

Shropshire Children and Young People's Strategy 2011



Foreword and Structure

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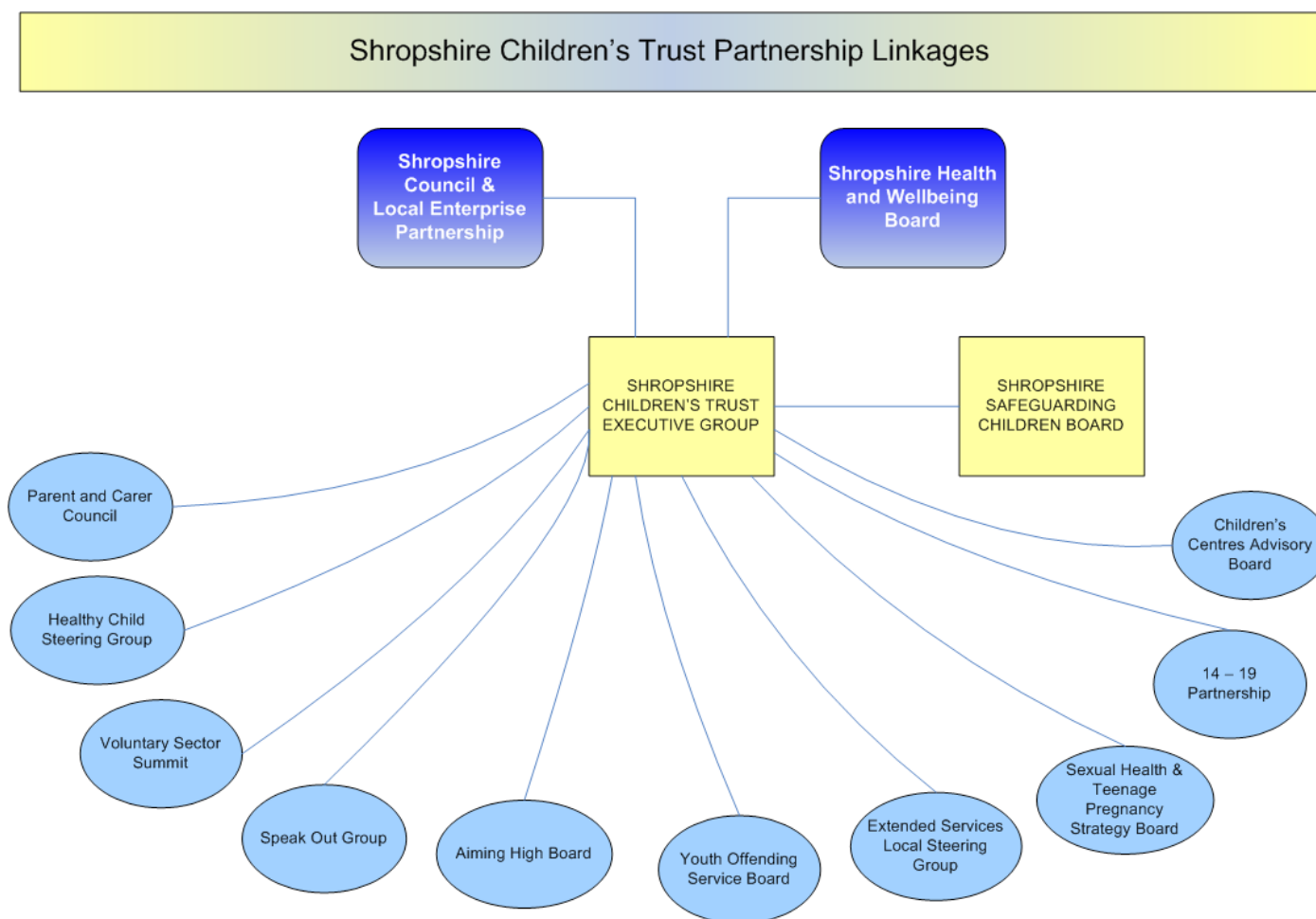
Shropshire Council and its partners were judged in 2010 to deliver good services for children and young people, with the majority of services and settings classed as good or better and there being promising prospects for further improvement.

The current economic austerity requires significant budget savings across public sector organisations but the Children's Trust partners are seeking to achieve these while

continuing to protect front line services that maintain and improve the high standards achieved.

The shapes of organisations are changing. Excellent inter-agency cooperation and partnership working will be a constant feature of continuing high levels of well-being for Shropshire's children, young people and families.

Structure of the Shropshire Children's Trust



Introduction



The key strategic factors being used to underpin the support of good outcomes for children and young people as given over the following few pages are to:

a) Overall Strategy - to maintain quality of provision within diminished resources:

Whilst resources are reduced for the foreseeable future it is paramount that the quality of provision is not only maintained but improved for the benefit of the children and young people of Shropshire.

b) Target effort at the most vulnerable but also those at high risk of needing care or protection: It is vital that resources are used where most appropriate and most effective. In line with this, resources will be targeted at the most vulnerable children and young people and those at high risk. These efforts are aimed at helping those who need help and ensuring others do not become vulnerable.

c) Move towards more localised services with more being delivered by others:

An authority wide restructure will enable integrated delivery of children's services at a local level. There will be three areas (Northern, Central and Southern Shropshire), with locality-based teams capable of working together and delivering services.

d) Achieve closer working with partners and also with neighbouring authorities:

We will build upon the good partnership working to date to implement new arrangements for joint working, particularly through and with voluntary and not for profit organisations.

The needs assessments that support the following priority actions are the latest Joint Strategic Needs Assessment and the Sustainable Community Strategy needs assessment, the December 2010 Local Area Interactive Tool of the Department for Education, the December 2010 Children's Services assessment by Ofsted and the detailed findings of the latest (2009) children and young people's Tellus perception survey.

While this strategy is publicly available and feedback is welcome from all, it is tailored particularly for children and young people's service providers and professionals.

Local Government and the VCS

Shropshire Council works in close partnership with local communities and the voluntary sector to deliver a wide range of projects and local policy initiatives. This provides support for vulnerable children and their families and includes projects such as the British Red Cross Young Carers scheme, Barnardo's Family Support and provision of Short Breaks to Children with Disabilities. The aim is to achieve comprehensive planning and delivery of services across a wide spectrum of need. Working with the voluntary sector is also an important part of Children's Centre service delivery. The Playbus helps us to increase access to families who are isolated, providing children with a high quality play and learning experience and parents with support, information and advice.

Also our work with community parent-led toddler groups helps families to access additional support, advice and opportunities in their locality without us having to duplicate services.

Attainment

Martin, a looked after child, achieved 10 GCSEs in 2010, including seven A*-C grades. He received excellent support from his local mainstream school, working in collaboration with a specialist teacher from the Looked after Children (LAC) Team. He was given particular support for his English studies, where he achieved two C grades. The LAC Connexions Worker supported Martin over career choices and he is making a successful transition into independent living.



Shropshire has an excellent record of academic attainment with many schools consistently featuring in the top 15% nationally. The proportion of young people gaining 5 or more GCSEs at A*- C including English and maths has continually improved and remains above the national average (57.8% in 2010). The achievement of 11 year olds in 2010 was 74% gaining Level 4 or above including English and Maths. Early years development measured through the Foundation Stage Profile has got better each year since 2006 and is now amongst the best 25% in England (62% 2010). The rate of persistent absence (4.2% 2010) and permanent exclusions (0.04% 2010) are also in the best quartile nationally.

To help protect and maintain achievement levels, we will:

- help increase the proportion of primary schools judged to be good or outstanding (67%, above the national average in 2010) and secondary schools judged to have good or outstanding behaviour; promote collaboration and joint working across schools and assist the implementation of progressive school organisation;
- work with schools to provide a re-shaped Advisory Team;
- respond to emerging Government policy re education;
- reduce financial pressures on central and devolved individual schools budgets; and
- support improvements in 16-19 education including a review of college provision in the south of the county.



The educational outcomes of the most vulnerable will remain a focus, with continued attention on closing the attainment gap at 11 and 16 years and provision for Looked After Children, those eligible for free school meals and those with special educational needs, particularly autistic spectrum disorders.

Positive Activities

Bethany (15) from Shrewsbury has given her last two Christmas Days to celebrate Christmas with those who would otherwise be alone or forgotten.

Young people engaged in positive activities are more likely to succeed, to become good citizens and less likely to disengage from education or offend.

In a rural county like Shropshire, it can be challenging to meet the expectations around youth facilities and activities more commonly present in urban areas, yet two thirds of local young people reported regularly taking part in positive activities during 2009 and the Shropshire Youth "Good Hood" and VTalent volunteering initiative delivered 634 hours of input a week or 27847 hours a year.

The latest published number of first time entrants to the youth justice system (per 100,000 10-17 year old popn) is amongst the lowest 25% nationally (750 in 2010 reduced from 1690 in 2006/07), as are the rates of young people sentenced to custody (3.5) and the rate of young people reoffending (0.82, an improvement from 1.1 in 2005). There has been a significant reduction in both the frequency and seriousness of offending by young people in Shropshire. The % of looked after children receiving final warnings, reprimands or convictions as a ratio of all 10-17 year olds receiving the same is 0.9 (2009), smaller than both statistical neighbour (2.8) and national (2.5) averages and an improvement from 3.8 in 2007. The number of young people in Shropshire receiving their first reprimand, warning or conviction has reduced from 520 in 2006/07 to 225 in 2009/10.

The future focus of encouraging participation in youth activities will be around maximising the spread and scale of provision with increased cost efficiency. A range of delivery mechanisms are being explored

and partnership work with the community and voluntary sector will be a strong feature. Targeted youth support services will be focused on the most needy individuals and groups.

Through these new services we will seek to:

- expand the range of opportunities to help increase the number of young people volunteering;
- open new facilities such as the MY Place youth development in Oswestry; and
- provide targeted support for the most vulnerable communities and individuals around reduced offending, substance misuse, teenage conceptions and to maximise attainment and engagement in society.

Shrewsbury Street Dance Club, which was forced to close through lack of funding, has reopened after receiving a £1000 grant from West Mercia Police Authority Community Initiatives Fund. The club operates on Friday evenings providing diversionary activities free of charge to young people aged 11 to 25 which will have a positive impact on anti-social behaviour in the community.



Economic Well-Being

Michael lived in an over-crowded house when his mother died and he went off the rails, got in trouble with the police and was expelled from school. Following support, he now lives with his family in better accommodation, is regularly attending and succeeding at a pupil referral unit, has made friends and built his self esteem at a boxing club. He has had no more issues with the law.

Shropshire has a relatively high proportion of its economic base related to service industries and the public sector, so faces a challenge in the current economic climate. The support provided to and achievement of young people remains good though, for example the number of 16-19 year olds awarded VRQs (Vocationally Related Qualifications) has increased from 866 in 2004 to 3782 in 2009; the number of NVQs has almost doubled over the same time period to 1037; and the achievement of Level 2 and Level 3 qualifications at age 19 are amongst the best 25% nationally and above the England average respectively. While Shropshire continues to maintain a very low level of young people aged 16 to 18 not in education, employment or training (ETE) (4.7% in 2009), getting more young offenders and looked after children (58.6% in 2010) into EET post 16 years is sought.

Reducing family poverty plays an important role in ensuring future economic wellbeing and while many of the services provided to children and their families contribute towards minimising the issue, targeting the below and other services at vulnerable individuals and communities is of particular significance.



To continue to equip young people for a prosperous future we will:

- improve access to information, advice and guidance and modernise the careers service;
- expand the scale of apprenticeship programmes;
- focus education, employment and training support on those with the greatest needs including young offenders, looked after children, young people from more deprived neighbourhoods and those with special educational needs; and
- reduce family poverty through partnership work around appropriate accommodation, maximising benefits, enabling parents' employment and income, plus engaging disadvantaged children and young people in aspiration and attainment-raising activities.



Amanda from Market Drayton said 'My local Children's Centre Breastfeeding Peer Support was such a fantastic source of support to me that I am now planning to train to become a peer supporter and help other mums to breastfeed.'

Health outcomes for Shropshire's children and young people are generally good, with similar obesity levels to nationally and high take-up rates for PE, sports, and school lunches. Obesity is more concentrated in the most deprived areas. Local breastfeeding rates (40.4% at 6-8 weeks in 2009) are below the national average of 45.2%. These will continue to be a focus as public health functions are migrated from PCTs to local authorities. The latest published teenage conception rates (30.7 per 10,000, 2008) are much lower than the England average (40.5). The level of development of Shropshire's child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS) compares well to nationally and is deemed ready for review in preparation for its next stage of development.

Parent and carer perceptions of services for disabled children are positive, scoring 63 against the England average of 59. It is recognised that further work is required around the level of alcohol, smoking and substance misuse that young people report since 11% of 10-15 year olds reported having more than one drink or substance in a week of 2009 compared to 10% nationally and 67% in Shropshire never having had a drink compared to 68% nationally. In 2008/09 816 people accessed specialist alcohol treatment of which under 16's accounted for just under 4%, with those aged between 16-19 accounting for 11%.

A new approach for 2010 as the Community Alcohol Partnership project piloted in the south of the county. The project recognised the need for the community, including businesses, to be involved in the solution to underage drinking and aimed to address the problem through education, enforcement and tackling public perceptions. It built on existing work undertaken by partners, such as the 'test purchasing' operations undertaken by the council's trading standards service and the local police team.

Local businesses worked hand-in-hand with partners to ensure that information was shared with trading standards and the police about alcohol related issues, including details about

illegal alcohol sales. In return, shops and pubs received support and education, rather than face criminal punishment, to help them overcome the problems they experienced. At the same time, leaflets about the project and the dangers of under age drinking were delivered to 4500 households in the area. Posters were displayed at local schools and colleges and by all partners with the aim of raising public awareness and encouraging active involvement across the community.

The Council's Alcohol Partnership is currently working with the police, children and family services and the Youth Offending Service (YOS) to develop pathways to ensure that young people found in possession of alcohol in a public place receive appropriate support to address alcohol use and related behaviour.

A booklet aimed at parents of children in year 6 to facilitate discussion about drinking sensibly has recently been revised and will be distributed to schools for dissemination in Spring 2011.

The booklet recognises recent findings from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation in relation to the influence that parent's attitudes and behaviour towards alcohol has on their children, Safeguarding practices have continued to improve in the full range of health services with safeguarding board training provided across agencies.

After extensive training of professionals we are starting to deliver HENRY (Health, Exercise and Nutrition for the Really Young) in Early Years settings to improve obesity rates, there is also an identified need for more initiatives which is being addressed.

To improve health outcomes, especially for the most vulnerable children and young people we will:

- target preventative support such as around breast feeding, smoking cessation, alcohol misuse etc. through Children's Centres;
- review the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service;
- reduce the numbers of young people requiring hospital treatment for alcohol abuses;
- increase the number of personalised budgets including short breaks for disabled children;
- maintain low levels of teenage conceptions; and
- we will liaise and build partnership working with the developing GP Consortium.

Stay Safe

A young person leaving care stated 'If I hadn't come into care I wouldn't have got the support with education and wouldn't now be on a degree course at university.'

The number of Looked After Children (LAC) in Shropshire increased from 28 per 10,000 in 2004 to 37 per 10,000 in 2010. While increases have also occurred nationally, this is above the level ideal in Shropshire. There are currently (December 2010) 110 foster caring households in Shropshire, of which 29 (above target of 27) are at Skills Level 3. The fostering service received a "good" judgement and no recommendations in 2010. While there have been recent decreases in LAC numbers from the year end figure, careful management of entry to and exit from the care system will be used to reduce and maintain appropriate levels for the future. There have been low levels of adoptions to date in Shropshire (7.2% of LAC in 2009) and the most recent adoption inspection gave some recommendations for further improvement. The percent of new LAC at 31 March 2010 who were placed more than 20 miles from their home was 30%, while in similar areas the latest rate available was

23.1% (2007). The long term stability of LAC has improved year on year from 44.9% of LAC looked after continuously for at least 2.5 years living in the same placement for at least 2 years in 2006 to 68.0% in 2010.

To help reduce the number of and support for Looked After Children we will:

- establish a crisis intervention, out of hours team to support families and prevent sustained care being necessary;
- increase the number of foster carers, Adoption and Special Guardianship placements and reduce the number of out of county placements;
- put in place new arrangements for homeless 16-18 year olds; and
- implement the adoption inspection recommendations including: ensuring the quality of background reports for prospective adoptive parents; clear communication of the decisions made; mapping the procedures used to access specialists and consistently good CAMHS support; Level 4 NVQ/equivalent management qualification of the identified manager; and appropriate premises for therapeutic interventions.



Before entering foster care Rachel was in trouble with the police and constantly missing school, she described the day she entered her first foster placement as the day that changed her life. Rachel started to thrive in her school environment and received support and encouragement in her passion for singing, acting and dancing. With the support Rachel received she has been able to progress with her passion and won a scholarship through an audition to a stage school, describing her change as 'surreal, as only a few months back I couldn't afford one pound fifty to attend my local dance class'.

Rachel has subsequently moved to Manchester after being accepted to the Manchester College to study Musical Theatre which she said was 'way beyond where I thought I could have been, I never would have thought that it was possible to achieve so much in so little time.'

Stay Safe

A total of 78 boys and girls from primary schools across Shrewsbury recently took part in a Tag Rugby Festival organised by the police. Tag rugby is a non contact sport which is aimed at engaging with youngsters and simultaneously delivering personal safety messages. To date, around 15 officers and CSOs have been trained as coaches by the Rugby Football Union and there are plans to expand the scheme to train another 20 officers in the near future.

The child protection outcomes of children and young people in Shropshire are good, there are fewer offences against children in Shropshire than would be expected. Shropshire has 28% of West Mercia's under 18 year olds but only 17% of the regions offences against children. In a similar way to with Looked After Children, there have been increased numbers of children with child protection plans locally and nationally: in Shropshire it increased from 173 in 2009 to 260 at the end of March 2010. The timeliness of both initial and core assessments is lower than desired with (at 78.2% within 7 days) initial assessments being above the England average (67.1%) but core assessments in 35 days at 61.4% (2010) being below the England average (71.8%). New social care team structures have been put in place, additional staff recruited and a revised helpdesk function created. The quality of plans and support for child protection and LAC children is being monitored by quality

assurance and business information checks with positive improvements noted. Progress is being made regarding data quality issues through support team changes, weekly management information reports and support and IT equipment for social workers. Partner agencies such as YOS are supported by Shropshire Safeguarding Children Board to develop strong safeguarding processes and practices.

To help support child protection service delivery we will:

- ensure high quality and improved timeliness of Initial and Core Assessments;
- monitor the quality and effectiveness of Common Assessment Frameworks each 6 months following service changes;
- use clear, regular and consistently accurate management information to support social workers manage their caseloads;
- improve the timeliness and accuracy of information recorded in case management;
- use recruitment initiatives to maintain good Social Worker staffing levels; and
- implement the new Commissioning Strategy (including Directors Panel).



Capacity To Improve

The Transformation Programme, 'Creating a better future' which is currently underway in the Council is a commitment to further improvement, by working together in new ways across the whole Council and with our local partners. The programme will equip the Council to continue to move forward confidently, as an efficient and innovative organisation, which puts improving the quality of life of all local people at the heart of everything it does.

An essential element of the programme is the further development of locality working, facilitated by the appointment of three Area Directors across the county. These are senior management posts that will involve communities in comprehensively redesigning services, enhancing and developing the work of the five existing Multi-Agency Teams to commission sustainable, locally owned and delivered solutions that meet local needs.

The streamlined and simplified management structure for the Council will see the integration of Public Protection into a People Directorate, providing further opportunities for strengthening recent good practice between Police and Trading Standards in relation to under-age drinking. In addition, locally-based Positive Activities teams and a more targeted approach to youth support will create a robust framework of education, enforcement and diversion to deliver improved outcomes for young people.

The new Council management structure also creates the capacity to integrate the Public Health function into the local authority in a phased and planned way throughout the transition period to April 2013. Existing good practice between the local authority and health partners in relation to, for example, the Healthy Child Programme, childhood obesity and sexual health and teenage pregnancy, will be further integrated in terms of both strategy and delivery within the Care and Well-being Group.

The creation of a 0-25 Disability Service in the Council's new operating model will facilitate more joined-up service planning and delivery in relation to transition issues. A recently-developed joint Transition Protocol, has a stated aim of improving transition planning and support for young people with additional needs and better co-ordinating support across a wide range of agencies (health, social care, education and training, Information, Advice and Guidance provider and voluntary agencies). This gives a clear illustration of our intention to work more closely across adults and children's services in all sectors.

A recent review of the role and function of the Council's Scrutiny Panels is now enabling Elected Members to play a more active part in ensuring

services improve and value for money is achieved. Task and Finish Groups of Members lead on the review of topics where they research issues and develop recommendations and they are also involved in setting the work programme for their scrutiny committee, bringing forward topics and issues, identifying who they want to hear from to inform their work, what they want to know and how they want it presented to them. A Scrutiny Task and Finish Group recently completed a review of Looked After Children and SEN External Placements and produced a "Top Ten" Improvement Action Plan.

In the New Operating Model the delivery of a ICT Support Service to Adults & Children's Social Care is being Integrated into one team. Re-forming a single ICT team will ensure that we are in a strong position to support our social care workforce. Particular emphasis will be on further improving and developing our current care management system (CareFirst) to ensure that our frontline staff have a robust system that underpins the work that they do. To support ongoing developments we have commissioned our care management supplier 'OLM' to undertake a 'Comprehensive Review' of the system, covering business processes, reporting, government guidance, and training. The 'Action Plan' from this review will inform our roadmap for development.

Workforce development will continue to be a prominent factor going forward. The 'In-Touch Project' has been set up and looks to address and improve recruitment and retention within Social Care teams with the aim of managing risks and improving outcomes for service users. A Common Assessment Framework (CAF) training programme for practitioners and managers within the children and young people's workforce continues to be provided. This training will be developed in line with future service changes.

Partnership arrangements have also been recently streamlined to reflect the need to work smarter and more efficiently. The Children's Trust Board has been replaced by a range of practitioner forums that build on local networks and provide opportunities for the children's workforce to share good practice. These will be further developed as locality working becomes more widespread across services. The Executive Group of the Children's Trust, made up of the main public sector organisations, meets six weekly and will feed directly into the Health and Well-being Board. This will ensure appropriate focus by the Board on children and young people's issues.