

A guide to engaging with workforce development strategic work at a local level

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Introduction

This guide is for local infrastructure organisations e.g. Councils for Voluntary Youth Services (CVYSSs), Councils for Voluntary Services (CVSSs) and Voluntary Youth Organisation Networks (VYONs). It provides tips on how to engage effectively with your local Children's Trust in order to represent the sector in strategic work in relation to workforce development. If you are new to this area of work, this guide will be a valuable introduction to the role of children's trusts and the work that should be taking place to meet the needs of the third sector's children, young people and families' workforce at a local level. The guide signposts the reader to further sources of information.

Background - the workforce development agenda locally

What are Children's Trusts?

Children's Trusts are local-area partnership arrangements for bringing together all services from key agencies for children, young people and families' and are key to delivery of the *Every Child Matters* agenda released by Government following the death of Victoria Climbié.

The Government expects Children's Trusts to be led by local authorities as this is where responsibility for some key statutory duties relating to children lie. The *Every Child Matters* web site states the essential features of a Children's Trusts are:

- Outcome-led vision - a focus on improved outcomes, informed by the views of children and their families;
- Integrated front-line delivery - professionals working together around the needs of children, not constrained by organisational boundaries;
- Integrated processes - better assessments, information sharing and improved referrals mean children get the services they need quickly;
- Integrated strategy - joint commissioning of services and pooling of budgets and resources to drive multi-agency working; and
- Inter-agency governance - setting a clear framework for strategic planning, resource allocation, and accountabilities.

Local authorities may choose not to call this partnership arrangement a 'Children's Trust' – it may be called a number of different things such as: Children and Young People's Trust Board, Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership or a Family and Children's Trust.

Engaging the voluntary sector

Children's Trusts are expected by government to deliver the *Every Child Matters Change for Children Programme* in conjunction with partners including the voluntary and community sector.

The voluntary and community sector (VCS) is different from the statutory sector, which provides those services that must be provided by law e.g. social services, health care, schools. It is recognised the VCS is often well-placed to deliver many services on behalf of local and national government. One reason is because of its independence and roots in the community; many small local children's and youth organisations are able to access 'harder to reach' or vulnerable young people or those from more socially-excluded communities. The VCS may also provide examples of innovation and new and creative practices; help provide a voice for children and young people and potentially bring vast experience and expertise in their service areas to local planning of integrated services.

Effective partnership working between the VCS and statutory sector is vital and commitment to engaging the VCS has to be meaningful. Unfortunately, we hear too many cases of Children's Trusts playing lip-service to the involvement of the VCS, almost just 'ticking the box' when the sector is represented at meetings and not truly involving them in decision making or strategic development. An interesting research report to read is the one published by the National Association for Voluntary and Community Action (NAVCA) – *Frontline Hopscotch – VCS engagement in delivering change for children: a jumpy start or a step back?*. Order details are within the further information section at the end of the guide.

Guides to partnership working:

The *Every Child Matters (ECM)* series of documents (2004-2005) provide guidance on working together with the voluntary and community sector (VCS) at a local level within a Children's Trust context. In addition, *Talking Trusts: recommendations for children's trusts working with voluntary and community organisations* is a useful document produced by a consortium of national infrastructure organisations including NCVYS. *Community Involvement in Children's Trusts – Unlock Your Potential* provides guidance on where and how organisations can most effectively engage with their local Children's Trust and gives four key recommendations. See the further information at the end of the guide for order details.

A possible checklist of good practice, to demonstrate effective engagement of the voluntary sector in Children's Trusts:

- Mainstream local authority funding for VCS network support
- Local authority support for VCS representation through payments
- Accountability and communication protocols for VCS representation
- Workforce development plans actively include VCS at the levels of training prioritisation and delivery of training
- Active identification of services that could be provided by VCS
- 3 year contracts and adherence to the Compact

Sharing practice:

Derbyshire Children's Trust web pages provide communication to the voluntary, community and independent sector, including a FAQ on Children's Trusts

www.derbyshire.gov.uk/Social_health/services_for_children/childrens_trust/vcsector/default.asp.

Local workforce development plans for the children, young people and families' workforce

A skilled workforce is key to meeting the five *Every Child Matters* outcomes:

1. Be healthy
2. Stay safe
3. Enjoy and achieve
4. Make a positive contribution
5. Achieve economic well-being

Therefore each Children's Trust is required to put in place workforce development plans (or often referred to as 'local workforce strategies') of how they are going to develop the workforce to meet the needs of children and young people. The voluntary and community sector's workforce development needs are suppose to also be met in those plans. However, recognising those needs depends upon the commitment and effectiveness of the Children's Trust to consult and work with the voluntary sector locally. Also, it is dependent upon whether local infrastructure bodies (or sometimes referred to as 'local networks') are fully engaged in the planning processes. It is a huge learning process for all concerned.

Workforce Strategy Partners Programme

In 2006-07, the Children's Workforce Development Council (CWDC) introduced the Private, Voluntary & Independent (PVI) Fund, now the Workforce Strategy Partners Programme (WSPP), to support the involvement and engagement of the Third and Private sectors in the development, implementation and delivery and review of local integrated children's workforce strategies and their action plans.

This has been a key fund for third sector infrastructure organisations to access working together in partnership with the Children's Trust. More information is available at www.cwdcouncil.org.uk/wspp. The web pages contain an Infobank in order for people to establish contact with other WSPP contract holders to learn from their practice.

One Children's Workforce Tool

The Children's Workforce Development Council is trialling a new on-line tool (across 150 areas) to help Children's Trusts establish the progress they have made in developing the whole of the children, young people and families' workforce. It will help them understand which areas need improvements too.

As a partner in Children's Trust arrangements, the VCS should be invited to work with the Children's Trust in the trial process and any subsequent action planning. Therefore, WSPP contract holders/local infrastructure organisations should be aware that they may be approached. Children's Trusts will be accessing the tool at <http://onechildrensworkforce.cwdcouncil.org.uk>

Role of the third sector in the local workforce development agenda

The ideal role of third sector infrastructure organisations in the local workforce development agenda would be to:

- Represent the sector on workforce development groups within Children's Trusts (it is also important that representation by the VCS takes place at all levels of a Children's Trust and in governance arrangements);
- Identify the workforce development needs of the sector;
- Communicate developments and opportunities to the local network;
- Provide support, advice and information on the workforce development agenda and opportunities; and
- Respond to requests from the Children's Trust to provide examples of delivery, relay good practice and raise issues.

Case Study:

Salford CVS's VOCAL has appointed 12 representatives to sit on various groups within Salford's Children and Young People's Partnership

Salford CVS's VOCAL (Voluntary and Community Forum to Salford Children and Young People's Partnership) has successfully appointed representatives to various groups within the Partnership, covering the 0-25 children, young people and families' sector. This has ensured good representation and a voice from the VCS at all levels within the Children's Trust.

VOCAL Representatives attend the workforce development strategy meetings led by Salford Children's Services Directorate and in return a representative attends VOCAL's Workforce Development Task Group. Louise Murray, Young People, Children and Families Co-ordinator said "This is good news – it should be a two way process enabling us to work together ensuring the VCS inputs in to the workforce development strategy locally so that it meets the sector's needs and so that we can contribute to partner's needs".

VOCAL representatives form the executive of VOCAL. To support all representatives VOCAL has in place a representation protocol and the representatives receive peer support from fellow executive group members.

For more information e-mail: Louise.Murray@salfordcvs.co.uk.

Nichola Brown at NCVYS can also signpost to other members who have examples of representation protocols e-mail nichola@ncvys.org.uk

Local groups and planning processes

Although the set up in every Children's Trust is different, generally there appears to be two levels at which engagement from a local infrastructure organisation (in order to represent their sector locally) is needed. However, this requires staffing capacity and funding!

Level 1

Children and Young People's Trust Board or in some areas known as Children and Young People's strategic Partnership

Role: Responsible for recommending & implementing the overall vision for the delivery of services of the Children's Trust; agreeing priorities & strategic direction; identifying & pooling resources; and monitoring the effectiveness of work in improving outcomes for children and young people via a 3 year Children and Young People's Strategic Plan.

Targets with regards to workforce development are reported to this board.

Normally a senior person within the LIO is represented e.g. the chair, director.



Level 2

Children's Trust Workforce Strategy Group

Role: Responsible for implementing & monitoring the children & young people's local workforce development strategy. Also will receive reports from working groups which often sit under this strategic group e.g. Common Assessment Framework, Data Collection.

Normally the person responsible for workforce development in the LIO is represented e.g. children's workforce development co-ordinator.

Sharing practice:

Two examples of practice where two NCVYS members state they are **fully involved in the workforce development local planning processes** and have good relationships with their Children's Trust.

Example 1:

Youth Focus (Buckinghamshire CVYS)

Thankfully Youth Focus has been involved in Children's Trusts developments right from the beginning. The Director of Youth Focus, Sue Martin, is in regular contact with the officer at her Children's Trust responsible for the implementation of the local children and young people's workforce development strategy.

Carol Mason, Chair of Youth Focus is the voluntary sector representative on the Children and Young People's Trust Board. She is supported by a reference group made up of network members called the 'Youth Focus Working Group'.

Sue Martin, Director of Youth Focus sits on both the Children and Young People's Trust Delivery Group (this partnership group facilitates the delivery of the Children and Young People's Plan and reports to the Trust Board) and a group called the Leadership Board, which is responsible for implementing the Children and Young People's Local Workforce Development Strategy.

She is in regular contact with the Youth Focus Working Group where she provides information to them and in return they feedback e.g. they helped to provide ideas for her Children's Workforce Development Council's Workforce Strategy Partners Programme application – which was successful.

Tips from Sue to share with others:

- Try and get involved with Children's Trusts developments as early on as possible; and
- Seek out the lead person in the Children's Trust responsible for the local workforce development strategy.

For more information contact Sue Martin e-mail: sue.martin@youthfocus.org.uk

Example 2:

Middlesbrough Voluntary Development Agency (MVDA)

A new structure has been established with regards to local planning processes and two levels of planning are in place. The first level is the Children and Young People's Trust Board. This board replaces the previous Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership. The new Trust arrangements were established in October 2007. Representation from the voluntary and community sector is occupied through MVDA's Planning and Partnership Officer (Children and Young People), as the strategic lead for the VCS around the *Every Child Matters* agenda.

The second level of planning is the Children's Workforce Development Strategy Group, which sits underneath the Children's Trust Board. Mark also attends these meetings.

NCVYS asked Mark Davis, MVDA's Planning and Partnership Officer, what he thinks has been the **key components to developing successful relationships with the Children's Trust**.

Mark outlined the following:

- The need to have in place a post to **mediate** between the Children's Trust and the VCS. There needs to be **capacity** to develop relationships and someone in post to **co-ordinate** the work. Mark undertakes this role; and
- In Middlesbrough, both the sector and the Children's Trust have both had the willingness to move forward with the agenda and there is understanding on both sides.

Tips from Mark to share with others:

- Do your reading and get to grips with the workforce development agenda;
- Exploit any opportunities for the sector to get engaged;
- Be well informed about developments in workforce development e.g. policy and work of Children's Trust; and
- Influence the Chairs of the planning groups to remind them to include the voluntary sector at all stages of developments.

Mark said "At first it was us approaching the Trust and now it is them approaching us. It is very much now a two-way process and that is how it should be".

For more information contact Mark Davis e-mail: Mark.Davis@mvdauk.org.uk

Further reading

Children's Trusts:

For more information on Children's Trusts follow this link www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/aims/childrenstrusts/faq/

Every Child Matters publications:

DfES: *ECM: Working with Voluntary & Community Organisations to deliver Change for Children and Young People*, 2004

All ECM publications are free and available from the DCSF. Can be ordered by phone on its orderline: 0845 6022260. They can also be downloaded from www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/publications

NCVYS publications:

Talking trusts: recommendations for children's trusts working with voluntary and community organisations

Community Involvement in Children's Trusts – Unlock Your Potential

Publications can be downloaded from www.ncvys.org.uk >> publications.

NAVCA publications:

Frontline Hopsctoch – VCS engagement in delivering change for children: a jumpy start or a step back?

Publication can be downloaded from www.navca.org.uk/publications

VCS Engage publications:

VCS Engage report: VCS engagement in the development of Children and Young People's Plans 2006/07

Report can be downloaded at www.ncb.org.uk/vcs/e_bulletin/A1_Web.pdf

Thanks

This guide has been written by Nichola Brown, Workforce Development Officer at the National Council for Voluntary Youth Services and consultant Lesley Derry. With special thanks to: Mark Davis from Middlesbrough Voluntary Development Agency, Sue Martin from Youth Focus (Buckinghamshire CVYS), Louise Murray from Salford CVS and Matt Ford from Derbyshire County Council.

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