

Building partnerships

Every Child Matters: Change for Children emphasises the importance of effective multi-agency partnership working to manage and deliver children's services.

Consultancy 4Children can assist with development of existing partnerships and planning for the future, developing pragmatic approaches to effective partnership working for delivering the Every Child Matters outcomes.

We will research partnership opportunities between teams, agencies, private, public, community and voluntary sectors and government bodies, and develop pragmatic approaches to effective partnership working for building and implementing a Children's Trust strategy.

Identification and engagement of key partners

Consultancy 4Children will identify and engage key partners and consult with them on delivering integrated services, including models of good practice in service delivery, and seminars with key partners to develop a common vision to enhance effective multi-agency partnership working.

Analysis

4Children will analyse the results and produce a report detailing:

- Findings of the consultation, including issues of take-up, problems encountered, barriers to be overcome
- Sustaining engagement
- Conclusions and recommendations

Consultancy 4Children can deliver training and support to enable partnerships to develop a coherent approach to the spectrum of planning and service delivery, including helping partners to take a constructively critical look at partnership working and multi-agency capacity building. A health check will be included to help establish areas of weakness and strategic and operational barriers, and to ensure that training and capacity building is tailored to address needs.

Partnership building programmes include:

- Reviewing objectives and responsibilities, and developing clear and jointly agreed strategies
- Establishing effective protocols for agencies and teams to work together

- Effective team working, including managing power imbalances
- Efficient communication processes and systems that aid the sharing of information between agencies and teams
- Managing expectations and helping to influence decision-makers
- Ensuring there is understanding and clarity of partners' roles and responsibilities
- Ongoing evaluation of your partnership's achievements

Capacity building

Services for children are delivered by a variety of providers, including voluntary and community, private and statutory front-line deliverers, most of whom are struggling to develop the capacity required to meet local needs.

Consultancy 4Children can help service providers to develop their skills and capabilities to offer users the most effective solution to their needs, focusing on:

- Governance and leadership
- Business planning
- Managing change
- Financial management
- Managing the organisation
- Partnership working and engagement
- Monitoring, evaluation and improvement

Consultancy 4Children can offer advice, support and training on capacity building to service providers including local authorities, children's centres, extended schools, voluntary and community organisations and management committees.

Consultancy 4Children can also review existing partnerships, including objectives and responsibilities, to:

- Establish effective protocols for agencies and teams to work together
- Provide recommendations for efficient communication processes and systems
- Aid the sharing of information between agencies and teams
- Manage expectations and helping to influence decision-makers
- Ensure there is understanding and clarity of partners' roles and responsibilities

Consultancy 4Children will write a report on the findings, including a draft action plan, and meet with stakeholders to talk through the action plan and agree a final version. This will be signed off by all parties, and future capacity building support agreed. The report will include issues relating to:

- Individual and/or group training needs analysis
- Roles and responsibilities
- Identification of future training and development
- Funding/resources

Play partnerships and strategies

The Big Lottery Fund has made £124 million available to local authority areas as part of its £155 million Children's Play initiative. Applications for funding must come from play partnerships led by local authorities, based on consultation with local stakeholders to review and develop their strategies for children's play.

Consultancy 4Children can help with developing partnerships, play strategies, and applications for the Big Lottery Children's Play initiative.

Local authorities will be invited to submit their play strategy, and a portfolio of project proposals as the basis for their application, clearly reflecting the joint interests of the local play partnership. The programme opened to applications in March 2006, with first grants to be announced in Autumn 2006. There will be four deadlines for the submission of applications: July 2006, November 2006, March 2007 and September 2007.

Consultancy 4Children has an experienced team of play professionals who can help with every stage of this process:

- Consultation with local stakeholders
- Building play partnerships
- Developing play strategies
- Project proposals
- Applications for Big Lottery Children's Play initiative funding

Children's Workforce development strategy

The government's Children's Workforce Development Strategy aims to develop a childcare workforce that is competent and confident, aspiring and progressive for workers and trusted and respected by parents, carers, children and young people. Each local authority is expected to develop a local Children's Workforce Development Strategy by March 2006.

Consultancy 4Children can assist with developing local Children's Workforce Strategies, and designing and delivering training and skills development programmes for private, voluntary and community sector childcare workers in a variety of areas to ensure that the local Children's Workforce Development Strategy is delivered effectively and informed by need.

The aim of the strategy will be:

- Staff are able to work with a wider range of, and provide a greater range of services to, children aged 0-16 years
- New, integrated approaches to the provision of services and Children's Workforce development can be developed
- Local workforce development strategies that reflect service needs
- Partnership development and interface with employers, training providers, Learning and Skills Councils and workforce
- Analysis of workforce and qualification gaps
- To identify additional activity and resources required to recruit, retrain and up-skill
- To strengthen career progression

Consultancy 4Children has worked with Sussex Learning and Skills Council to develop a Workforce Development Strategy and ongoing support to audit, plan and develop training and career pathways for the childcare workforce across three local authorities.

We are currently working with Cheshire County Council to take forward a recruitment and retention strategy for childcare staff.