

## **CHILDREN'S TRUST CONFERENCE – NOVEMBER 2008**

### **Introduction**

The aim of the Children's Trust Conference was to engage Children's Trust partners and stakeholders in early planning for the preparation of the CYPP 09/10 and the CYPP 15 year strategy 2010-2025. Attendees at the conference included:

- Head teachers/teachers
- Governors
- Children's Trust members
- Children's trust strategic partnership
- CSELT
- Children's services staff and the
- Voluntary sector.

In total 127 people attended the conference, which was held at the Stadium of Light. Delegates listened to presentations from keynote speakers, Dr Helen Patterson Director of Children's Services, Cllr Pat Smith Portfolio Holder for Children's Services as well as Colin Pettigrew, Government Office North East. The conference closed with an interactive display from John Kilcoyne and Jeff Teasdale from Sunderland University entitled 'Science is fun', which was well received by attendees.

The conference consisted of two workshops, which were designed as opportunities for stakeholders to contribute to the preparation of the 15-year commissioning strategy. The outcomes of the workshops were presented at the end of the conference.

### **Background to the 15 year commissioning strategy**

As from April 2006 all local authorities were required to prepare and publish a Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP). The plan is a strategic document, planning the coordination and development of services to deliver and improve outcomes for children.

The CYPP 2007-09 comes to an end on 31 March 2009. A new plan will need to be prepared by Children's Services in partnership with Children's Trust stakeholders. This is an opportunity to fundamentally review the purpose, scale and duration of the plan.

The Children's Trust plans to take a long term approach to city-wide planning, through a 15 year commissioning strategy for children and young people. This will take the CYPP to 2025, with a series of delivery plans for all partners. The 15-year commissioning strategy will be in place by April 2010 and will be closely aligned with the 2025 Sunderland Strategy published earlier this year.

Between April 2009 and March 2010 a year long CYPP will be implemented. This will include:

- Outstanding actions from 2006/9 plan
- Review of measurable outcomes from 2008/9
- Priorities and recommendations from partnerships aligned to the Children's Trust

Throughout 2009, the 15 year Strategy will be developed. Consideration will be given to

- how the 2010-2025 CYPP can become a commissioning and (decommissioning) strategy for the Children's Trust
- A review of current Children's Trust arrangements and aligned partnerships
- Making clearer linkages with the Local Strategic Partnership

## Key findings

### Workshop one Task 1

**Workshops were asked to identify 3 quick wins to obtaining more effective support from another agency.**

A recurring theme within this task appeared to be the need for an **accessible directory of services** to ensure direct access to up to date contact information. Professionals stressed quick access to appropriate services would assist early intervention and promote awareness raising of available services.

Workshop one identified a need for all agencies to have more **flexible working hours** as at times there is a need for things to happen out of hours and at a more suitable time for both customers and professionals.

The workshops also identified a need for **clearer access to funding**, as at present there appears to be an over-complicated process and suggested more flexibility in the use of existing funding.

Workshops identified themes around ways of working as well as involving communities. There were numerous suggestions from having **services based in localities**, which would enable services to 'come to children', to ensuring professionals understand the communities in which they work as well as involving communities in the services we provide.

Task one identified a need to **work closely with schools** to ensure consistency of practice as well as ensuring the climate within **schools is inclusive of working with professionals**.

Professionals were eager to **involve children and young people** in existing services more effectively as well as service planning. Suggestions were made around **advocacy** for children as well as listening to and trusting young people's views.

### Workshop one Task 2

**Workshops were asked to identify three big issues, which professionals believed needed addressing in order to improve outcomes for children and young people.**

A common theme throughout each group's big issues, was the **perception of young people's behaviour and the media responsibility** around this. Professionals believed there is a need to publish 'good news stories' and promote the positive achievements of young people. The perception of young people needs to change in order for young people to feel supported and believed in.

Key words from workshop two were, **aspirations, expectations and opportunities**.

- It was agreed all children have **aspirations** and we need to work with parents and partner agencies to focus on helping children achieve their aspirations. Achievement needs to be measured in the widest sense possible not just academic.
- Workshops identified a need to establish children's **expectations** around employment as well as raising children and families' expectations of the city.
- Children and young people should be offered more **opportunities** around activities and places to meet incorporating a wide variety of needs and wants. Professionals believe there is a lack of opportunities for children and families to do things together as well as an imbalance of facilities for children and young people across the city.

Again professionals believed **involving children and young people** within this process was essential. In asking for children and young people's opinions and listening to what they want we can begin to ensure the right opportunities are available and children strive to have higher expectations. Professionals recognised the need to have more affordable services in place and ensuring services are more child and family focussed.

Poverty and deprivation were also identified as areas to tackle in order to improve outcomes for children and young people, as it was recognised poverty cuts across all the issues. Professionals believe the impact of the 'credit crunch' will need to be considered as well as establishing a definition for poverty to alert professionals to visible signs.

### Workshop two Task 3

**Workshops were asked to identify one thing the Children's Trust could do to help professionals who work with Children and Young People tackle the three big issues identified above.**

Numerous suggestions were made including

- **Creating a media officer to promote children's achievements** on the Children's Trust Board; which reflects the big issue around perception of young peoples' behaviour and the need to promote 'good news stories'.
- Another suggestion was to encourage a **flexible approach amongst the workforce to empower children and young people to achieve**, through a range of opportunities to achieve and succeed. All partners at all levels should be responsible for achieving this. This again reflects the big issue around opportunities, aspirations and expectations and the need to involve children and young people in order to successfully raise the levels of all three.
- Echoing further the big issues around aspirations and expectations an outcome from workshop two was to **tackle youth unemployment**. The workshop felt by providing modern apprenticeships and work experience this will enable the expectations and aspirations of young people to be improved.
- Feedback from this task also included the **Children's Trust having a greater openness and accountability** to the people it serves.
- Communication was a factor within this task with workshops suggesting more **information sharing meetings** to take place as well as the need to embed information sharing.

## Workshop two Task 4

### **Workshops were asked to identify their top three requirements for an effective Children's Trust.**

There were recurring themes throughout each workshop.

These were:

- **Vision** - having shared vision and objectives
- **Impact** - being clear as to the impact the plan will have on children and families
- **Membership** - having the right people from the right organisation at the right level
- **Measurable** - having a measurable plan including timescales for delivery
- **Accountability** - clear accountability lines and mechanisms for reporting to and influencing other partners.

### **Evaluation/feedback**

A total of 95 evaluation forms were completed by delegates and feedback around the workshops included:

- "Workshops extremely beneficial to me. The issues identified were of a common theme. Most of our group had similar thoughts and problems."
- "The opportunity to contribute in small groups was very well planned and valuable."
- 90% of respondents thought that the 'Big issues and quick wins' workshop was very good or good and 87% of respondents thought that 'The Children's Trust – shaping the future' workshop was very good or good.

### **Suggestions for improvements/future workshops**

The following suggestions were received: -

- More detail on Children's Trust would be very helpful and informative
- It would have been helpful to get information in advance of conference
- Wider involvement of practitioners
- It would be helpful to know in advance the topics of the workshops
- Questions which were asked during workshop sessions should have been given in advance to achieve the best outcomes, i.e. delegates consulting with colleagues in schools etc
- Discussion around the opportunities around funding i.e. pooling of budgets
- Extending invitation to 'grass level' operational staff
- Follow on from the success of 'science is fun' to end the conference

Comments were received around the event as a whole and included:

- "Excellent chance to realise common themes exist no matter which agency from and which targets attempting to reach."
- "Very clear that all at conference were there in a partnership capacity and we all want to achieve the best for the city."
- "Insufficient information available prior to conference and this does not filter down to 'grass roots' workers."
- "The Science is fun session at the end was a master stroke – you will certainly remember this conference."

See appendix for more detailed information.

## APPENDIX

# CHILDREN'S TRUST CONFERENCE

**Children and Young People's Plan – 2009 onwards  
Tuesday 18 November 2008**

**Feedback from evaluation sheets**

### 1. Attendance

Total number attending the event: 127

Headteachers/teachers:	35	
Governors:	7	
Members:	4	
Children's Trust:	9	
C T Strategic Partnership:	16	
CSELT		16
Vol Sector	14	
C S Staff	16	
Other/unknown	26	

36 non-attendance

### 2. Feedback on sessions

A total of 95 evaluation forms were completed by delegates.

#### **Opening Address – Dr Helen Paterson**

85% of respondents felt that the opening address was very good or good, 13% thought it was average and the remaining 2% did not answer the question.

#### **Keynote Address – Cllr Pat Smith**

90% of respondents thought that the keynote address was very good or good, 8% thought it was average and the remaining 2% did not answer the question.

#### **A child friendly city for 2025 - messages from children and young people**

86% of respondents found this session to be very good or good, 7% thought it was average and the remaining 7% did not answer the question.

#### **Keynote Address – Colin Pettigrew**

72% of respondents found this session to be very good or good, 23% thought it was average and the remaining 5% thought it poor.

### **Performance by ‘Science is Fun’ – John Kilcoyne and Jeff Teasdale**

96% of respondents found the entertainment very good, 2% found it good and 2% did not answer the question.

The following comments were made:-

“We need to get the structures and accountability sorted.”

“A forward looking or celebratory feel about today – thanks!”

“Insufficient information available prior to conference and this does not filter down to ‘grass roots’ workers.”

“Very focussed, interesting and informative – scientists fab!”

“Excellent chance to realise common themes exist no matter which agency from and which targets attempting to reach.”

“A very interesting and informative conference with many points to reflect on.”

“Great to have time to think with others.”

“A great conference: new contacts, shared views and some new ideas for the future!”

“Very clear that all at conference were there in a partnership capacity and we all want to achieve the best for the city.”

“Performance by Science is fun was a really good way of ending conference and thinks about ‘risks’ and ‘progress’.”

“The Science is fun session at the end was a master stroke – you will certainly remember this conference.”

### **3. Comments on sessions**

### **4. Feedback on workshops**

90% of respondents thought that the ‘Big issues and quick wins’ workshop was very good or good, 6% thought it was average and 4% thought it was poor or had not answered.

87% of respondents thought that ‘The Children’s Trust – shaping the future’ workshop was very good or good, 7% thought it was average and 6% thought it was poor or had not answered.

The following comments were also made:-

"I really enjoyed the workshops – there needs to be more of this if people are going to really 'own' the plans."

"Workshops extremely beneficial to me. The issues identified were of a common theme. Most of our group had similar thoughts and problems."

"The opportunity to contribute in small groups was very well planned and valuable."

"When in small groups, not enough discussion about selecting priorities. Felt it was down to facilitator's choice. Very useful non the less."

## **5. The event**

Feedback from the evaluation forms showed that:

### **Vision and values of the Children's Trust**

81% did not respond but of those that did 18% thought that the visions and values of the Children's Trust were evident throughout the day and 1% did not.

### **General organisation**

76% of respondents thought that the general organisation of the conference was very good or good, 5% thought it was average and the remaining 19% did not answer the question.

### **Venue**

81% of respondents felt that the venue was either very good or good, 2% thought it was average and the remaining 17% did not answer.

### **Helpfulness of staff**

79% of respondents felt that the helpfulness of staff was very good or good, 2% thought it was average and the remaining 19% didn't complete the question.

### **Catering**

57% of respondents thought that the catering was either very good or good, a further 13% found the catering to be average, 1% thought it poor and the remaining 29% didn't comment.

### **Delegate pack information**

80% thought that the quality of the pack was very good or good, 2% thought it was average, 1% thought it poor and the remaining 17% did not answer the question.

### **Overall rating**

Of those who submitted an evaluation sheet, 66% rated the event very good or good, 1% rated the event as average and the remaining 33% didn't complete the question.

## **6. Suggestions for improvements/future workshops**

The following suggestions were received:-

- Budget allocations will be part of this process. Look at pooled opportunities
- More detail on Children's Trust would be very helpful and informative
- It would have been helpful to get information in advance of conference
- Wider involvement of practitioners
- It would be helpful to know in advance the topics of the workshops
- Questions which were asked during workshop sessions should have been given in advance to achieve the best outcomes, ie delegates consulting with colleagues in schools etc
- More science please!