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**PROPOSALS FOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES CONFIGURATION FOR DARLINGTON  
BOROUGH COUNCIL**

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**Responsible Cabinet Member(s) –Councillor Chris McEwan, Children's Services Portfolio**

**Responsible Director(s) – Margaret Asquith, Director of Social Services  
(Director of Children's Services - Designate)**

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**Purpose of Report**

1. This report is to outline the initial stages in the development of Darlington's Children's Services.

**Background**

2. The starting point for any reconfiguration of services must be to improve outcomes for the end user, in this case children and their families.
3. It has long been recognised by staff, families, teachers and children that barriers exist (real or imagined) between services and organisations whose aim is to support and assist children and families. These barriers include :-
  - (a) Different cultures
  - (b) Professional backgrounds
  - (c) Perceptions of who the client is (child, parent, school etc)
  - (d) Legislation
  - (e) Budget constraints
  - (f) Thresholds for "entry" to services
  - (g) Data collection and sharing
  - (h) Processes (i.e. pathways between services)
  - (i) Lack of knowledge of each other's roles and responsibilities
4. Children and their families can, and do, move along a spectrum of need depending upon their circumstances at any given time, and it is the responsibility of service providers to ensure that the child's movement along the spectrum of need is as smooth (seamless) as possible and that the services required are provided in a timely and responsive manner. Too often children and their families require re-assessment and then have to wait until services decide whose criteria the particular needs "fit" and then whether the child actually reaches their threshold to be eligible for services.
5. The design of Darlington's Children's Services must eliminate these types of barriers and considerations. Teams need to be multi-skilled so that most of the spectrum of need can be

met during one intervention in the child and family's life.

6. Running alongside the support needs of children and families is the achievement agenda for schools. This agenda belongs to children and families too, every child has the right to be supported to achieve their maximum potential in educational (and other) terms. Educational achievement opens the door to all the life chances of a child in the future. Helping all children achieve their potential will also help schools achieve the best outcomes for their school and for the wider community in Darlington. The new Children's Services Department will retain educational achievement as a key priority and will focus on better support and challenge to schools.

#### Outcomes for Children

7. The five outcomes for children have been set out clearly in Government's Green Paper "Every Child Matters" and have since been reiterated in the Children Act 2004, which received Royal Assent at the end of November 2004.

The 5 outcomes are :-

- (a) Being healthy
- (b) Staying safe
- (c) Enjoying and achieving
- (d) Making a positive contribution
- (e) Social and economic well being

#### Performance

8. Each of the outcomes has a range of national performance indicators attached which have been pulled together from the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) education targets, and the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) social services PAF indicators and the Department of Health NSF for children targets (attached at **Appendix A**).
9. It will be important that Darlington's service delivery for children can be matched against these targets and therefore in the proposed senior management structure, each of the 4 Assistant Directors will have primary responsibility for one or more of the 5 outcomes and the related targets, and a secondary responsibility for the remaining outcomes and targets.

#### Senior Management Structure

10. To make early progress with the development of a new Children's Services Department it is essential that the senior management structure at Assistant Director level is agreed and that early appointments are made.
11. A copy of the proposed structure and areas of responsibility is detailed at **Appendix B**. Grades will be attached to these posts following a Job Evaluation exercise. It is recommended that these posts will initially be ring-fenced to existing staff. Appointments will be made by Members.

## **Information and Analysis**

12. The reconfiguration of operational teams should be designed to eliminate barriers and thresholds between services which have historically caused difficulties for children and families. Workers in these teams will need to develop a wider method of working and take on responsibilities from each other which have previously been delivered in a “silo” method of working. Ultimately, it is likely that we will be moving towards a changed workforce with greater interface between professional roles. The teams for which reconfiguration should be considered are as follows :-

- (a) Parts of the school effectiveness team
- (b) Parts of the school improvement team
- (c) Special Educational Needs (SEN)
- (d) Pupil support services
- (e) Learning and development services (educational psychology)
- (f) Long term child care teams
- (g) Family support teams
- (h) Leaving care team

The reconfigured teams will be able to, and expected to, deliver support to children and families across most of the spectrum of need from general family support to more specialist support to children looked after, and will avoid the need for children to be passed from one worker or team to another.

## **Linked Services**

### Adult Learning Services

13. There needs to be further discussion about the future location of adult learning services and whether this should remain as a single entity or if it would be better split into, for example, learning in children’s services and libraries and community services. In the interim, however, it could remain as an entity within children’s services with further consideration of its future location made as the new Children’s Department becomes established.

### Youth Service

14. The Youth Service is currently located within Community Services following a very recent move out of Education. It is recommended that the Youth Service stays within Community Services to avoid further disruption for staff, but that this is reviewed after 12 months.

### PODs

15. At present the Early Interventions Team (EIT) oversees the PODs. The EIT has a specific aim of working with young people who are at risk of offending, carrying out antisocial behaviour or indulging in substance misuse. The PODs, however, can have an effective role in working with all young people irrespective of circumstances.

16. The POD is, therefore, more of a youth service provision than an early interventions project. It is somewhere Youth Workers can meet young people on their own ground who may be either reluctant or unable to use existing youth service provision. By using the PODs the Youth Workers are also able to be flexible in servicing the needs of the young people with whom they meet and work. For the young people who do not have use or access to existing youth provision, the PODs play a very important part in assisting with engagement. It gives the young people somewhere to meet their friends in safe and warm environment. This could help the Darlington Youth Service by meeting and working with young people at the front line who do not access mainstream facilities.
17. At present there are only two young people attending the PODs who are known to the EIT and this demonstrates the way in which the PODs serve a wide spectrum of youth within the Borough. It is therefore recommended that the PODs transfer to the Youth Service.

#### Youth Offending Team (YOT) and Early Interventions Team (EIT)

18. Youth offending teams are located in a variety of services across the country, including Social Services, Community Safety, and Chief Executive offices. There are advantages and disadvantages to most of the possible locations.
19. Darlington's YOT and EIT are currently located within the children's services division of the Social Services Department and on balance, officers would recommend that the optimum location for these services would be to place them within Darlington's newly formed Children's Services Department. However, there is no blueprint for successful YOTs or Children's Services Departments and Cabinet Members have highlighted the importance of Community Safety and would prefer that the YOT and EIT are located alongside other Community Safety services in the Department of Community Service therefore the proposed structure reflects the wishes of Cabinet.

#### Adult Services

20. The review of Adult Services is ongoing and a report on options for the location of these services will be brought to a future Cabinet meeting. In the meantime, Adult Services will remain under the direction of the Director of Social Services until 31st March, 2005 and thereafter with the Director of Children Services until a decision is made.

#### **Accommodation**

21. A big issue for consideration will be the accommodation for these new teams. Research and practice shows that the biggest step towards delivering an integrated service is when different professionals are co-located. An initial mapping exercise will need to be undertaken to identify current accommodation issues and future requirements.

#### **Continuity of Service Delivery**

22. Alongside this reconfiguration, we must ensure that services continue to be delivered and that we maintain safety for children. Some children's services will need to be maintained in their current form and examples of this are child protection, and some specialist support to schools.

## **Corporate Considerations**

23. Some functions within the Children's Services Department could be configured into a corporate support link. Examples for consideration are:
- (a) Finance services
  - (b) HR services
  - (c) IT services

Some of these considerations are linked to wider agendas, e.g. Support Services BVR and the Government's efficiency agenda. In the short term, it is proposed that a simple disaggregation of functions between adult and children's social services takes place and staff located accordingly.

## **HR Process**

24. It is proposed that as many staff as possible are slotted into new posts, followed by ring fenced interviews. The unions will be consulted at an early stage throughout the process. The main appointments at Assistant Director level should be made by 1st April 2005 with other appointments following throughout 2005. Once the Assistant Director appointments are made, it would be sensible to engage these staff in the final decisions about team configuration and appointments. It is likely that staff positions down to team manager level will be affected in terms of areas of responsibility and supervision requirements.

## **Change Programme**

25. We need to establish changes in children's services as a programme not a project. There will be many constituent projects within the overall programme and tensions between these to complete to time and budget. Although we expect to have the Assistant Directors for Children's Services in post by 1st April 2005, we will clearly not have a changed and integrated children's department which is operational by this date.
26. The change programme we are embarking upon is at least a 5 year programme and likely to run 10 years for a complete change in culture and working practices. This change programme will have specific targets and milestones built in, alongside regular evaluation. The outline change programme with guidance date lines is attached at **Appendix C**.

## **Conclusion**

27. It is clear that the structure and service delivery we operate in Darlington will be judged for success against the 5 outcomes for children. At each stage, inspectors will be looking for evidence of improved outcomes and integration across service delivery, processes, and governance. The proposed structure is designed to deliver against these objectives (attached at Appendix B).

## **Outcome of Consultation**

28. Initial consultation with the current Assistant Directors within Education and Social Services and the Primary Care Trust has taken place. Consultation is ongoing with Headteachers and employees and if appropriate a verbal update will be given at the Cabinet

meeting.

### **Legal Implications**

26. This report has been considered by the Borough Solicitor for legal implications in accordance with the Council's approved procedures. There are no issues which the Borough Solicitor considers need to be brought to the specific attention of Members, other than those highlighted in the report.

### **Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998**

27. The contents of this report have been considered in the context of the requirements placed on the Council by Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, namely, the duty on the Council to exercise its functions with due regard to the likely effect of the exercise of those functions on, and the need to do all that it reasonably can to prevent, crime and disorder in its area. It is not considered that the contents of this report have any such effect.

### **Council Policy Framework**

28. The issues contained within this report do not represent change to Council policy or the Council's policy framework

### **Decision Deadline**

29. For the purpose of the 'call-in' procedure this does not represent an urgent matter

### **Key Decisions**

30. This is a key decision as these proposals affect the delivery of Council services to the whole Borough.

### **Recommendations**

31. It is recommended that Members:-
- (a) Agree the proposed Assistant Director structure and proposals for the future structure and integration of Darlington's Children's Services Department; and
  - (b) Agree the proposals for the location of adult learning, the Youth Services, and the Youth Offending Team/Early Interventions Team with regular reviews and changes as necessary.

### **Reason**

32. The Children Act 2004 requires local authorities to progress their plans for the formation of integrated children's services.

**Margaret Asquith**  
**Director of Social Services**  
**(Director of Children's Services – Designate)**



## **Background Papers**

“Every Child Matters” – Green Paper  
The Children Act 2004

M Asquith : Extension 2099



