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**A CHILDREN'S TRUST FOR DARLINGTON**

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

**Responsible Director - Margaret Asquith, Director of Children's Services**

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**Purpose of the Report**

1. To seek Members' approval for the establishment of a Children's Trust for Darlington as part of the Local Strategic Partnership.

**Information and Analysis**

Children's Trusts

2. The Government intends that Children's Trusts will be established in most Authorities by 2006, and all Authorities by 2008. Children's Trusts are not legal entities, but designed to pull together key partners and stakeholders to promote co-operation and child centred service delivery. They have a key role to play in the development, implementation and review of the Children and Young People's Plan. Key statutory partners are the Strategic Health Authority and Primary Care Trust, Police Authority, Youth Offending Team, local Probation Board and the Learning and Skills Council. Other key stakeholders include children and young people, schools, voluntary agencies, play organisations and any other local body connected to service delivery for children and young people.

Functions

3. Children's Trusts are expected to develop in line with local need and there is no "blue-print" for structure or functions. Each Children's Trust will develop over time to whichever degree is appropriate to local circumstances to address the following:
  - (a) integrated service delivery;
  - (b) integrated processes;
  - (c) integrated strategies, including planning and joint commissioning where appropriate;
  - (d) integrated workforce development; and
  - (e) consultation with children and young people.

Membership

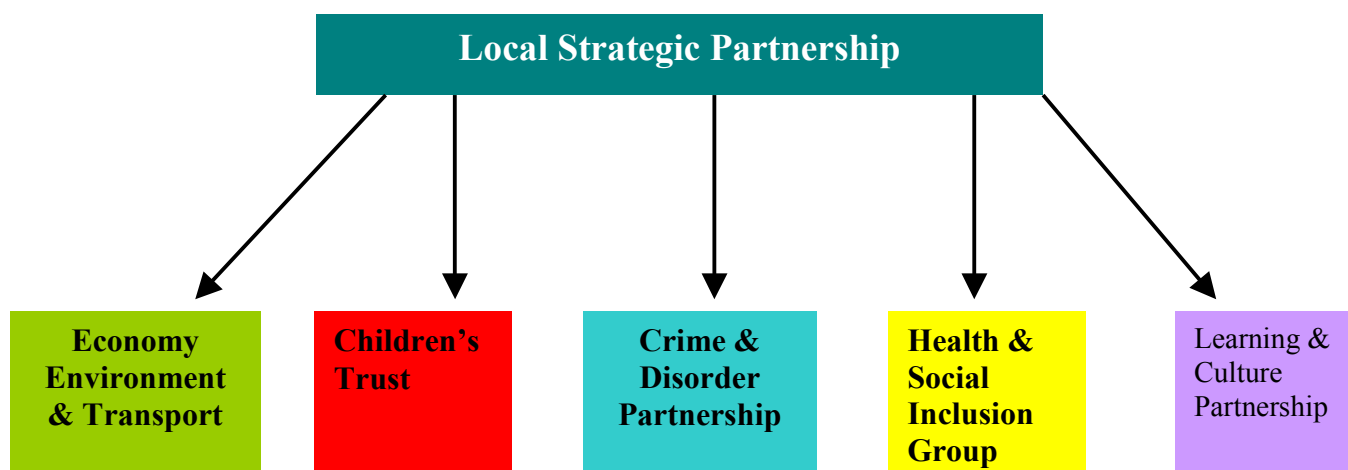
4. Statutory guidance states that the following must be represented on the Trust:
  - (a) The Police Authority and the local Chief of Police;

- (b) Local Probation Board;
  - (c) Youth Offending Team;
  - (d) Strategic Health Authority;
  - (e) Primary Care Trust;
  - (f) Learning and Skills Council; and
  - (g) Local Connexions Partnership
5. The Trust may also include:
- (a) Voluntary and community agencies and private sector bodies working with young people and their families;
  - (b) Schools; and
  - (c) Other agencies including GPs, colleges, faith organisations, Job Centre Plus and the Immigration Service (where appropriate).
6. The guidance other than specifying the Local Chief of Police, does not specify the precise level of representation on the Trust (for example, Chief Executive or Chairman). It does, however, state that the level of representation needs to be appropriate to the strategic nature of the Trust and that representatives should be in a position to make decisions on behalf of their organisations, particularly on service collaboration and funding. Consequently, representation will be sought from the organisations listed above at a senior level.

### Governance

7. Statutory guidance on Children's Trusts and the duties of a Director of Children's Services (DCS) stipulate that the DCS has a direct responsibility to lead partnership working through Children's Trusts, and for ensuring the effectiveness of partnership arrangements and sustaining inter-agency co-operation. The guidance also encourages local authorities, when developing arrangements for a Children's Trust, to seek to streamline the number of existing partnerships with a focus on children and young people and incorporate them within the remit of Local Strategic Partnerships (LSP). This position has been reinforced in a consultation paper issued by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister 'Local Strategic Partnerships – Shaping their Future' which recommends that Children's Trusts sit within the overall structure of the LSP and that key representatives of the Children's Trust, including the DCS, should also be members of the LSP Executive.
8. The diagram below illustrates the proposal for a Children's Trust in Darlington that is incorporated within the overall governance arrangements of the LSP. The Trust will form the fifth themed group of the Partnership. Under the proposal the Trust will supersede the existing Children & Young People's Partnership and will be chaired by the Director of Children's Services, who will also hold membership of the LSP. A new thematic group entitled the "Learning & Culture Partnership" will be established from the existing Learning Partnership, to encompass responsibilities for Adult Learning, the Arts, Sport, Heritage, Culture, major events, town-twinning and volunteering, and will continue to be chaired by the current Chair of the Learning Partnership. Clearly there will need to be close liaison and working together between these two groups, which will share similar agendas and will have

many crossover areas. There is an arrangement that the two groups will share a support officer to assist in this co-ordination.



### **Outcome of Consultation**

9. The existing Darlington Learning Partnership, the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership, and the Darlington Partnership Board have been consulted on the proposals and all have given 'in principle' support.

### **Legal Implications**

10. This report has been considered by the Legal Services Manager for legal implications in accordance with the Council's approved procedures. There are no issues which the Legal Services Manager 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**

11. 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**

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

### **Decision Deadline**

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

### **Recommendations**

14. It is recommended that Members agree the proposals to establish a Children's Trust for Darlington as part of the overall structure of the Local Strategic Partnership and chaired by

the Director of Children's Services.

## **Reasons**

15. To comply with statutory requirements.

**Margaret Asquith**  
**Director of Children's Services**

## **Background Papers**

Statutory Guidance on Inter-agency Co-operation to Improve the Well-being of Children:  
Children's Trusts.

Statutory Guidance on the Roles and Responsibilities of Director of Children's Services and the  
Lead Member for Children's Services

'Local Strategic Partnerships – Shaping their Future': Office of the Deputy Prime Minister:

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