

NORFOLK CHILDREN'S FUND PARTNERSHIP BOARD CONSTITUTION

1. NAME, PURPOSE and ACCOUNTABILITY

1.1 The Norfolk Children's Fund Partnership Board is the formal decision making body for the Children's Fund in Norfolk. It is accountable to the chief executive of Norfolk County Council as the accountable body and lead agency for the Children's Fund in Norfolk.

2. MISSION

2.1 The partnership board is committed through its work to providing a flexible and responsive approach of meeting needs in Norfolk for services for vulnerable children aged 5 to 13 years, supporting them and their families in breaking the cycle of poverty and disadvantage. To achieve this it will develop good practice and recommend access to additional resources over and above those provided through mainstream and specific programmes. The work of the board will be in accordance with the objectives and key principles as it develops effective service provision in the county. It will engage and support voluntary and community organisations in playing their part and enable services to work together to help children overcome poverty and disadvantage.

3. OBJECTIVES

- To enhance existing services within Norfolk, building on what has proved to be effective.
- To develop services with the involvement of local groups who will in turn engage in a dialogue with the children and parents in their area.
- To deliver services based on the identified needs of local communities.
- To deliver services based on communities of interest such as children from minority ethnic families, travellers, young carers or children in isolated rural communities.
- To learn from best practice elsewhere.
- To develop mechanisms to detect early signs of difficulty, identify needs and introduce children, young people and their families to appropriate services.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of the Children's Fund programme in Norfolk.
- To contribute to strategic planning for children.

4. KEY PRINCIPLES

- 4.1 In working towards the objectives, the partnership board will seek to:
- encourage inter-agency work, based within the neighbourhood community, through stimulating imaginative and innovative work as well as reinforcing local co-operation;
 - provide support for children showing early signs of difficulties and address the causes of such risk, in the family, in the wider community, or both;

- support extension of good evidence-based existing projects, as well as new innovative services;
- secure long term improvement through building capacity within individual families and broader communities, as well as direct support to individual children;
- when providing support to children and their families pay particular attention to those who face discrimination or have particular needs because of ethnic origin, disability or gender;
- operate with the minimum of bureaucracy and complexity;
- achieve an equitable geographical spread within the county, although higher levels of support will be provided to areas of greater need;
- complement and bridge the gap in preventive services between Sure Start and Early Years programmes and the development of the Connexions Service for the 13+ age group; and
- engage voluntary and community groups, including groups serving particular needs such as those of ethnic minorities or people with disabilities, both through funding and by ensuring that they are key players in drawing up local proposals for improved services.

5. MEMBERSHIP AND STAFFING

5.1 The partnership board has adopted principles of membership based on the Seven Principles of Public Life proposed by the Nolan Committee in 1996:

Selflessness. Members should take decisions solely in terms of the partnership. They should not do so in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, family or friends, or own organisation whether statutory or voluntary. Representatives of local groups are expected to promote only the interests of that partnership.

Integrity. Members should not place themselves under any financial or other obligation to outside individuals or organisations that might influence them in the performance of their duties.

Objectivity. In carrying out the business of the Norfolk Children's Fund partnership board, including recommending approval of funding applications, members will make choices solely on merit.

Accountability. Board members are ordinarily accountable to their host organisations and local partnership. In terms of their activities as a board member they are accountable to that body and must submit themselves to whatever scrutiny is deemed appropriate by the committee.

Openness. Members should be as open as possible about all the decisions and actions they take. They should give reasons for their views and decisions and restrict information only when the wider interests of the partnership clearly demand it.

Honesty. Board members have a duty to declare any particular interests of their own organisation relating to partnership responsibilities and to take steps to resolve any conflicts arising in a way which protects the interests of the partnership board.

Leadership. Board members should promote and support these principles by leadership and example.

5.2 The membership of the partnership board will consist of two representatives

nominated by each local group, representatives from appropriate statutory agencies and individuals representing the views of parents and children.

- Appropriate statutory agencies might include those involved in education, policing and crime prevention, leisure and youth services, health and social services.
- Representatives of statutory agencies attending the Partnership Board should have sufficient authority to allow them to speak on behalf of their agency and make decisions at an agreed level without reference to their line managers.
- Representatives of local partnerships should have sufficient authority to speak on behalf of that group and make decisions at an agreed level without further reference.
- Of the two local group representatives, at least one should be from the voluntary sector.

5.3 The membership of the board will seek to be an equal partnership between the statutory and voluntary sectors.

5.4 Additional members will only be appointed with the approval of the board.

5.5 The board may co-opt additional members.

5.6 Members should aim to maintain consistent attendance at board meetings. Where unavoidable, however, an agency or local group may arrange for a substitute to attend and be involved in decision making. Failure to attend three consecutive meetings will normally disqualify an individual from membership of the partnership board. In exceptional circumstances, such as long term illness, the chair has discretion to waive this requirement.

5.7 The chair of the partnership board will be an independent person appointed by a selection process in which the board is fully involved.

5.8 The programme manager or a suitable deputy will be expected to attend all partnership board meetings. Other members of the Norfolk Children's Fund central team will attend as appropriate.

5.9 At the discretion of the chair, representatives of individual organisations seeking funding may attend the relevant board meeting to outline their proposal and answer any questions from members.

5.10 The secretariat for the partnership board will be provided by a member of the central team.

6. MEETINGS

6.1 There will be an agreed schedule of meetings at quarterly intervals, subject to review at six monthly intervals. The purpose of the meetings is:

- to set, develop and keep under review the strategic direction of the Norfolk Children's Fund plan;
- to develop and agree criteria and monitor the process that will be used to approve project proposals;

- to ensure and maintain a county perspective in relation to Children's Fund developments;
- to receive and approve standards in respect of equality of access, child protection, user involvement, referrals, monitoring and evaluation, contracting arrangements, health and safety, risk assessment and any other standards as appropriate;
- to receive reports from projects, local groups, the Children's Fund team and identify common issues;
- to commission work, including research, to enable the board to effectively carry out its functions;
- to approve the annual review and report on the plan, including all budget proposals; and
- to approve the work and monitor the performance of the Children's Fund team.
- To delegate authority to the Programme Manager and the Children's fund team to carry out financial and operational functions on behalf of the Partnership to support the delivery of the Children's Fund Strategic Plan and the service programme.

6.2 The quorum for a meeting will be 50% of the statutory and local group representatives, with at least one representative from each of the local groups and two statutory sector representatives present.

6.3 In keeping with a partnership model, decisions will normally be reached by consensus. Should in exceptional circumstances a vote become necessary, decisions will be reached by simple majority, with the independent chair having a casting vote in the event of a tie. If more than one member of an individual statutory agency is present, only one may vote. Staff of the Norfolk Children's Fund central team are not eligible to vote.

6.4 An extraordinary board meeting may be convened by the independent chair or by a request in writing to the chair signed by at least three board members. At least fourteen days notice in writing will be given of such meetings.

6.5 The partnership board will arrange and host an annual conference to inform, consult and encourage participants in the work of the Children's Fund within Norfolk. At least twenty one days' notice in writing will be given of the conference.

6.6 Meetings of the partnership board will be comprehensively recorded with wide circulation of the approved minutes.

7. SUB COMMITTEES

7.1 The partnership board may appoint one or more sub-committees. These will consist of three or more members of the board for the purpose of making any inquiry or supervising or performing any function or duty which in the opinion of the board would be more conveniently undertaken or carried out by a sub-committee.

7.2 The acts and proceedings of any such sub-committees shall be fully and promptly reported to the board.

8. AMENDMENT OF THE CONSTITUTION

8.1 Amendment of the constitution requires the approval of the full partnership board.