



Nottinghamshire Children's Trust

BRIEFING: The role of the Director of Children's Services regarding the Nottinghamshire Children's Trust and the Nottinghamshire Safeguarding Children's Board

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This briefing provides an overview of the role of the Nottinghamshire County Council (the Council) Director of Children's Services (DCS) regarding Nottinghamshire's Children's Trust and the Nottinghamshire Safeguarding Children Board (NSCB).

2. Legislative Background

- 2.1 The Children Act (2004) required the establishment of a single, strategic body responsible for ensuring all services co-operate to improve the well-being of local children and young people. Nottinghamshire Children's Trust fulfils this requirement. This statutory requirement has been further reinforced by subsequent guidance such as "Children's Trusts: Statutory Guidance on inter-agency cooperation to improve the well-being of children, young people and their families" (DCSF, 2008) and "The Roles and Responsibilities of the Lead Member for Children's Services and the Director of Children's Services" (DCSF, 2009).
- 2.2 Local Safeguarding Children Boards were also established by the Children Act (2004) to (a) co-ordinate what is done by each person or body represented on the Board for the purposes of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of the children in the Council's area and (b) ensure the effectiveness of what is done by each such person or body for that purpose.
- 2.3 "Working Together" (2006) describes the requirement for Local Safeguarding Children Boards and Children's Trusts to develop and implement an ongoing and direct relationship in order to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. This requirement has also been further reinforced by the guidance mentioned in paragraph 2.1 above, along with "The protection of children in England: A Progress Report, Laming" (March 2009).

3. Relationship between Nottinghamshire Children's Trust and NSCB

- 3.1 The functions of the Children's Trust and NSCB include responsibility and accountability for keeping children and young people safe. Whilst their roles in this regard are complementary, they are also distinct.
- 3.2 The Children's Trust is responsible for the improvement of outcomes across all aspects of children and young people's lives and for the overarching framework for the delivery of these improved outcomes.
- 3.3 The NSCB has a specific role to ensure the Children's Trust pays due regard to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children. A major aspect of the NSCB's function is to challenge and scrutinise individual agencies of the Children's Trust (as well as the partnership as a whole) to ensure they are meeting this requirement effectively and in a co-ordinated way. The Children's Trust has a challenge and

scrutiny role towards the NSCB including, for example, its scrutiny of the annual report of the NSCB.

3.4 Therefore, although the NSCB must operate within the framework of the Children's Trust, it must also maintain a separate identity and independent voice to ensure this relationship of mutual challenge can be implemented effectively.

4. Role of the Director of Children's Services

4.1 The role of the Director of Children's Services regarding the Children's Trust and NSCB is set out in "The Roles and Responsibilities of the Lead Member for Children's Services and the Director of Children's Services" (DCSF, 2009) and is summarised below. The role is reinforced by "The protection of children in England: action plan. The Government's response to Lord Laming" (DCSF, 2009).

4.2 With regard to the Children's Trust, the guidance identifies the following role for the Director of Children's Services (DCS). They should:

- provide leadership to
 - promote the importance of improving outcomes for all children and young people and narrowing the gaps for those in disadvantaged groups throughout the local authority's services and activities
 - encourage all services to contribute to improving outcomes for all children and narrowing gaps within the Children's Trust and other partnerships, such as the Local Strategic Partnership
 - work with local head teachers collectively to drive up standards in schools and ensure that they work together and with others to improve children's well-being
- champion children, young people and their families within the local area, in particular through
 - driving joint working with and between bodies which commission, provide or have an interest in services affecting local children, young people and families
 - interacting with and supporting local schools and encouraging them to play their full part as relevant partners of the Children's Trust¹ and to work productively with other services
 - maintaining strategic oversight of the production and publication of the Children and Young People's Plan
 - holding the Children's Trust Board members to account for the implementation of the Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP), including in particular delivery of the relevant targets within the Local Area Agreement and the statutory DCSF targets
 - ensuring that the annual report on the CYPP is published and that appropriate action is taken to revise the plan
 - ensuring services are available for all children within the local authority area, including those attending all types of early years settings or schools (including independent schools), unaccompanied asylum-seeking children and other vulnerable children and young people

¹ This is subject to Parliamentary approval; the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Bill is expected to receive Royal Assent in autumn 2009.

- manage the local authority's children's services with professional responsibility and accountability for their effectiveness, availability and value for money. In particular
 - securing a high quality and appropriately skilled and supported multi-professional children and young people's workforce with adequate resources committed
 - providing all members of the workforce, including social workers, with strong support, focusing on:
 - improving retention and recruitment
 - enhancing and maintaining morale
 - helping staff cope with the emotional stress of their jobs
 - delivering good systems for line management, appraisal, supervision, career development and continuous professional development
- ensure there are effective arrangements for school improvement in the area, for instance by
 - performance managing school improvement partners and arranging good quality training for them
 - setting challenging but achievable targets for schools
 - ensuring a clear and costed menu of support for school improvement
 - using powers to address underperformance quickly, including:
 - warning notices
 - structural improvement models, the creation of Interim Executive Boards and other alternative governance arrangements and
 - where necessary, school closures
- ensure effective delivery of the Council's responsibilities for 14-19 commissioning and provision, and all aspects of 16-19 provision
- promote early intervention and prevention in delivering services for children, young people and families
- emphasise and ensure all plans and strategies reflect the importance of reducing child poverty in the local area.

4.3 With regard to the Children's Trust and its relationship with NSCB, the DCS should:

- safeguard and promote the welfare of children, in particular by
 - safeguarding and promoting the safety and welfare of all children, especially looked after children, across all agencies
 - engaging effectively as a member of the NSCB
 - considering data on child protection and information emerging from the NSCB and regularly reviewing all points of referral where concerns about a child's safety or welfare are received
 - ensuring appropriate local authority services engage effectively with the NSCB
- support looked after children, in particular by
 - promoting strong corporate parenting
 - focusing on improving their outcomes, including health and educational attainment
 - engaging with other local agencies who share the corporate parenting responsibility through the Children's Trust Board to ensure looked after children are given the support they need.

The DCS is accountable for ensuring that work undertaken by the Council and its partners to safeguard and promote children's welfare is operating effectively.

As a member of the Children's Trust Board (CTB), the DCS will have a clear leadership role in responding to the NSCB annual report and in brokering negotiations with other CTB members to reflect within the Children and Young People's Plan the priorities identified by the NSCB.

4.4 Along with the Lead Member, the DCS must:

- lead and facilitate local partnership arrangements, including information sharing databases and the Local Safeguarding Children Board
- ensure everyone in the Council and each of the Children's Trust partners is aware of their shared responsibility for improving outcomes for looked after children and ensure the Council fulfils its responsibilities for children for which it is corporate parent
- work with the Lead Member to act as corporate parent for looked after children.

Note on context of this briefing:

1. This briefing is one of a set of four that provide an overview of the roles of the

- Council Leader
- Lead Member for children and young people
- Council Chief Executive

Therefore, the role of the Director of Children's Services is set within the context of the roles of the above.

2. This briefing has been produced prior to the publication of the Apprenticeship, Skills, Children and Learning Act, expected in autumn 2009 and may be subject to subsequent amendment.

3. This briefing has been produced by the Nottinghamshire Children's Trust and NSCB during the development of a protocol to establish an effective communication and relationship between Nottinghamshire's Children's Trust and NSCB. The protocol will outline processes to ensure the role of the Director of Children's Services with regard to the Children's Trust and NSCB is fully operationalised.