



Newcastle Children's Trust Partnership Handbook



Newcastle Children's Trust
www.newcastlechildrenservices.org.uk

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If you would like further information on the work of Newcastle Children's Trust please contact us by email at childrens.services@newcastle.gov.uk

Foreword to the Newcastle Children's Trust Partnership Handbook

Newcastle has a strong history of working in partnership. The drive and commitment of staff and the support of agencies allow us to deliver more and better outcomes for children and young people in Newcastle. What holds us together is our shared commitment to make sure that children and young people in Newcastle have the best start possible in their lives, and it is our passion which drives us.

We are learning and developing over time, but we think that this handbook captures some of what matters to us so far.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John Collings." The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'J' and a long, sweeping underline.

John Collings
Executive Director of Children's Services
Chair of Newcastle Children's Trust Board

1. What is a partnership?

A partnership is a relationship between two or more independent organisations which is based on trust, openness and honesty and where the parties are working together in a mutually agreed way to achieve agreed outcomes based on their key objectives, which they believe they cannot reasonably achieve alone. (This definition does not include any contractual relationship between organisations, the principal purpose or effect of which is the employment or engagement by the organisation of another party to provide it with goods, works or services).

There are many benefits stemming from partnership working. Where managed effectively partnerships can:

- Improve the relationship between key agencies in an area
- Improve the co-ordination of services across organisational boundaries and make better use of existing partner resources
- Improve public services by generating solutions to problems that single agencies cannot solve
- Exert greater influence collectively than their members could achieve individually
- Structure more effectively, with services focused more logically around children and families
- Commission services to enhance the quality of life for children, young people and their families

2. What is the Children's Trust in Newcastle?

The Children's Trust is the sum total of cooperation arrangements and partnerships between organisations with a role in improving outcomes for children and young people. The Children's Trust is not a separate organisation. Each partner within the Trust retains its own functions and responsibilities.

The Children's Trust reports into the [Wellbeing for Life Board](#). The [Children's Trust Board](#) (CTB) is the strategic group, with the Performance Management and Resources Group (PMRG) the executive body, and 3 operational groups linked to the 3 priorities of SAFE, EQUAL and ACHIEVING. There are also a number of additional partnerships linking to the Children's Trust including [Newcastle Safeguarding Children Board](#) and wider commissioning partnerships and advisory groups. A partnership structure is listed below.

Although the statutory nature of Children's Trusts has changed, in Newcastle stakeholders who have come together in the interests of children and young people have decided to continue with a formal arrangement to co-operate.

2.1 Wellbeing for Life Board

The Wellbeing for Life Board is a partnership arrangement which works to improve the wellbeing and health of everyone in Newcastle, with a particular focus on reducing health inequalities. The Board acts as the city's shadow Health and Wellbeing Board as proposed in the current Health and Social Care Bill. Membership is drawn from Newcastle City Council, the NHS in Newcastle, Newcastle LINks, the Voluntary and Community Sector and our two local universities.

2.2 Children's Trust Board

In June 2009, the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership Executive agreed to formally become the Newcastle Children's Trust Board. The Children's Trust Board is the strategic body of the Children's Trust. The Board meets monthly, and has representation from the local authority, community and voluntary sector, schools and the college, police, housing, Jobcentre Plus, Primary Care Trusts (PCT's) and health. Other partners can attend the meetings at the request of the Chair of the Board.

2.3 Performance Management and Resources Group

The Performance Management and Resources Group directs and manages performance and resources around the Children's Trust. It manages inter-agency delivery, procures services and provides challenge to outcome leads. The group is made up of key representatives from Children's Services, Health, Voluntary and Community Sector and Education.

2.4 Operational Outcome Groups

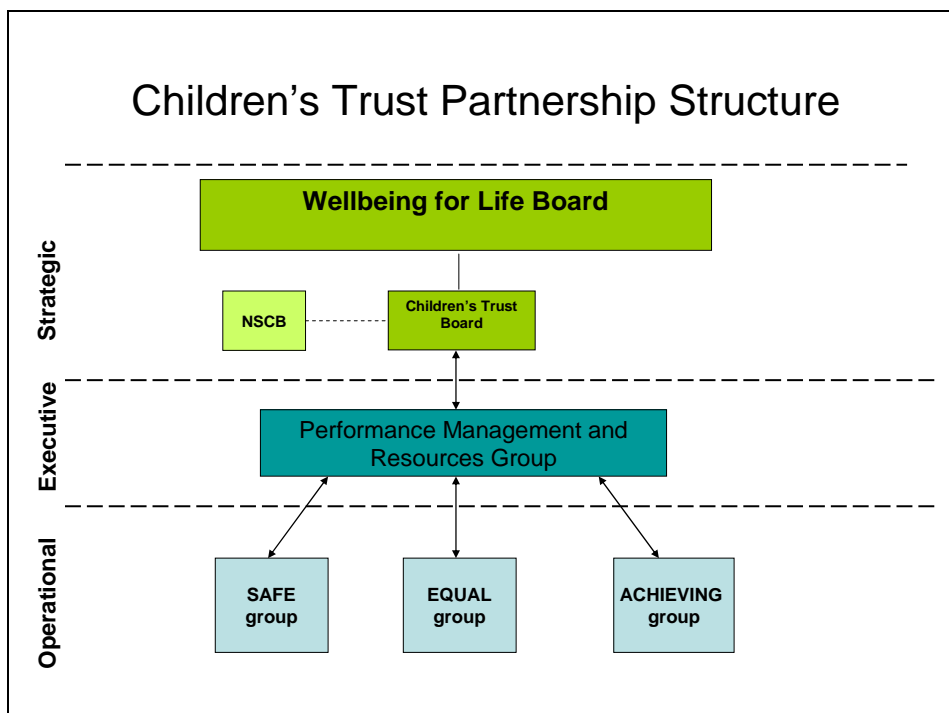
There are three operational groups established around the outcomes of SAFE, EQUAL and ACHIEVING. These groups are made up of members of linked partnerships who can manage performance relating to these outcomes. These groups report to the PMRG.

2.5 Commissioning Partnerships

There are a number of [partnerships linked to the Children's Trust](#) that commission services for children, young people and their families in Newcastle.

2.6 Relationship between Newcastle Safeguarding Children Board and the Children's Trust Board

[A working protocol exists between the NSCB and the CTB.](#)



3. Setting up a partnership

It is important to agree the purpose and kind of partnership you intend setting up with the Children's Trust Board (CTB). The contact person for the CTB is Louise Appleby, email: louise.appleby@newcastle.gov.uk

3.1 Planning the work of the partnership

There are some key considerations when starting up a partnership:

- Partnerships should have a clear vision of what they are trying to achieve and a plan of how they will achieve it. The vision of the Children's Trust is in the Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP) and this should be adopted by partnerships within the Children's Trust.
- Membership of the partnership needs to be identified. Care must be taken to ensure the correct organisations are represented, and those attending are able to fully represent their organisation and make decisions that are required of them. Partners also need to be committed to the work of the partnership and able to attend meetings regularly.

3.2 Terms of reference

Partnerships will develop their own Terms of Reference (see Appendix 1 for an example). These should include:

- Who is involved, how they will be elected and review of membership
- How often the partnership will meet
- Partners' roles and responsibilities
- How the partnership fits with existing arrangements
- Resources needed and who will provide them
- How the partnership will make decisions
- How the partnership will manage its finances, including who is the accountable body. (If a partnership is responsible for managing money it must adhere to the rules of the host budget holder. Any finances will be governed by the accountable body).
- How the partnership will deal with complaints and disputes – partnerships must comply with the governance agreement and sign up to the agreed complaints procedure
- What would happen to the service and assets if the partnership was to end

3.3 Risks

Risks for individual members/organisations need to be considered before entering the partnership and then discussed when the partnerships meet. If the partnership identifies a risk or a problem it cannot solve, the body it reports to should be informed.

3.4 Administration support

The chair will be responsible for agreeing and locating administrative support for minutes, circulating agendas and paperwork in advance of the meeting, scheduling future meetings, maintaining the forward plan and the like.

Partnerships may benefit by agreeing a Communication Plan, specifying who are the key stakeholders and what information they will need to provide and how frequently. A Communication Plan should also show who is responsible for keeping all partnership information up to date, how and where it will be stored and who can be contacted to update, amend or add to information.

3.5 Access to training and support

Each partnership will be different in its expectations and requirements for training and

support. We expect the chair or lead of each partnership to ensure that every partner has been given the information they require to contribute fully to the partnership. This may include:

- A personal briefing
- Access to previous minutes or papers
- Opportunities to contribute to the partnership's development
- Each partnership needs to identify a suitable person who will promote training within their group

3.6 The Review Process

Partnerships need to agree how and when they will review the action plan to ensure the partnership is meeting its objectives. Terms of Reference should also be reviewed. And a copy of the revised terms of reference should be sent to the Children's Trust Officer for approval by the CTB.

Other issues that a partnership may wish to review include:

- key risks relating to the partnership's activities
- the thoughts and feelings of children, young people, parents and carers
- How well the partnership works as one group as opposed to as a group of different agencies
- Membership of the partnership.

4. Roles and responsibilities in the partnership

A clear description of the roles and responsibilities expected of partnership members should be provided.

4.1 The Role of the Chair

A chairperson must be willing and able to give time to undertaking the role. The chairperson needs to be someone with a very good understanding of the context which the partnership is working in. The key tasks of the Chair include:

- Constructing and agreeing the agenda for meetings
- Planning and keeping good order in meetings
- Encouraging partners participation in, and between, meetings
- Ensuring all decisions are understood, and that necessary action is taken
- Ensuring partners receive relevant information and materials
- Ensuring Partners know the ground rules
- Ensuring with the support of the Vice Chair (s) that groups reporting to the partnerships are working effectively and to terms of reference
- Checking that decisions taken by the partnership are acted upon
- Ensuring that partnership decisions are reported to the accountable partnership
- Ensuring the views of parents, carers, children and young people are considered by the partnership
- Monitoring the work of the partnership
- Representing the partnership for example in public meetings

4.2 The Role of a Vice Chair

Key Tasks:

- Supporting the chair in the conduct of meetings

- Being a critical friend, to check that decisions taken by the partnership are enacted
- Welcoming and inducting new members
- Supporting the chair in ensuring groups reporting to the partnership are operating effectively
- Being available to stand in for the chair in his/her absence

4.3 Roles of Partnership Members

The partnership will only be successful if the right people are involved. This may include agencies with a statutory duty, agencies providing services, people representing parents, children, young people or members of the community.

Members have a responsibility to contribute to the efficient working of a partnership.

Members are required to:

- Represent the views of their agency, sector or stakeholder group as appropriate;
- Report back to their agency, sector or stakeholder group as appropriate;
- Provide factual information about the role of their agency or sector and its work, or about the needs of the stakeholder group;
- Work with other partnership members to implement these governance arrangements and the shared vision set out in the Children and Young People's Plan;
- Accept that all partners have an equal status and that our main concern is improving outcomes for children, young people and their families;
- Demonstrate commitment to the participation of parents, carers, children and young people;
- Demonstrate commitment to joint working, and to act as a champion of it within their agency or sector;
- Work collaboratively to respect diversity;
- Ensure their knowledge of Children's Services is regularly updated;
- Scrutinise and challenge information received;
- Prepare for meetings by reading papers, attending promptly, regularly, and for the full time;
- Where a partner is a member of more than one key partnership he / she will champion the needs of children and young people and act as a strong communication link between the partnerships identifying areas for collaboration and joint working.

It is essential that the members of a partnership have sufficient authority to commit their organisation to a particular course of action in order for partnerships to work. It is most effective if you plan your workloads so that you know well in advance when decisions with significant policy or financial implications will need to be made to ensure the partnership continues to move forward.

It is vital for individuals working in partnership to be clear who they represent at the partnership and how they are accountable to the people they represent. This brings clarity to the organisation about who is making decisions.

4.4 Expenses

If you work for an agency that is committed to partnership working it can be expected that the agency will cover your expenses. Expenses for parents and carers and children and young people who are involved in service planning, design and delivery should be paid at an actual rate that reimburses the cost incurred. This includes the cost of childcare which

should be provided by Registered Childcare Providers.

A policy setting out the CTB's position on reward and recognition for parents and carers and children and young people who are involved in service planning, design and delivery is currently under development; see the [Children's Services website](#) for latest developments. (Prior to making any cash payments to parents and carers, partners should ensure that parents and carers are fully informed about the potential impact of any payments made on any benefits in payments that are made. Information to help them make an informed decision on their level of involvement can be obtained from the Welfare Rights Service on 0191 277 2621).

4.5 What are your liabilities as a partner?

As a partner you are bound by the Terms of Reference governing that partnership. It is important that you read these and discuss with your manager or those you are representing, to ensure that you are happy with the responsibilities outlined in the agreement.

4.6 Legal Liabilities in Partnership

There is a strong commitment to partnership working in Newcastle by agencies and individuals. However, as partnerships become more popular and take on a wider role the number of officers from all partner organisations working as part of a partnership naturally increases. This may be as a result of legislation, because their employer is committed to the partnership or because their employing organisation has some ownership of the partnership.

In all of these cases, as a result of their commitment to working in partnership, the individual may assume legal liabilities for their actions in the partnership. Newcastle City Council has developed guidance for its staff to explain these liabilities and when they can arise both when officially representing the Council and when acting in a private capacity. This information is available at <http://194.61.175.66/odsc.nsf/a/partnershipfaq's> Other partners may wish to consider this document or may choose to seek independent advice from their employing organisation.

4.5 Joining and resigning from partnerships

If you have been asked or elected to join the partnership please contact the lead or chair of the partnership who will discuss the protocols around joining. If you need to leave a partnership please give the chair of the partnership as much notice as possible and discuss who may attend in your place if this is relevant.

5. Running a Partnership

Every partnership needs at least one body, a board or steering group which all the partners recognise as the partnership's mechanism for making decisions. A properly structured partnership board or similar, is essential to ensure that the partnership delivers its objectives and remains accountable to the partners. It should be large enough to be inclusive, yet small enough to make decisions. If problems are encountered the decision should be referred up the partnership structure.

Increasingly agencies are being asked to work in partnership resulting in capacity issues for staff who often represent their organisation on multiple partnerships.

Thought needs to be given to whether an agency needs to be represented and if so what

added value they are bringing. Where the added value to the partnership, or the agency they are representing, is unclear, or there is none, then it is not sensible for that agency to be involved.

5.1 Running a meeting

Ground rules should be set and adhered to. All members of the partnership should be able to express their opinions and be listened to. Attendance should be recorded, as well as apologies and the minutes from the previous meeting should be approved. Partnerships should focus on what they achieving and follow an action plan.

5.2 Complaints

If the partnership receives a complaint about its actions, its people or its future plans they can be dealt with through either:

- The partners' own complaints process
- [Newcastle City Council Complaints Procedure](#)

It is important that there is clarity between partners over which partner will lead on handling all complaints or specific complaints. Failure to get this right could result in the complaint not being responded to which is likely to make the situation worse. It is recommended that partnerships consider how complaints will be handled and include this in their terms of reference. The partnership should also consider how it will learn from complaints, particularly if issues occur regularly. It may be appropriate to report regular issues to the Children's Trust Board (CTB) using the partnership structure or to a level where action can be taken to resolve the problem.

5.3 Disputes between Partners

A robust Terms of Reference is one tool that helps to prevent these disputes arising or escalating, by setting out in advance the expectations on each partner, the level of resource that they will contribute, and other important issues for the partnership.

Partnership working generally works well. However within partnerships, even where there is a strong sense of shared objectives, partners may still disagree over how best to achieve them. Often conflict is one way that partnerships challenge, innovate and improve their ways of working, yet disputes do occur.

The partnership needs to ensure that each partner contributes in an acceptable way, or the way they agreed to contribute. But, depending on the nature of the partnership, there is often no way of enforcing this other than through the relationships that exist between partners.

Tensions may also be caused by changes that local partners have no control over, such as national reorganisation or changing budgetary priorities. These issues should be considered by a partnership when it is considering a dispute.

However, when a dispute arises the partnership should be clear on the process it will use to resolve the dispute including:

- Will it be left purely to partners in dispute to resolve?
- Will it go to the partnership board? Will their decision be final?
- Will it be referred to an external arbitrator? If so will their decision be binding or advisory?

If the dispute cannot be satisfactorily resolved within the partnership it should be escalated within the Children's Trust Arrangements (see Appendix 2).

5.4 Safeguarding

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is a shared responsibility and a high priority for Newcastle agencies. It is the process of protecting children from abuse or neglect, preventing impairment of their health and development, and ensuring they grow up with safe and effective care enabling them to have optimum life chances and enter adulthood successfully.

Partnerships should ensure that they are aware of and adhere to safeguarding procedures. In line with this each partnership should consider safeguarding issues in day to day work. If your partnership has an action plan, it should review this on a regular basis and escalate any difficulties within the Children's Trust Arrangement.

For further information regarding Safeguarding log on to the [Local Safeguarding Children Board](#) website for the most up to date information.

6. Dissolving a Partnership

If you are considering dissolving a partnership you need to get the support of the partnership you are accountable to. CTB need to be made aware of any request to dissolve a commissioning partnership. A partnership must inform the CTB if they plan to dissolve the partnership. An exit strategy is essential for all partnerships and should be included in the Terms of Reference. This allows all agencies to consider what actions would be necessary to continue a service or to achieve a set of outcomes if the partnership was unable to do so, in addition to setting out how any partnership assets and finance would be disposed of.

Alternatively where the partnership will last for a specified time period, early consideration of how the partnership's work will be sustained in the future, and how any resources will be shared and used by the partners, can also help to avoid any future confusion and a legacy of problems.

A partnership should be concluded if the partnership has delivered its objectives and if there is no additional work for it to undertake. If there is any additional work to undertake this may constitute a change in the partnership and you should refer to the changing your partnership guidance above.

If the partnership's job is done it should:

- Thank all contributors for their hard work, time, resources and effort
- Undertake a lessons learned workshop and where appropriate celebrate what partners have achieved
- Refer to the Terms of Reference which should establish how any existing assets will be shared or disposed of

Appendix 1 Terms of Reference example

All partnerships should consider the following headings in their Terms of Reference. They should only include the sections relevant to them.

1. Purpose To improve the well-being of all the children and young people who are born, raised, educated or find work within the city, by working together to achieve the three priorities which matter most to children, young people and their families:

- Keeping children and young people safe and supporting families
- Reducing inequalities and promoting equality
- Raising aspirations, achievements and opportunities

2. Function

What the partnership will do.

3. Partnership Membership

List the members, titles and the organisations they represent and how they became members (e.g. Election), and the length of time they will serve.

4. Quorum

How many people need to be present to make decisions?

5. Chair Who will be the Chair/Vice Chair? How long will they serve in their roles? It would be advantageous to have a chair and vice chair from different organisations.

6. Budget

Because financial management is a key part of good governance, decisions should not be made in the absence of budget information.

7. Expectation of chair and board members

What are the ground rules for the partnership?

8. Probity and declaration of interest The Nolan principles of public life will apply. Do the members need to declare any interests?

9. Decision Making How will decisions be reached? How will the partnership ensure all stakeholders have had an opportunity to contribute to the debate, particularly Parents, Carers, Children and Young People? How will disputes/complaints be dealt with?

10. Key Relationships and Accountabilities Who will the partnership report to? Which groups, (if any) will report to the partnership? How will the partnership communicate with other groups?

11. Delegation

If the partnership is going to delegate powers how will this be managed?

12. Review

13. Management and Administration What arrangements will the partnership make to administer meetings and manage its work?

14. Signatures

Appendix 2

Partnership Disputes Procedure Flow chart summary

