

# Herefordshire Children's Trust

## Report on the consultation of the Children and Young People's Plan 2008-2011

### 1. Background

The Children's Trust is a statutory partnership of local agencies across Herefordshire that commission and deliver services to children, young people and their families. This covers children and young people from 0-19 years of age and up to 25 for those young people with learning difficulties and disabilities.

The partner agencies include:

- Herefordshire Council, including schools
- Herefordshire Primary Care Trust, including GPs
- Herefordshire Voluntary Sector Alliance
- West Mercia Constabulary
- Herefordshire and Worcestershire Learning and Skills Council
- Connexions, Herefordshire and Worcestershire
- Herefordshire Hospitals NHS Trust
- Worcestershire and Herefordshire Youth Offending Service
- Herefordshire Probation Service

The Children and Young People's Plan, a statutory document, contains the key priorities of the Children's Trust. The priorities have been debated and discussed during November and December 2007 at various forums to arrive at a draft document. This has included children and young people and professionals. Over an eight week period between January and March 2008 the draft plan went through a formal consultation exercise, as laid down in statutory guidance, involving various forums, agencies and individuals. These were all contacted either by email, post or through presentations and attendance by officers at various meetings.

### 2. Consultation Responses

The total number of responses received was 44. The majority of responses were received mainly from individual / professional workers, with 14 from statutory organisation / service providers and 6 from the voluntary sector / infrastructure organisation. Additionally representatives on the Children's Trust outcome groups also contributed their views, thereby encompassing a broad range of partners.

The following give an indication of the views and responses received, in similar groupings rather than listing all the detailed feedback received:

#### 2.1 The right priorities for children and young people in Herefordshire?

There was general agreement that the priorities within the plan were correct for Herefordshire children and young people at this time.

**2.2** However there were some **issues or gaps in the plan** that respondents felt had not been covered. These included:

- working with fathers and families
- working with younger children i.e. before they reach school age and hard to reach groups
- language impaired pupils / SEN
- reducing the number of young people who smoke or drink excessive amounts of alcohol
- ensuring every young person has a named adult advocate or supporter
- providing 5 hours of quality PE
- working with young carers
- youth centres and activities for teenagers
- young people with serious mental health difficulties
- to support and provide publicity for organisations providing facilities for young people
- the priorities and outcomes should be much broader, recognising the role of family and community in childhood development
- school travel plans and sustainable travel (improving safety, improving health
- enjoy and achieve should also include development of life/social/emotional skills to be able to enjoy – its not just about schools
- stay safe – e-safety and bullying should be separated into 2 priorities as although interlinked, by having one priority covering both areas it takes away the individual requirements needed for each issue
- lack of speech therapists
- families having sufficient support during pregnancy and immediately after birth
- support for all early provisions to enable them to raise their quality and maintain a quality workforce
- need explicit recognition of the contribution of “spiritual development / spiritual health” in both emotional health and well-being and social, emotional and spiritual aspects of learning
- extended schools needs to be addressed in practical, not theoretical, terms urgently
- well-being, health-wise and socially – a narrow dental priority is too specific than improving general health and well-being
- extra-curricular activities
- recognise that the current sex education regime is not working

**2.3** To the question “**does the plan cover all children and young people in Herefordshire**” the following were highlighted as missing:

- young carers
- gifted and talented youngsters
- young people who are less confident and lacking in self-esteem (but don't have learning difficulties or disabilities)

- children who are looked after at care homes provided by external agencies or other county's companies.
- pupils where English is not their first language
- physically disabled children and younger people
- younger children – pre-school and primary
- children and young people from faith backgrounds would be disadvantaged ; the omission of a spiritual dimension would apply to all children and young people
- transition from child to adult services need to be a high priority as this is where a number of young people tend to fall through the gap

**2.4** There were many suggestions about **how to involve children, young people and their families in delivering the plan**, which included:

- using partnership working and community development approach
- using different ways and methods of consultation
- a targeted approach
- encourage and assist provision of community support and facilities that provide help for the whole family unit
- provide fun and informal educational programmes and events that are free and cater for the whole family together
- re Gypsy and Traveller communities – through the Specialist Team at West Midlands Consortium Services for Travelling children.
- using corporate consultation processes
- by providing collective opportunities to contribute, e.g. bring the plan to every school in the county, present the ideas to young people and ask for feedback via their tutor groups. Need wider consultation than youth and school councils.
- provide resources for what families actually need
- by ensuring involvement right from the start and giving clear pathways for continuous improvement
- publicity is everything – making sure families know what is on offer to help
- extend the youth survey to wider age group
- expand school councils coverage to 100%
- questionnaires to child / youth based groups e.g. scouts, guides, forces cadet type schemes
- youth offending service – how can they be used to support reaching prevent and deter group members or prolific and other priority offenders
- how to tap into the economic migrant community?
- the need to involve primary school / early years aged children
- using representative groups
- reduce barriers to involvement and talk to people at home; use the media to invite involvement.
- encourage involvement of young people in diverse community activities through volunteering

- concern that current mechanisms e.g. shadow board, if not carefully monitored, can lead to stresses on children not mature enough to handle

## **2.5 Other comments included:**

- how would the plan be implemented and funded, i.e. how would the actions be achieved; concern not to divert funding from one need to another
- how will you know you've achieved what you set out to do?
- ensure full involvement of the voluntary and community sector and help to strengthen their role
- the plan is excellent, logical and well thought through
- the need to protect small schools, and the effect of the schools review on children's health, well-being and educational achievement
- involvement of children and young people in meaningful consultation; and funding is needed to adopt the hear by right standards.
- consultation is not enough – action needs better budgeting and less money spent on talking and writing about issues and more money getting to the grass roots. The most effective organisations should be defined and supported.
- clarity over joint commissioning and what is happening
- is the birth rate really dropping?
- remove schools review paragraph
- need for intensive family support for all families (not just those in crisis) from early pregnancy in preparing for parenthood and during first 2 years of child's life
- need to celebrate successes more – the plan focuses on the areas that need to improve and therefore paint a negative picture
- more emphasis on the role of young people volunteering, training and a wider variety of opportunities to achieve and make a positive contribution
- the role of communities outside school and family in children's well-being

## **3. Summary**

The overall message is one around the Children's Trust agencies supporting families as they are key in providing happy environments in which children can thrive and learn. This is particularly so in those important early years when laying down the basis for future health, happiness and achievement. Additionally, ensuring the Children's Trust involves and engages families, carers, younger children and hard to reach groups, in a variety of methods, are areas that need further work. Consultation and feedback needs to be an ongoing cycle of communication and action.

Re-directing resources from existing services to support the actions in the plan is another challenging area that needs addressing.

#### **4. Next steps**

Many individuals and agencies have taken time to look at the plan and to consider its coverage, and for all the comments received, the Children's Trust is very grateful. All the comments received will be considered and where appropriate the Children and Young People's Plan will be amended. Many comments have been quite detailed or specific so although not appropriate to include within the strategic three year plan they will have been directed toward the appropriate outcome group(s) to consider scope and inclusion within the annual delivery plans.

The final Children and Young People's Plan 2008-2011 will be published on the council's website on the 12 May 2008; there will also be a formal launch on the 3 June 2008.

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