order to develop such structures, it will be important to establish the extent to which the new 'Trust' engages citizens, users and other

stakeholders in delivering services and securing better outcomes for children, young people and their families.

5.2 It will also be important for the partners to examine and understand the relationship which exists between them, the lines of accountability which ensures that our services are safe, identify good practice and its transferability between organisations.

5.3 The Children's Trust Commissioning Team will be supporting partners in progressing this area of work, and in particular, to promote the overall relationship between governance and strengthened evidence of what engagement practice works best in what situations.

6. Joint Performance Management Framework

6.1 In order to be able to fulfil its aim of improving outcomes for children and young people, Children's Trust will be working closely with corporate Quality and Performance team to develop and implement processes and methodologies that will allow the identification of the needs and the gaps, the establishment of targets and objectives, the identification of outcomes and when necessary the identification of corrective actions to improve these outcomes.

7. Consultation and Participation

7.1 The involvement of children and young people is central to all that we do. This means that we will be working with partners to create meaningful opportunities for children and young people to become involved, in our decision making processes and to feed their wishes and feelings into service planning and delivery. The Participation Charter which is based upon how children and young people want to be consulted/involved and the 'Hear by Right' standards, the Consultation data base and diary and the Annual Lifestyle Survey will all contribute to children and young people's involvement.