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Children's Trusts: Improving Support for Schools

Introduction
Integrated and effective children’s services help children to be safe and healthy, to enjoy their childhood, and to prepare for the future. This leaflet explains how Children’s Trusts ensure services are joined up and how headteachers and school staff can get involved.

What is a Children’s Trust?
- Children’s Trusts bring together the local authority and other bodies – including some specified in legislation (“statutory partners”) – in local partnerships to improve the commissioning and delivery of services for all children, young people and families in a given area. From January 2010, schools will become “statutory partners”.
- The Trust is governed by a statutory Children’s Trust Board, comprising representatives of all statutory partners and other interests. The Board does not deliver services itself, but agrees what has to be done in practical terms by everyone to improve outcomes for local children.
- In particular, the Board is responsible for preparing and publishing a Children and Young People’s Plan, the joint strategy which sets out how the partners will work together to improve children’s lives, and for monitoring its delivery and success. This formalises and reinforces existing good practice.

Why are Children’s Trust Boards needed?
- To improve services for children, young people and their families, and in particular promote early intervention to support vulnerable children and families.
- To ensure that services available locally meet the needs of individuals and communities, and respond quickly and effectively to changing circumstances.
- To give parents confidence in the services available.

Why should schools get involved?
- To ensure that services are being delivered in the right way and at the right time, and are helping those who need them.
- To ensure that children, especially vulnerable children, get the support and services they need.
- To influence what help is on offer through local services, many of which are integral to a school’s obligation to its children and young people, from child protection to careers advice, access to extended services, information and guidance.
- To ensure that the contribution schools make is at the heart of local decision-making.

The Law
Section 10 of the Children Act 2004 places duties on local authorities and their statutory partners to co-operate in making arrangements to improve children’s well-being.

Well-being means that children should:
- be healthy
- stay safe
- enjoy and achieve
- make a positive contribution
- enjoy economic well-being

The Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009 extends the list of statutory partners to include schools.

The Act also introduces a statutory requirement to have a Children’s Trust Board on which all key statutory partners are represented, meaning that schools will have a permanent place round the table.
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