

WIRRAL CHILDREN'S TRUST BOARD 24th SEPTEMBER 2010

PROPOSED GOVERNMENT CHANGES FOR CHILDREN'S TRUSTS

1.0 Background

In July 2010 The Secretary of State has indicated that he proposes to amend the current legislation regarding Children's Trusts in the Education Bill which will be published in the autumn. The Children's Trust Board has discussed the proposed changes at a previous meeting where consensus was that Wirral Children's Trust arrangements were valuable in promoting and developing partnership working, shared planning and priorities and outcomes for children, young people and families. This report seeks to formalise the future arrangements for Wirral Children's Trust.

2.0 Introduction

Children's trusts are local partnership arrangements to improve children's well-being through the five Every Child Matters outcomes. They are not defined in legislation but are underpinned by a 'duty to co-operate' in section 10 of the Children Act 2004. The Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009 amended section 10 by bringing schools, colleges and Jobcentre Plus under the duty to co-operate and requiring all local areas to have a children's trust board. This Board has a duty to prepare and publish a jointly owned Children and Young People's Plan by April 2011.

3.0 The Proposals

The Secretary of State has indicated that he proposes to:

- remove the duty on schools to co-operate through Children's Trusts via the forthcoming Education Bill;
- remove the requirement on local authorities to set up Children's Trust Boards and the requirement on those Boards to prepare and publish a joint Children and Young People's Plan, at the first available legislative opportunity;
- revoke the regulations underpinning the Children and Young People's Plan and withdraw the statutory guidance on Children's Trusts, in the autumn.

The government suggests that this does not mean Children's Trust partnerships are no longer a priority but that it supports effective local partnerships and is freeing them to address local issues with innovative solutions. The basic duty to co-operate will continue but the list of statutory partners will be reviewed. The government will introduce legislation to remove the duty to co-operate from schools, revoke the regulations and withdraw the guidance in the autumn. The other proposed legislative changes to children's trusts will follow as soon as possible.

There has been a national response to the announcement led by the Association of Directors of Children's Services (ADCS). They are urging schools to continue taking part in local children's trust arrangements, despite government plans to remove their statutory duty to co-operate. Schools play a key role in the lives of children and young people, and children's ability to learn is affected by their lives outside schools and their wider needs.

The view is that it is vital that schools are represented at the strategic table when decisions are made about services for children in the area. The ADCS outlined that in many areas children's trust arrangements are working well and will continue to do so after these changes. In addition the ADCS noted that the legislation underpinning children's trusts and children and young people's plans has helped agencies work together towards local priorities. Planning together helps partners to allocate their resources more effectively through shared understanding of costs and benefits which is of great benefit in difficult financial times.

4.0 Recommendations:

- 4.1 That Wirral Children's Trust Board recommends the continuation of Wirral Children's Trust arrangements in its current form.
- 4.2 That Wirral Children's Trust Board approves the continuation of the involvement of schools in Children's Trust arrangements and requests that the Director of Children's Services in collaboration with the school representative Board members communicate with schools regarding their continued participation.

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