

Every Child Matters: Change for Children
Consultation on Functional Modelling

Response By Easington District Council

Question 1:
What improvements can be made to the model?

Easington District Council would wish to confirm its support for, and commitment to, working with other partners both locally within Easington and strategically across the County to focus on positive outcomes for children and young people and their families. The key points we would wish to make are:

- It is accepted that the consultation paper is setting out one functional model as to how a Change for Children agenda could operate in the County rather than a description of structures.
- The concept of the model being advanced of having a strategic county level executive linked to, and supported by, locality based Boards, that are close to local communities and potentially more responsive to local needs, aspirations and priorities is supported.
- It is agreed that the development of structures should be driven by the goal of delivering improved outcomes for children and young people rather than representation issues.

However from a careful consideration of the preferred model structural being advanced for the delivery of integrated services for children, young people and their families, it is felt that a number of material issues require amendment. This is in order to fully address issues around linkages to the existing wider partnership working structures designed to support the achievement of improved service delivery co-ordination and improved outcomes; improve the Children's Agenda Partnership's operational arrangements; and make clearer how improved engagement with children and young people and their families, as well as the community and voluntary sector is to be advanced.

1. Context Provided by Wider Public Service Co-ordination Relationships

Since the consultation period was initiated, County Durham's status as a Local Area Agreement Pilot area (LAA) has been confirmed. As such the arrangements for Children and Young People Services should fully reflect this and how it will 'fit' with the LAA's specific strand of Children and Young People. The functional model should give greater weight to the LAA linkages in terms of service outcome determination and governance arrangements. In determining this relationship, full account should be taken of the agreed principles for policy and service development set out in the LAA Expression of Interest that builds on the earlier Durham Accord work.

It is also disappointing that the current Consultation document fails to make a connection with the County's well established Local Strategic Partnership's (LSPs) which are charged under the Local Government Act as providing a means to improve the co-ordination of services for their delivery in line with community aspirations. It is also through the LSP structure that the greatest opportunity exists for ensuring neighbourhood engagement and linking this to other services which families with children are engaged in and rely on. This is particularly important when seeking to take a holistic approach to addressing deprivation in line with the National Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy and making best use of Neighbourhood Renewal Fund resources (where available). Each LSP represents a specific locality and are a Partnership within which all County Durham public sector service agencies are engaged. Using this LSP structure would also serve to better connect the Every Child Matters work to the County Durham Strategic Partnership/Local Strategic Partnership Framework.

The use of PCT/CDRP areas is also not sufficiently future proofed, particularly given the recent announcement over the re-shaping of PCTs to have co-terminosity with County Social Service areas. Whilst in Easington the use of a PCT/CRDP geography would provide a common locality basis with the LSP, the planned arrangement does not serve to add to a clarity over sub county areas and given the CDSP and LSP structure is well established. Community engagement networks are firmly linked into this spatial arrangement. The present proposed arrangement would promote confusion over the concept of 'local' within the County (e.g. 7 Local Strategic Partnerships but 5 Local Boards) The revised arrangements post the current consultation period should provide for the Local Boards to linked to the County's current LSP level geography.

2. Children's Executive Board and Local Children's Board Arrangements

Greater clarity in terms of the expected roles of the Local Boards and how they will connect with the Executive Board is required to improve the model, in particular a number of points are felt to warrant further attention:

- Para 7.9 of the Consultation document is of particular concern: "the degree of representation and resultant "share of voice" can become an issue in relation to setting the strategic agenda. This is a particular issue when considering effective representation within the Children's Executive Board for the 7 District Councils and the varied interest of the voluntary organisations". This comment strongly under values the role District Councils can play as community leaders in promoting the well being of localities and wrongly suggests Senior District Council representatives (Members and Officers) are not able to deal with strategic issues at a county scale and so assist to manage the implications and conflicts that might arise between local areas. This paragraph should be fully re- considered.
- The above point also appears to underline the approach proposed for Local Children Board representation at the Executive level. The expectation that the Chair of Local Boards should only attend the Executive for "communication purposes" requires revision. It is critical if the partnership working principle of equality and equity of all partners is to be upheld, the locality Chairs should have the same roles and responsibilities as all other Executive members. Locality members can legitimately and purposefully help contribute towards management of the strategic agenda. in terms of

strategy development; strategic commissioning and performance management; and overseeing and scrutinising local delivery arrangements and the performance of Local Area Boards.

- The potential size of the Partnerships meetings at Executive and Local level would appear to be too large to be effective as decision making bodies. If smaller sub groups are to be used these should maintain the principle of inclusiveness through accountability of members to the larger Group or Board and have clearly defined terms of reference and decision making powers. If such Groups are to be employed they should ensure their decisions are based on the outcome of consultation with all partnership members. It might be considered appropriate to establish thematic working groups below the Local Board level focusing on the five ECM outcomes. This will ensure that the outcomes are given appropriate consideration outside of current remits and delivered from the bottom-up.
- The roles of the Children's Champions for safeguarding and attainment need to be clarified and their role at the Local level further elaborated on in terms of relationship to service providers.
- The role and membership of the 'Local' Safeguarding Children Board requires clarification as to how will this link to the local level and work on the 'Staying Safe' outcome?
- Communication between the Executive Board and the Local Boards needs to be strengthened and the respective roles and responsibilities of each need to be set out clearly. A Communication strategy will be required to enshrine the subsidiarity and 'bottom-up' design principle.
- The accountability and responsibilities of Local Boards in respect of commissioning requires clarification – will Local Boards have some devolved responsibility for commissioning or just provide services?

3. Engagement with Children and Young People/Community and Voluntary Sector Organisations

The model suggests an unclear commitment to Voluntary and Community sector engagement and a lack of inclusion of the views of children, young people and families, contrary to claims that this is what the preferred model will secure. Consideration must be given as to how the views of children and young people can be engaged in the process. The locality arrangements should be seen as critical to this, and again by linking with the LSP structures there is the opportunity to ensure public sector organizations engage with communities and localities in a co-ordination and holistic manner rather than by introducing further structures and mechanisms within an already crowded partnership/engagement environment.

Sitting alongside the Executive Board and the Local Children Boards should be some form of forum(s) that represents the views and interests of children and young people drawing upon existing arrangements where they exist such as the Easington Youth Forum.

The model in addition should more clearly set out how it is proposed to address and promote the equality and diversity agenda.

Question 2:			
	YES	NO	
a) Does the proposed functional model address the Every Child Matters Agenda?	UNCLEAR		The 5 ECM Outcomes do not appear to be sufficiently addressed in the model. It is not clear whether the personnel selected can fully deliver the five outcomes (e.g. would have limited impact on the economic wellbeing outcome without involving the business sector). A stakeholder mapping exercise should have been undertaken to inform representation on the Boards. As stated above, thematic working groups could support the Boards in order to ensure appropriate consideration of the ECM Outcomes Framework.
b) Is your core business area represented appropriately within it?	X		<p>The Council welcomes the full involvement of Districts in the model. Though there is a need to consider further the role for District Council Executive/Cabinet members who have a 'lead' for Children and Young People Services to aid local community leadership and service co-ordination. It is agreed that representation at an Officer level should be at senior level.</p> <p>However, there is a need to clarify the representation of Sure Start/Children's Centres in the structure. And in particular how the experience gained through local Sure Start Partnerships of parents and carers having had a strong service development remit is not to be lost under the Every Child Matters Agenda arrangements.</p>

Question 3: What format, Trust or Partnership, do you consider would be most effective?			
	Trust	Partnership	
	Unclear	Unclear	<p>In respect to the debate over whether a Trust or Partnership model should be introduced, it is felt that the two options should be the subject of a more rigorous option appraisal process that involves a wider range of stakeholders, given it is crucial to get this right first time. The appraisal process should also take an informed view of alternatives – demonstrating learning from pathfinders (that include Gateshead and Darlington) and other sources. (The current Appendix 2 is only a brief SWOT exercise.)</p> <p>The Trust option is seen to offer a number of real benefits such as those indicated below which should be tested against a partnership structure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ a clear vision and mandate, a robust structure and governance arrangements ■ a focus on service improvements – clear workstreams to facilitate commissioning ■ securing appropriate resources (rather than use of aligned and pooled budgets). ■ Greater and clearer accountability. ■ Supports change management by being suitably distinct from current arrangements <p>Furthermore, the partnership model to be evaluated should be that of a fully accountable partnership with clear terms of reference and governance arrangements and which operates within a clear financial framework of committed resources, has SLAs with delivery partners and a strong performance management framework. An appraisal on the current ‘form’ of partnership working in the county would not provide a real alternative option.</p> <p>However, it may prove appropriate to combine the two structures e.g. a County Durham Trust supported by local partnerships or vice versa (to ensure local needs are met).</p>

Question 4: Is the membership of the Children's Executive Board adequately representative?			
	YES	NO	
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<p>It is questionable whether the Executive Board can be truly representative of local services/needs if the Chairs of the Local Boards attend the Executive for 'communication purposes'. (See comments in response to Question 1)</p> <p>The Executive Board should also secure representation in respect of the following...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Business community ■ Voluntary and Community Sector ■ Education and Training Providers ■ Fire & Rescue Service
Question 5: Is the membership of the Local Children's Boards adequately representative?			
	YES	NO	
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<p>The Local Boards should also secure representation in respect of the following...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Schools ■ Sure Start/Children's Centres ■ Education and Training Providers ■ Business community ■ Voluntary and Community Sector ■ Children and young people and their families

<p>Question 6: What governance arrangements would best support the model?</p>	<p>The document does not provide sufficient information on this issue. Clearly effective governance (representation, accountability, performance, financial and risk management) should ensure that there is a real and positive change in the service outcomes delivered and maintains a strategic vision without compromising local diversity of needs and interests. Within this governance framework, consideration should be given to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Learning from best practice in respect of governance ■ Terms of reference for each group within the structure ■ Clear decision-making, including a policy on alternates ■ Guidance, training and support for Executive and Local Board members ■ Internal and external communication and reporting protocols ■ Communication and clarity in the monitoring/assessment of progress ■ Appropriate scrutiny/audit arrangements. <p>The consultation paper promotes the principle of subsidiary so that decisions around services are taken as close to communities as possible. This can be achieved by passing as much responsibility as possible over the design and implementation of services along with budget responsibility to the locality level. Whilst this appears to be on offer, there is perhaps an over cautious approach to the principle, which has the effect of reinforcing a centralised approach that undermines and puts at risk local responsiveness.</p>
<p>Question 7: What do you consider as the major risks in implementing the model?</p>	<p>Many of the risks are those that characterise service integration and include...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Lack of connection to wider policy initiatives and partnership frameworks (LAA and LSP arguments outlined above) ■ Local needs being lost within the overall County picture ■ Insufficient links to Children and Young People to ensure there is a continuing dialogue with users on the quality and appropriateness of services being delivered. ■ Raising community expectations but not delivering through lack of resources etc. ■ Disruption to delivery/inconvenience to families. ■ Difficulties in marrying systems/data sharing ■ Lack of experience in joint-commissioning

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Roles and responsibilities not clearly specified■ Change management issues – training, communication etc.
Any Other Comments	The Council would stress the importance of effectively ‘managing the change’ during the integration of services, particularly in respect to ensuring the standard of services being delivered whilst changes in services are being introduced is not compromised.