

## Introduction

Thurrock's Children's Trust was launched in November 2007. The Trust followed on from the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership and continued to deliver on its' Children and Young People's Plan which had been developed and adopted by all agencies which work with children, young people and their families in Thurrock.

The Children's Trust in Thurrock brings together the work of a range of agencies and partners who have a responsibility for delivering services for all of our children, young people and families. These partner agencies have worked throughout the year to develop and implement ways to improve outcomes and opportunities for children and families across the borough.

The Children's Trust Board are pleased to present this first Annual Report, which highlights the work the Trust has done during the first 18 months, the positive differences we have seen so far and the next steps which the Trust partners will take to further improve the quality and quantity of services available for the children, young people and families who live in our community.

This report is produced at an exciting time for Thurrock, its residents and its young people with new developments of a Community Hospital, a University campus, and a new creative skills park to house the base for the Royal Opera House's

backstage services all now moving rapidly closer to fruition. During the last 18 months, the borough has also seen the opening of the new Gateway Academy building, the completion of the new Treetops and Beacon Hill Special Schools, the completion of the first phase of a new primary school for the pupils of West Thurrock Primary School and the opening of a number of new Children's Centres across the borough.

Clearly, the physical evidence of regeneration and change are becoming increasingly visible and the Trust looks forward to continuing to play its part in the transformation of Thurrock. The aim of the Trust is to work for continuous improvement – stated simply in the Children and Young People's Plan as "Better and better – for each child and every young person in Thurrock".

This first Annual Report celebrates what has been achieved in pursuit of that aim so far and all partner agencies are confident that the Children's Trust in Thurrock will continue to work together, listening to the voice of young people and putting them first, and in that way, secure the kind of services, facilities, and opportunities that our community wants and that all of our children, young people and their families richly deserve.

## Background

Historically, partnership working has also been a key feature of working arrangements in Thurrock, since unitary status was awarded in 1998. However the establishment of the Thurrock

Children's Trust as a legal entity in November 2007 took partnership working in Thurrock to a level not seen in the borough previously.

To ensure that the new Trust embarked on a truly joined up approach, a wide range of agencies signed a 'Memorandum Of Agreement' committing themselves to working with each other, removing artificial barriers, developing integrated staff teams based around children's needs rather than professional boundaries or agency organisational structures and pooling their resources to jointly fund, commission and deliver, services for children, young people and their families.

The Children and Young People's Plan is the Trust's overarching strategic document and it identifies a number of strategic objectives and sub-objectives which are the Trust's priorities for 2007 to 2010. As part of the review process for this Annual Report, the Trust has reviewed all information and data about outcomes for children and young people and updated its needs assessment. Consequently, the Trust will consider, and where necessary amend and adjust, its strategic objectives / sub-objectives and from there it will alter its strategic Children and Young People's Plan.

The Trust has also considered both national and local developments as part of the review process for this Annual Report, particularly the publication of the Government's Children's Plan and the development of Thurrock's Local Area Agreement. The

Trust will continue to monitor and evaluate changes in local need and national policy and take appropriate and swift actions to address any and all issues that affect children and young people in Thurrock.

## The Trust In Operation

### Membership of the Trust

Every agency which is under a legal duty to participate and co-operate with the Children's Trust is a member of the Trust Board. Therefore, the membership of the Trust Board includes the Director of Children's Services, the elected member with responsibility for children and young people and a number of senior managers from the Council's Children, Education and Families Directorate along with the Director of Strategic Commissioning, the Director of Public Health, and a member of the Executive Board from the South West Essex Primary Care Trust.

The Trust Board also includes representatives from

- Learning and Skills Council
- Essex Probation Service
- Primary Schools in Thurrock
- Secondary and Special Schools in Thurrock
- Voluntary Sector providers in Thurrock
- Essex Police

The Children's Trust Board are responsible for setting the overall direction of the Trust, monitoring its work and are accountable to the Local Strategic Partnership

## Structure of the Trust

The Children's Trust Board is the strategic decision making body within the Trust. It is the Trust Board where decisions are made about priorities and funding allocations, as well as the commissioning of services to meet specific identified needs among children and young people.

There are a number of multi-agency 'Workstream Groups' where managers and practitioners from different partners come together to plan and deliver actions in more detail. These groups address issues which directly affect children and young people such as

- Risky Behaviours among children and young people
- Anti-Bullying
- Children Missing Education
- 14-19 Education

# Improving Children and Young People's Health – How Well Are We Doing?

## Be Healthy Priorities

The Children's Trust has three key strategic objectives for children and young people's health.

**Be Healthy Objective 1. Each baby and young child has the healthiest possible start to life**

### What has been achieved so far?

- We have increased the number of visits made to babies within the first two months of their life
- The range of ante-natal service advice and support has been extended to a number of new areas in Thurrock
- We have provided support for parents to help the personal, social and emotional development of babies and young children through our Sure Start Personal and Social Education programme

### What difference have we made?

- 127 new mothers were visited ante-natal last year
- Infant mortality rates in Thurrock are better than the national averages

- 64% of Thurrock schools now offer access to childcare for parents
- 91% of Thurrock schools now offer access to parenting support

#### **What will be the next steps?**

- We need to provide more advice and guidance for parents. Recent surveys showed 75% would welcome more advice and guidance about their parenting roles
- The levels of childhood immunisation and MMR vaccination need to improve to raise them above the national average

### **Be Healthy Objective 2. Each child and every young person is able to make healthy choices**

#### **What has been achieved so far?**

- All Thurrock's Primary, Secondary and Special Schools are working on the Healthy Schools Programme
- An additional advisor for Personal Social and Health Education has been recruited to help schools become 'Healthy Schools'
- Programme of weighing all pupils to review childhood obesity levels at age 5 and again at age 11 is in place in every Thurrock primary school
- Revised the way advice and support services work on reducing teenage pregnancy rates in the borough
- All Thurrock Primary Schools offer fruit to pupils every day through the National Fruit in Schools Scheme

### **What difference have we made?**

- Teenage pregnancy rates in Thurrock fell again last year.  
Overall the numbers of teenage pregnancies have fallen by more than 25% in the last 10 years, which is more than double the national average
- 36 of Thurrock's schools have now fully met all of the demanding national Healthy Schools standards
- 90% of Thurrock's schools were judged as good or better by Ofsted for the way in which learners were encouraged to adopt healthy lifestyles

### **What will be the next steps?**

- Although the overall letter of sexually transmitted infections among young people is improving compared to other boroughs, we need to do more to improve our screening for Chlamydia
- Measuring children's weights shows that too many of your young children are already classed as obese by the age of 5. In some areas it is around ¼ of all children. We need to continue to promote and support healthy eating directly among parents and families as well as with children through our schools
- Too few of our young people participate in sports activities as frequently as we would want them to. We need to improve the range of opportunities on offer and improve the ways we help children and young people access sports and leisure provision

## **Be Healthy Objective 3 - Each child and every young person to have access to the services they need when they need them?**

### **What has been achieved so far?**

- We have developed a Primary Mental Health Team for schools to refer children and young people for assessment and treatment quickly and appropriately
- We have increased the number of speech and language therapists working to support schools and families
- A new strategy for developing and providing better services for children and adolescent mental health needs has been produced

### **What difference have we made?**

- Waiting times for initial appointments have been significantly reduced
- Waiting times for treatment have been significantly reduced. In particular the waiting times for non-specialist cases is now better than the national average

### **What will be the next steps?**

- We need to improve the timeliness of the services for children with complex needs such as those with learning difficulties and disabilities
- We will develop better advice and guidance about our services to support mental health needs, especially to be clear about the criteria for referrals and treatment

- We will pilot providing services for out of hours and minor accidents within the borough
- We will prioritise local delivery of services to support improving children's health through our redevelopment and re-building of primary and secondary schools in the borough, and through the development of Children's Centres and other locally accessible venues such as one-stop health shops

## Keeping Children and Young People Safe – How Well Are We Doing?

### Stay Safe Priorities

The Children's Trust has two key strategic objectives for children and young people's safety.

**Stay Safe Objective 1. Each child and every young person is able to feel and be safe at school, in their early years setting, and in their local area**

**What has been achieved so far?**

- We have developed a new approach to tackle bullying and race/hate crime in schools and in the community

- We have begun to pilot a new 'kite-marking' scheme with a small group of schools and this will include assessing how effectively they keep children and young people safe
- All Thurrock schools now have staff and governors who are trained in safer recruitment practices
- All schools in Thurrock have travel plans which promote healthy and safe routes to school

### **What difference have we made?**

- There was a significant increase in the number of children reporting that they felt 'very safe' or 'quite safe' in Thurrock last year. The levels are now better than those for England as a whole
- Crime levels are continuing to fall and they dropped by a further 19% in the last 2 years
- All of the Thurrock schools audited last year were satisfactory or better for the way they ensured all staff had appropriate CRB checks in place.

### **What will be the next steps?**

- We need to do more on ensuring young people feel safe on the way to and from school, including on public and specially provided transport
- We need to make better use of the information we are gathering on bullying and racist incident levels
- Although crime levels are falling, young people's perceptions of crime suggest that they are still very concerned that they will be

victims of crime. We need to do more to promote safe messages and feelings of safety among young people.

**Stay Safe Objective 2. Each child and every young person is protected from harm or neglect and supported to remain with their own family wherever possible**

#### **What has been achieved so far?**

- We have invested more in resources to identify and support children and young people who are at risk
- Over one million pounds of additional funding is being invested in developing and providing a range of family support and guidance services, which will be delivered by the voluntary sector in Thurrock
- A new approach to assessing children's needs earlier has been developed based around 4 geographically based 'panels' (called MAGS) and involving all agencies from across health, social care and education

#### **What difference have we made?**

- The numbers of children who are subject to child protection plans is now in line with the national level
- Although the numbers of referrals for support from social care has grown, especially in the last 3 months of 2008, assessments are still being done on time and to an improved standard.
- Services which provide support for children who are looked after by the Council are judged very positively by Ofsted and the

performance on reviewing their support is now among the best in the country

### **What will be the next steps?**

- We need to ensure that all of our early prevention and assessment MAGS panels are effective and have access to the right kind of support at the right time
- We need to provide more support for disabled children and young people, and their families, particularly by increasing the amount of short break support which is available
- We need to review how effectively we deliver on child protection plans over time so that we either reduce the level of risk of harm within 2 years or we take alternative steps if there is no reduction in the level of risk in that time

## **Improving Children and Young People's Attainment – How Well Are We Doing?**

### **Enjoy and Achieve Priorities**

The Children's Trust has two key strategic objectives for children and young people's education.

**Enjoy and Achieve Objective 1. Each child and every young person is helped to achieve their learning potential through high quality education**

**What has been achieved so far?**

- Increased the number of staff within the Council who can support school improvement
- Carried out a review of standards and progress made by our Black and Ethnic Minority pupils which shows that at present their attainment compares favourably with their peers in Thurrock
- Developed a new Behaviour Support Team, including teachers, social workers, Special Needs staff and Learning Mentors to support and advise schools on improving and supporting management of pupil behaviour
- Worked in collaboration with two primary schools to introduce a new approach to school management through a 'joint' Headteacher appointment
- Provided additional targeted support to young children accessing early education in wards with higher levels of deprivation

**What difference have we made?**

- Between the ages of 11 and 16, pupils in Thurrock progress at a faster rate than in England as a whole
- The number of young people who leave Thurrock schools with 5 GCSE's at A\* - C is now the same as that seen nationally

- Enjoyment of education continues to be strong. In 2008, Ofsted judged learner enjoyment of education in Thurrock schools as good or better in 87% of those inspected so far. In 11 Thurrock schools learner enjoyment was considered to be 'outstanding'
- Children's achievements at the age of 5 are now much improved. The gap between Thurrock's children and those in England is now much less than before
- Attendance levels in Thurrock secondary schools are much improved and compare favourably with levels of attendance in other boroughs

#### **What will be the next steps?**

- Although standards at age 16 are improving and much better than before, we need to work with schools to ensure that attainment of English and Maths GCSE's improves at a faster rate
- Pupil achievements between the ages of 5 and 11 are improving but they remain too low. We need to develop new approaches to improving primary school provision so that by age 11, Thurrock's children start secondary school at levels of attainment which are the same as children elsewhere.
- Attendance levels in primary schools need to be improved and as part of that we need to specifically target the small numbers of individual who have high absence rates
- We need to provide the right mix of support and challenge to schools to ensure young people can access full time provision and so reduce the numbers who miss parts of their education due to exclusions

**Enjoy and Achieve Objective 2. Each child and every young person is able to participate in a range of leisure activities**

**What has been achieved so far?**

**What has been achieved so far?**

- Secured an additional £1 million of central funding for play provision in Thurrock
- Promoted an increasing range of cultural opportunities alongside partners such as the Royal Opera House Education service
- The refurbished 'Sunshine Centre' now provides much improved leisure facilities for disabled children

**What difference have we made?**

- 73% of our schools facilities are now available for community use
- Improved play facilities are being provided for every primary school in Thurrock, funded by the Primary Care Trust
- Community based play facilities have been provided in different parts of the borough, including West Thurrock, Aveley, Tilbury and Little Thurrock

**What will be the next steps?**

- Refurbishing more existing play sites and establishing a number of new play sites across the borough
- Improving the range and quality of provision for disabled children and young people, including improved access to existing sites

- Introduce a range of programmes specifically designed to increase the participation of young women
- Increase the quality and amount of provision for sport and PE across our primary schools

## Helping Children and Young People Make A Positive Contribution – How Well Are We Doing?

### Positive Contribution Priorities

The Children's Trust has two key strategic objectives for children and young people's opportunities and support to make a positive contribution.

**Positive Contribution Objective 1. Each child and every young person is able to share in shaping services and engage in positive activities**

#### What has been achieved so far?

- Introduced rolling programme of debate between senior representatives of the Trust and children and young people through a series of 'face to face' discussions
- Developed approach to consultation with children and young people by conducting a 'consultation tour' of schools and youth clubs to review particular issues

- Piloted project to explore the use of video and photographic feedback with young people in Thurrock Special Schools
- Continued to develop Thurrock's Youth Cabinet and refine their approach to funding and commissioning short and longer term projects and programmes, delivered in local communities by young people on behalf of other young people
- Restructured approach to provision of youth facilities

### **What difference have we made?**

- Awarded Youth Cabinet grants totalling X to young people in the last 12 months
- Response rates to national surveys of young people's views and opinions were above national averages
- Levels of participation by individual children and young people in SEN reviews and in Looked After Children reviews are high
- Extended range of youth provision and opening times in specific centres
- Increased take up of Prince's Trust and Duke of Edinburgh volunteering schemes

### **What will be the next steps?**

- Recruiting and training young people to conduct participation and engagement work with other young people on our behalf
- Extending the voice of parents and families in shaping and designing services
- Reaching some young people and some more vulnerable groups that we have not successfully engaged with in the past

- Increase number of young people reached by our youth services

**Positive Contribution Objective 2. Each child and every young person lives free from crime, bullying and harassment**

**What has been achieved so far?**

- We have begun to pilot a new way to record and track bullying and racist incident levels in schools so that we can effectively target support and resources
- Conference on Anti-Bullying, planned, organised and delivered by children and young people themselves to coincide with national anti-bullying week
- Multi-agency conference focused on tackling homophobic bullying within local communities
- Youth Offending Service has been commended for its work by the Youth Justice Board for its support on development of assessment and information sharing agreements
- Mentoring and support programmes for parents and young people at risk are in place

**What difference have we made?**

- Reduced the number of first time entrants to the criminal justice system because of youth crime
- Young people's views about bullying levels in schools are now in line with those elsewhere in England

### **What will be the next steps?**

- We need to work with schools to ensure there are consistent and effective mechanisms in place to deal with reported bullying
- Need to continue to reduce the number of first time offenders among young people

## **Improving Children' and Young People's Economic Well Being – How Well Are We Doing? Economic Well Being Priorities**

The Children's Trust has two key strategic objectives for children and young people's economic well being.

**Economic Well Being Objective 1. Each child and every young person is supported to become confident, informed, educated and skilled**

### **What has been achieved so far?**

- There is a new 14-19 Education Plan in place
- Thurrock 14-19 Partnership secured approval for five new Specialised Diplomas, which will start being taught in September 2009

- Developed a new Integrated Youth and Connexions service by combining the Thurrock Youth Service, the Adolescent service and Thurrock Connexions
- New purpose built post-16 provision for young people with learning difficulties and disabilities developed as part of new Special School re-building programme

### **What difference have we made?**

- Thurrock rated as one of the best unitary authorities for diploma development
- Diploma development for Society, Health and Development rated as 'outstanding'
- Increasing number of young people now in education, employment or training at age 16 and Thurrock met all targets in this area in 2008
- Post-16 attainment levels are improving with increase in average points scores per student in both colleges
- Number of young people with disabilities and number of care leavers in education, employment or training at age 16 on leaving school are much improved.
- New collaborative sixth form provision opening in Stanford-Le-Hope

### **What will be the next steps?**

- Ensuring good take up and successful delivery of new diplomas from September 2009 onwards

- Extend transition planning for young people with Special Needs to support those leaving mainstream school as effectively as is currently done for those in Special Schools
- Continue to reduce the number of young people who are not in education, employment or training after leaving school.

**Economic Well Being Objective 2. Regeneration in Thurrock has a positive impact on the lives and opportunities of children and young people**

**What has been achieved so far?**

- Agreement in place to develop brand-new Further and Higher Education Campus
- Agreement in place to develop new National Skills Academy for Creative and Cultural Skills in Thurrock
- First of new generation of secondary schools in the borough begun with opening of Gateway Academy
- New primary school in West Thurrock built and due to open in April 2009 to accommodate children moving to live in the area through regeneration

**What difference have we made?**

- Temporary campus opened and taking first intake of students
- Application and entry levels to higher education by Thurrock students has increased for last two years in succession
- Three higher education providers now in place as part of development of the 14-19 partnership

### **What will be the next steps?**

- Ensuring entry to Building Schools for the Future programme as early as possible and aligning this with wider regeneration development activity
- Beginning first phase of implementing our schools strategy to ensure we have the right quantity and quality of educational provision in areas which will be at the heart of regeneration
- Securing at least one and up to two more 'academies' within the overall school provision in Thurrock
- Completing the next phase of new and refurbished children's centres placing services as close to local communities as possible

## **Conclusion**

We are proud of what our children and young people have achieved in the last 18 months and the Children's Trust is determined to ensure that the young people of our borough continue to grow and achieve. We believe that our services have done much to safeguard and support young people since the Trust's creation in November 2007 and we aim to be equally ambitious in the years ahead. All of the partners within the Trust recognise that more remains to be done to ensure that all our young people continue to receive an equal chance to achieve their full potential.

Our intentions for the future are set out in more detail in our revised Children and Young People's Plan 2009, which is being published at the same time as this annual review. Beyond that plan, we are already thinking about the longer term and looking forward to the challenging of creating a further Children's Plan for 2012 onwards. At the heart of our revised plan for 2009 and our planning for the future will be engaging all partners, children, young people, parents and carers, so that we continue to improve the life chances and aspirations of current and future generations of young people in Thurrock.