

A commitment from  
**The Children's Plan**

# Third sector strategy and action plan: intentions into action





# Contents

<b>Foreword by the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Children, Young People and Families</b>	04
<b>1 Overview – the wider context</b>	05
<b>2 Our vision and principles for working with the third sector</b>	06
<b>3 Our pledges</b>	07
<b>4 Our commitments to future work with the third sector:</b>	07
(i) Be healthy	08
(ii) Stay safe	09
(iii) Enjoy and achieve	10
(iv) Make a positive contribution	12
(v) Achieve economic well-being	13
<b>5 Making it happen</b>	14
<b>Annex A</b> DfES Strategy and Action Plan 2007: examples of progress against commitments	22
<b>Annex B</b> DCSF Third Sector Group membership	23

## Foreword by the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Children, Young People and Families



The Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) is passionate about working with others to improve the lives of children, young people and their families, and about making this country the best place in the world for children and young people to grow up. These are the goals to which we committed ourselves in Every Child Matters and our Children's Plan. They are the driving force behind the whole of the Department's work.

We are very fortunate in having strong relationships with many diverse third sector organisations<sup>1</sup>, locally and nationally, who share our passion and our goals.

Together, we believe we can achieve our goals; neither of us can reach them alone. We need the third sector to tell us the views and concerns of children, young people and families, so that we can develop better policies that will meet their needs. And we need and value the third sector's ability to deliver high quality services across the country, particularly to the most disadvantaged and marginalised in the community who face additional challenges in fulfilling their potential.

We now want to build on the third sector strategy that was published in 2007 by the Department for Education and Skills and to improve our joint relationship. The current economic problems that affect everyone in this country mean that many third sector organisations are facing the double pressure of increased demands for their services and reduced income. Children, young people and families are also experiencing additional challenges. So it is increasingly important that DCSF and its third sector partners work even more closely together.

On the advice of our Third Sector Group<sup>2</sup>, which represents DCSF's major third sector partners, this is not a lengthy document, but one that re-affirms our vision and commitments to working productively with the third sector in the delivery of our shared goals.

I will be asking our Third Sector Group to monitor the Department's progress in making this strategy and action plan a reality.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Delyth Morgan". The signature is fluid and cursive.

**Delyth Morgan**

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<sup>1</sup> The Government defines the third sector as non-governmental organisations that are value-driven and which principally reinvest their surpluses to further social, environmental or cultural objectives. This reflects the diversity of the sector's activities and organisational structures. It includes voluntary and community organisations, charities, social enterprises, co-operatives and mutuals

<sup>2</sup> See Annex B for details of membership

## 1 Overview – the wider context

- 1.1 The third sector is extremely diverse and fulfils a multitude of roles. The majority of third sector organisations are small, have modest funds, and are locally based. A minority are large, have more significant funds, and operate at a national level.
- 1.2 The Government appreciates and values the importance of the third sector in all its diversity across its whole agenda, and is committed to taking account of the differing needs and potential of small local organisations as well as large national players. DCSF acknowledges the role played by the third sector in creating inclusive, vibrant communities in which children, young people and their families can be supported and can thrive. This is an important contribution to the Government's wider aims of empowering communities and promoting active citizenship.
- 1.3 DCSF works closely with the Office of the Third Sector (OTS) and other Government Departments to improve partnership working and ensure positive working relationships between Government and the third sector. We are fully committed to complying with the Government's Compact on Relations between Government and the Voluntary and Community Sector<sup>3</sup>, and we are working with the Commission for the Compact on the refresh of the Compact. We are also committed to promoting the refreshed Compact when it is launched later in the year. In 2009-10, the Department will provide direct funding of some £240 million to third sector organisations for infrastructure support and the delivery of services. Wherever possible, we will provide third sector organisations financial security by offering three year funding.
- 1.4 In 2007 the Department for Education and Skills, DCSF's predecessor Department, published a comprehensive "Third Sector Strategy and Action Plan". Annex A sets out some of the achievements since then.
- 1.5 This new DCSF strategy and action plan builds on what has been achieved since 2007. We describe how we propose to work more closely with the third sector; and set out the main focus of our shared goals and work over the coming months and years within the framework of Every Child Matters (ECM). Most importantly we describe how we will make things happen.
- 1.6 In the current economic climate, some third sector organisations are seeing a fall in their income while demand for their services has increased. We meet regularly with third sector representatives and receive information from them about the financial pressures the sector is experiencing. In February 2009, the OTS announced extra cross-Government support to help the sector through the economic downturn, and DCSF has committed an additional £3 million to third sector organisations who offer services such as relationship and family support to those affected by the recession.

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<sup>3</sup> Referred to as 'the Compact'

Both OTS and DCSF are taking action to improve commissioning of children's services in order to open up markets and to offer more funding opportunities to third sector organisations. DCSF's Secretary of State is also a member of a new Cabinet Office Committee formed to examine the barriers faced by third sector organisations in securing and delivering public service contracts.

- 1.7 Meanwhile, DCSF is delivering an exciting new agenda, which will present new opportunities as well as challenges for the third sector – for example there are changes in how services are commissioned and delivered; significant developments in education and skills, such as the change to the participation age, so that all young people will continue in learning until at least 18; the continued rollout of children's centres and extended services in schools and increased emphasis on the provision of sport and other out-of-school activities.

## **2 Our vision and principles for working with the third sector**

- 2.1 We value third sector organisations' many and varied contributions to creating better lives for children, young people and families and better places for them to live, learn and play. Individually and collectively they:
- advise, inform and challenge the rationale for policy and procedures
  - bring new perspectives and considerable experience to help us develop and deliver new initiatives
  - offer creative solutions to difficult problems
  - provide direct support to children, young people and families every day
- 2.2 Our vision is for the whole of DCSF to have a dynamic, purposeful and productive partnership with the third sector; and for that relationship to be characterised by mutual clarity, consistency and trust.
- 2.3 In our work with our third sector partners we will adopt the following principles. We will:
- respect and value the expertise, diversity and independence of the sector
  - champion and promote third sector best practice in our drive for improvements in services and outcomes
  - operate in accordance with Compact principles across DCSF and our delivery partners
  - consult and listen to third sector organisations so that we develop policies which are relevant and deliverable
  - be inclusive, fair, open and un-bureaucratic

- work together with other Government departments to achieve greater coherence and consistency in our relationships with the third sector; and to ensure that the third sector's voice is heard
- encourage third sector organisations to take a sustainable development approach to service delivery and to empower and educate children, young people and families for life in a sustainable world<sup>4</sup>

### 3 Our Pledges

3.1 In support of our vision and principles we pledge to:

- improve standards of commissioning by increasing commissioners' awareness and understanding of what the third sector can provide and by helping third sector organisations, especially those working with disadvantaged communities, to better participate in the commissioning process
- reduce bureaucracy in our dealings with the third sector and ensure we share and manage risk proportionately
- Compact-proof all new policies and procedures, and ask the same of our NDPBs and any new bodies
- identify and implement ways of improving the effectiveness of how we communicate and listen to the third sector
- increase and further embed awareness of the third sector's potential to add value across DCSF, our NDPBs and delivery partners
- use our Third Sector Group to assess and report on our performance against these pledges and other commitments in this strategy

## 4 Our commitments to future work with the third sector

4.1 ECM committed Government to five outcomes that are key to well-being in childhood and later life – being healthy, staying safe, enjoying and achieving, making a positive contribution, and achieving economic well-being. Achieving these outcomes for all children, young people and their families and working towards the goals in DCSF's Children's Plan are at the centre of everything we do.

<sup>4</sup> In line with DCSF's Sustainable Development Action Plan: *Brighter Futures, Greener Lives*

4.2 DCSF cannot achieve these outcomes alone and we work closely with other Government Departments, such as Health, the Home Office, Business, Innovation, and Skills, Justice and Culture, Media and Sport, and many external partners. We also work closely with third sector organisations in many and varied ways in support of the ECM outcomes and the Children's Plan. The following pages set out an illustrative (not comprehensive) selection of areas where we plan to work, or to continue working, with third sector organisations, to help deliver the ECM agenda.

### **(i) Be healthy**

4.3 Being healthy means being in good physical, mental, emotional and sexual health. It also means making healthy lifestyle choices, such as regular exercise, and a nutritious diet. DCSF will continue to work with, and draw on, the expertise of the third sector in the delivery of various policy initiatives, such as the Department's Teenage Pregnancy Strategy and the Travel to School initiative. Other examples of where we and the third sector will work together are:

### **Play provision**

4.4 Third sector organisations have a significant role in supporting and delivering play provision, from small 'friends of the park' groups to broader-based third sector play partnerships. Underpinning the Play Strategy is a vision of community empowerment whereby local children, young people, parents and residents are integral to the shaping, quality and long-term future of play provision accessible via safe walking and cycling routes. The third sector has a crucial role in delivering this vision, from local advocacy to supporting volunteering in play. Through implementation of the £235 million Play Strategy capital programme we are creating the conditions for more integrated working between local authorities, the third sector and other partners who support delivery of play. We are also investing £1.5 million in third sector run adventure playgrounds.

### **Disabled children and their families**

4.5 The Government is working closely with the third sector to transform services for disabled children and their families through the Aiming High for Disabled Children (AHDC) Programme. With £430 million of investment from DCSF over 2008-11, and an additional £340 million in Primary Care Trust baselines, we expect to see significant increases in short-break provision for families of disabled children; parents' forums in all areas; better transition into adulthood for young disabled people; and improvements in palliative care and community equipment services. The third sector plays a key role throughout the AHDC Programme – such as membership of the Ministerial Implementation Group, as delivery partners and as front-line service providers.



### Improving children's mental health

- 4.6 We will continue to actively encourage local authorities involved in the Targeted Mental Health in Schools (TaMHS) programme to involve and commission third sector providers. This £60 million programme includes group work interventions, family support and individual counselling services for children who are experiencing difficulties. All local authorities are required to include details of how they intend to involve third sector partners in their plans.
- 4.7 We have also commissioned the National Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services Support Service (NCSS), who provide a support and challenge function to TaMHS local authorities, to work with third sector partners to produce guidance for schools participating in TaMHS. We anticipate that the guidance will be published in Autumn 2009.

### (ii) Stay Safe

- 4.8 We want all children and young people to enjoy growing up; and to do so they need to be protected from harm – whether maltreatment, bullying or road traffic and other accidental injury. We will continue to fund third sector organisations to raise awareness of anti-bullying work and to run peer mentoring pilots in schools. Other examples of where we and the third sector will work together are:

### Better protection for children

- 4.9 We have an extensive agenda to provide better protection. We will involve third sector representatives in:
- taking forward *The protection of children in England: action plan – the Government's response to Lord Laming*
  - preparing the revised core statutory guidance, *Working Together to Safeguard Children*, due to be produced by the end of 2009, to ensure that the third sector's role in protecting and safeguarding children is fully recognised

### Safer recruitment and effective practice

- 4.10 We will continue to support the Safe Network, the national safeguarding unit for the third sector, led by two major third sector organisations. Safe Network provides advice and help on issues such as child protection; risk management in activity provision; anti-bullying work; and safer recruitment, so that third sector organisations and their Trustees can take advantage of new guidance and training for the children's workforce and can prepare to comply with the new vetting and barring scheme.

4.11 In May 2009, Sir Roger Singleton, the new Chief Adviser on the Safety of Children, invited third sector representation onto his Expert Group to provide advice on progress on safeguarding and to share innovative approaches and good practice. The Government will also shortly invite third sector representation onto a new Partnership Network which will work with the National Safeguarding Delivery Unit and the Chief Adviser to pursue specific issues relevant to effective safeguarding practice.

### **(iii) Enjoy and achieve**

4.12 To help today's children and young people to be happy and successful we want them to have excellent early learning and care; world-class schools; help in overcoming any barriers to learning; access to positive leisure time activities and appropriate educational opportunities until at least 18. We will continue to work with a wide range of educational charities and third sector partners, including faith providers and those providing alternative provision, to enhance children and young people's learning experience and to help them make the most of their talents and to realise their ambitions. We also want all children to have opportunities to learn about the importance of the natural world through outdoor play and learning outside of the classroom, and to enjoy their leisure time through taking part in positive activities that help develop the broader skills they need for life. Through local commissioning arrangements and direct access to funding through programmes such as *myplace* and the Youth Sector Development Fund we expect the third sector to play a major role in helping deliver our long-term goal of all young people participating regularly in such activities.

4.13 *Your child, your schools, our future: building a 21st century schools system*<sup>5</sup>, sets out our plan to develop a system of 21st century schools which provide a great start in life for every child in every school. In order to ensure that all children can benefit from the Pupil Guarantee set out in the White Paper all schools will need to work in partnership with other schools, other learning providers, wider children's services and other sectors, including the third sector. Other areas where we will work closely with the third sector are:

### **Support for families**

4.14 We know that parents can find it hard to identify the right local or national services when they seek support. It can also be difficult for third sector organisations that support families to find other organisations or to promote themselves to parents and families. To help tackle these difficulties the Parent Know How Directory will go live in September 2009. This new, free, web-based tool for parents will also enable third sector providers who work with parents and families to identify the right service for their clients. We anticipate that the Directory will lead to real benefits for third sector organisations, as many currently maintain their own signposting databases.

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<sup>5</sup> White Paper published on 30 June 2009

- 4.15 The third sector plays a key role in the provision of Think Family projects, such as Family Intervention Projects. Through key workers and the delivery of parenting programmes these provide intensive assistance to families facing complex challenges. Through the Think Family guidance, to be published in Summer 2009, we will continue to actively encourage local authorities to involve and commission third sector providers to deliver parenting and family support.
- 4.16 In Autumn 2009, we plan to publish a wide ranging Green Paper about how we might support families and relationships further. We will engage stakeholders, including the third sector, in preparing this Green Paper.

### Early years and childcare

- 4.17 Third sector organisations play a central role in early years and childcare provision. They deliver significant elements of the free early education entitlement for three and four year olds and have a key role in the delivery of children's centre services in many areas.
- 4.18 We want to see the role of the third sector in this area continued and developed. Third sector providers offer a distinctive approach to early years and childcare, and encourage the take up of early learning and childcare by families who might otherwise be reluctant to do so. In developing the free early education entitlement for three and four year olds and in extending it to disadvantaged two year olds we will ensure the particular approaches and issues faced by third sector providers are taken into account.
- 4.19 Similarly, where local authorities are undertaking work to improve the sufficiency of childcare in their areas and to develop their networks of children's centres, our guidance is clear that the role of the third sector needs to be taken into account. Some of our funding for improving quality and access to childcare, for example, has a particular focus on the private and third sector. Close dialogue with organisations representing third sector providers, and consultation with individual providers across the early years agenda, will continue to be a key element in our strategy for policy development and delivery.
- 4.20 We will continue to work with organisations representing third sector providers to provide high quality support to their members – using strategic grants to support and focus their work. Increasing the quality of non-statutory childcare provision is a particular focus for us, reflected, for example, in the creation of the Graduate Leader Fund to support private and third sector providers in the recruitment and retention of graduates. Other support, often delivered through representative organisations, includes work on financial sustainability, on business management and on partnership working.

### **Children in care**

4.21 The third sector's contribution to delivering quality services to children in care is well-evidenced. Many local authorities work closely with third sector partners in delivering the Care Matters programme of reform to improve significantly outcomes for all children in care, and more specifically, in delivering services to adopted children and children in need of adoption. We will draw on third sector expertise to ensure we have the right provision in place as we implement the Children and Young Persons Act 2008 to accelerate progress in improving outcomes for all children in care.

#### **(iv) Make a positive contribution**

4.22 We want children and young people to understand others, value diversity, apply and defend human rights, promote sustainable development and be skilled in participating responsibly in their communities. We also want young people to make a real contribution to society, using their energy and dynamism to bring about change. We are investing over £6 million in the creation of a National Body for Youth Leadership – 'The Youth of Today' – led by third sector partners, which will provide a range of opportunities for young people to lead change in their communities.

4.23 In our guidance to schools and local authorities on promoting community cohesion we will highlight the contribution the third sector can make in engaging the local community, developing or delivering projects/programmes and supporting the workforce. Additionally, through the pilot of 100 Co-operative Trust schools we will test how, through the adoption of cooperative values of self-help, self-responsibility, democracy, equality, equity and community solidarity, children and young people can gain a better understanding of their role as citizens and how they can help build a fairer and more sustainable society. Other examples of areas where we will work closely with the third sector are:

### **Social enterprise and employer partnership**

4.24 We are promoting young people's understanding and awareness of economic and social well-being by including social enterprise in the curriculum at Key Stages 3 and 4, and in guidance on enterprise as part of work-related learning. Through enterprise learning, including activities focussing on social enterprise, we will develop enterprise capabilities in young people – encouraging them to be creative and innovative and to take and manage risks. We will consider including social enterprise in the criteria for specifications in Advanced Level business studies, and will provide guidance on social enterprise to support enterprise education in general. We will also work with a range of third sector organisations to strengthen employer engagement with children, schools and families services.

### Community service

4.25 We will work with OTS, schools and local third sector organisations in taking forward a £146 million initiative to provide young people with increased opportunities to undertake community service activities. This will help develop young people's skills and employability, help them into work, and enhance their role in their local community by giving them a voice, sense of personal responsibility and independence.

### Volunteering and mentoring opportunities

4.26 Together with our delivery partners we will work with schools and the third sector to develop long-term volunteering and mentoring schemes which will benefit children and young people by:

- addressing equality issues in schools and narrowing the gap in outcomes between vulnerable children and the rest
- bringing specialist skills and knowledge to schools
- developing social and economic awareness in schools
- supporting the community and developing community cohesion

### (v) Achieve economic well-being

4.27 We will continue to work with the third sector to help ensure that all young people are ready and able to engage in further education, employment or training on leaving school. Third sector organisations often lead the way, for example, in engaging marginalised young people or those who have disengaged from formal learning, or by helping care leavers into employment. *Targeted Youth Support: Next Steps*<sup>6</sup> emphasised the important role the third sector plays in delivering systematic and joined up prevention, early intervention and support arrangements for teenagers who are or might be at risk. Other examples of areas where we will work closely with the third sector are:

### Raising the participation age

4.28 We have legislated to raise the participation age so that by 2013 all young people will stay in learning until at least 17, and at least 18 by 2015. To make our commitment a success, it is critical that there is a suitable and appropriate high quality place in learning for every young person. We will continue to work with the third sector to ensure that it has the capacity to help deliver this increased provision and that local authorities engage with them in the commissioning process. We will publish guidance and share good practice to enable third sector organisations to prepare for this change and to ensure that local areas are aware of the benefits that the third sector offers.

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<sup>6</sup> Published on 18 June 2009

- 4.29 One of the ways that young people will be able to participate is by volunteering full time while undertaking part-time accredited training. The third sector offers excellent volunteering opportunities and we will encourage providers to include accredited training as part of that; or by accrediting some of their own training.

### **Young people not in education, employment or training**

- 4.30 We know that third sector organisations play a very important role in supporting and re-engaging young people Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) – often working in partnership with local Connexions and young people’s services or delivering activities funded by the European Social Fund. Looking ahead, helping NEET young people to re-engage will require excellent ongoing partnership working with the third sector. We will update our widely used NEET Toolkit in early 2010, so that this makes clear the important role that third sector organisations play in delivering local NEET Strategies.
- 4.31 Entry to Learning pilots are currently running in four areas to test different models of commissioning third sector re-engagement provision to ensure that the most vulnerable young people are supported back into formal learning. A thorough evaluation has begun and will be completed in 2010 to ensure that as we move towards raising the participation age we make the most of what third sector providers can offer.

### **Child poverty**

- 4.32 We are committed to ending child poverty. The Child Poverty Bill<sup>7</sup> sets out a requirement to produce a national child poverty strategy and arrangements for local authorities and their partners to work together to tackle child poverty. This will provide opportunities for the third sector to work with national and local government to bring their expertise to tackling child poverty. As the Bill progresses we will talk to the third sector about how to achieve our aim.

## **5 Making it happen**

- 5.1 We want to do more to make sure that all service deliverers, including those from the third sector, work together as effectively as possible to improve outcomes for children, young people and families. Given the huge diversity of the third sector we know that individual organisations’ capacity and ability to engage varies considerably. If we are to embrace all that the third sector has to offer in policy and service development, then we and our delivery partners need to do more to enable third sector organisations to play a full and equal part. In the following paragraphs we describe our plans to improve engagement and commissioning and to help to develop a healthy third sector.

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<sup>7</sup> Introduced into Parliament in June 2009

## Better engagement and partnership working

- 5.2 Delivering our vision for 21st century children's services will require big changes and a series of system-wide reforms. Children's Trusts will be at the heart of this and they will need to work effectively with a wide range of local partners, including the third sector. We want the third sector to be involved at all levels of commissioning, from strategic planning and putting forward users' perspective to service delivery and monitoring. The Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Bill, which is currently before Parliament, seeks to strengthen Children's Trusts, for example by putting Children's Trust Boards on a firmer statutory footing. While there is evidence that the majority of Children's Trust Boards already have third sector representation we know that there is more to do to strengthen the effectiveness of their engagement. We plan to issue statutory guidance in Spring 2010 on Children's Trust Boards<sup>8</sup> in which we will give strong messages about our expectation that all Boards will include a third sector presence. The Bill also seeks to give Children's Trust Boards the functions of preparing, publishing and revising local Children and Young People's Plans, and of monitoring Board members' implementation of the Plan. We intend to ensure through regulations that third sector organisations are consulted during the preparation of the Plan. We are setting up an experts group which will include representatives from the third sector to help advise on the contents of the anticipated regulations and guidance.
- 5.3 DCSF's Children's Trusts and Commissioning Advisory Group advises on policy in relation to Children's Trusts and commissioning. The third sector is represented on that Group but we will review its membership to ensure that the contribution of the third sector is fully recognised.
- 5.4 We want the third sector to be real partners in local arrangements for supporting all young people and we encourage their active engagement in local strategic 14-19 Partnerships, whose role it is to agree the local vision for 14-19, to develop and articulate strategies for 14-19 priorities and to support consortia of providers so that they are ready to deliver.
- 5.5 Many national third sector organisations already play a vital role in both advising the Government on national youth policy and supporting delivery. We are improving the way in which the Government commissions support for young people's services and uses the expertise of national youth organisations to inform strategy through changes we are making following a consultation on youth sector support. This includes tendering for several framework agreements for broad areas of youth sector support later in 2009. We will also continue to ensure that representatives of the third sector are actively involved in steering the overall delivery of *Aiming High for young people: a ten year strategy for positive activities* through the involvement of key partners on the Aiming High Advisory Group.

<sup>8</sup> Subject to the passage of the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning (ASCL) Bill

- 5.6 We want schools to be at the centre of their communities and we are encouraging both schools and local authorities to widen the range of appropriate services and facilities that can be provided from schools. In particular, school buildings and facilities are assets that can be used for wider benefit, including by third sector organisations. Where existing buildings are not fully suitable we are encouraging third sector organisations to work with local authorities and other local agencies to develop high quality facilities that meet the needs of children, young people and families through capital programmes such as *myplace* and the co-location fund. Schools and local authorities can also use their own capital to invest in facilities that can be used by third sector organisations, for activities that contribute to the ECM agenda. We will continue to consider how best to support such partnership working through our capital programmes.
- 5.7 We will work with OTS's Innovation Exchange scheme, which provides third sector innovators with help to become more involved in public service. DCSF is committed to working with the Cabinet Office Advisor on Third Sector Innovation on better understanding the potential contribution of the third sector in the design and delivery of personalised learning for young people.

## Effective commissioning

### (i) Children's Trusts

- 5.8 We want the commissioning of services for children, young people and families to work effectively for all providers, including those from the third sector. Both service users and providers, including those from the third sector, need to be involved in planning and designing services to meet local needs. We want commissioners to take steps to develop a more diverse provider base to ensure that there are sufficient potential providers; and to be skilled in engaging potential and existing providers in constructive dialogue. We will promote a mixed model of commissioning that includes grant funding and commissioning from third sector partnerships and consortia. We will also encourage sub-contracting models that support the involvement of smaller organisations in the delivery of part of a bigger contract.
- 5.9 Through the work of the Commissioning Support Programme (CSP) we want to bring about a transformation in commissioning practice. We want to ensure clarity and transparency to enable the third sector to play a full part. To help create better understanding between Children's Trusts and the third sector about the systems and processes surrounding commissioning the CSP will:



- work with *Kindle*, the community sector partnership for children and young people, to produce relevant resources on commissioning from the third sector, including two practical guides; one for Children's Trusts on how to engage effectively with the third sector and one for third sector organisations on playing a full role in the commissioning process
  - actively promote the interaction of commissioners and third sector providers through online 'groups' and discussion fora
  - disseminate case studies featuring the effective commissioning of services from the third sector
  - facilitate a self-analysis and planning exercise for Children's Trusts which will include analysis of how they commission from, and build commissioning capacity amongst, third sector providers
  - ensure Children's Trusts are aware of the training provided by the OTS funded commissioning programme as well as CSP run activities
- 5.10 DCSF will continue to work closely with OTS and other Government Departments on other initiatives to improve commissioning. We will ensure that there is close working between the contractor for the National Programme for Third Sector Commissioning run by OTS and the CSP so that the programmes are aligned and mutually reinforcing.
- 5.11 We will publish the results of a survey of children's services providers, including those from the third sector, about providers' perceptions and experiences of being commissioned by Children's Trusts. Following publication, we will evaluate the findings and consider whether to repeat the survey on a regular basis.
- 5.12 Through the development of one set of overarching quality standards we aim to increase the clarity and consistency of the commissioning process for positive activities for young people at a local level. These standards will ensure that third sector providers are clear about how their proposals for delivery will be measured and the requirements they need to meet.

## **(ii) School improvement**

- 5.13 *Your child, your schools, our future: building a 21st century schools system*<sup>9</sup>, sets out a new approach to how schools will access support for their improvement. We intend to move to a new system where individual schools are empowered to identify the resources they will invest in school improvement and professional development; and what external support they will need and from whom, based on effective self-evaluation. That support – to span all schools' responsibilities across all of the ECM outcomes – will in future be offered by a range of different providers, including those with relevant expertise in the third sector.

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<sup>9</sup> White Paper published on 30 June 2009

5.14 To support this new approach, we will be creating a series of improvement support frameworks for schools to identify quality-assured providers of support. In developing these new frameworks we will ensure that we take account of the particular circumstances of third sector organisations.

### **(iii) Early intervention**

5.15 One area of particular focus in *Your child, your schools, our future: building a 21st century schools system* is early intervention for children, young people and families who need extra help. We will work with partners, including the third sector, to develop proposals for improving the consistency and effectiveness of early intervention. We plan to publish a consultation document in Autumn 2009. We will ensure that our proposals take full account of the contribution the third sector can make in this area.

### **(iv) Short break provision for disabled children**

5.16 In 2009-11 we are significantly expanding short-break provision for disabled children, mainly through local authority commissioning. For the market for short breaks to operate effectively it will be essential that commissioners are aware of the services provided by third sector short break providers; and for third sector organisations to have information on commissioners' future requirements. We will, therefore, launch an e-marketplace for short breaks by September 2009 on the CSP website, [www.commissioningsupport.org.uk/](http://www.commissioningsupport.org.uk/). This will enable providers and commissioners to upload details and information about their services and commissioning intentions and invitations to tender.

5.17 We have also commissioned research from Loughborough University into the unit costs of short break provision and will publish the findings in late Summer 2009. This will enable commissioners to make fairer comparisons between third sector and other providers.

### **(v) Learning opportunities for 16-19 year olds**

5.18 We plan to transfer responsibility for commissioning learning opportunities for 16-19 year olds to local authorities<sup>10</sup>. Given the significance of this change we want to ensure that the third sector is fully involved in the new arrangements and that we learn from how the Learning and Skills Council worked with third sector providers. We have, therefore, invited the third sector onto the 16 – 19 project board and communications work group which will oversee the transfer arrangements. Through ongoing consultation with the third sector we will ensure that the National Commissioning Framework, the statutory guidance to be issued by the Young People's Learning Agency (YPLA)<sup>11</sup> in April 2010, clearly sets out how local authorities should commission provision in a provider-neutral way, whilst recognising the unique role of third sector providers in meeting the needs of young people. We will also work with the third sector to ensure that the commissioning processes and

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<sup>10</sup> Subject to the passage of the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning (ASCL) Bill

<sup>11</sup> Subject to the passage of the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning (ASCL) Bill

systems introduced allow the sector to play a full and equal part in enabling every young person to participate fully in learning.

## Helping to develop a healthy third sector

### (i) Building capacity

5.19 We want to continue to build capacity in, and support the infrastructure of, the third sector, including organisations working with minority ethnic and disadvantaged communities. We know that many small local organisations find it hard to compete for, and deliver, contracts and grants. We are working with umbrella groups and the black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) and faith-based VCS practitioners' networks to improve the skills of these groups so they are better able to participate. Through the Parenting Fund we will provide tailored support to front-line third sector organisations to help with their long term sustainability. We will also:

- ensure that the Children, Young People and Families Grant programme, on which we are currently consulting, has a clearly defined role and purpose. We want it both to support delivery of the department's priorities and also to support the third sector in a range of ways, from delivery through to infrastructure support
- help youth sector organisations by:
  - providing financial and professional support through the Youth Sector Development Fund, supporting those organisations that can demonstrate effective approaches to engaging and empowering young people, particularly the most disadvantaged. Over the three years April 2008-2011, we are making up to £100 million available through a mixture of large and small grants and expert business support to help these organisations sustain and grow their provision so that more young people can benefit from the activities they offer
  - enabling third sector organisations to expand their youth leadership initiatives through the £1 million Youth Leadership Fund launched in July 2009 as part of The Youth of Today programme

### (ii) Workforce support and development

5.20 In delivering the commitments in the *2020 Children and Young People's Workforce Strategy* and to support workforce development in the third sector we will ensure that we and our delivery partners consult the third sector about issues of importance to them, such as the impact on them of requirements for formal qualifications and training; opportunities for, and access to, staff development; and, where appropriate, access to supervision. We will also consider how we and our delivery partners can most effectively engage with Skills – Third Sector, the new independent skills body designed to ensure that the third sector is equipped to deliver across the whole children's services and young people agenda.

5.21 To support the creation of apprenticeship places in third sector organisations working with children and young people we will work with the third sector to:

- support and encourage the creation of, and access to, apprenticeship places for new and existing staff
- ensure it plays a full part in the development of a 21st century foundation apprenticeship which will provide access to a range of careers in the children and young people's workforce

5.22 We are also developing and starting to implement a range of measures as part of the Youth Workforce Reform Programme to increase the quality and capacity of the youth workforce. These include specific actions to improve third sector workers' skills, such as better local and regional access to training and development opportunities. Third sector organisations will continue to be represented on the Youth Workforce Reform Programme Board that oversees the direction of this programme.

5.23 We will work collectively to spread good practice in professional development, e.g. where third sector providers have trained teachers to improve their skills in engaging with challenging young people; or where they have undertaken specific training – e.g. in the Common Assessment Framework – to improve their skills.

**(iii) More widely**

5.24 DCSF will support the Government-wide initiative to encourage volunteering by offering around 100 volunteering opportunities for DCSF staff with third sector organisations over the next year. The national volunteering initiative supports the aims and objectives of the Children's Plan and will support our drive towards better community engagement through closer working with third sector organisations.

5.25 We will reduce unnecessary bureaucracy by working with other Government Departments and local authorities to ensure that all information requested by Government is meaningful and useful; and that, wherever possible, the same information will be acceptable to several funders. This will be particularly useful for providers who work across more than one local authority.

5.26 We will adopt the principles of proportionate monitoring and reporting recently published by OTS. We will set out clear expectations and parameters for both the funder and the funded at the outset of funding relationships. We will ensure we have a shared understanding about any risks or issues associated with the venture and how these will be managed and monitored. We will also be open about our need to retain the flexibility and right to monitor more closely if there appears to be any threat to the delivery of the Department's strategic objectives and/or reputation. In addition, we will maintain close links with those with whom we have a financial relationship and will endeavour to be as supportive as possible if difficulties arise.

- 5.27 In Summer 2009, we will begin a survey to provide a baseline of the awareness, implementation and knowledge of the Compact across DCSF and our NDPBs. A report will be available in early 2010. We will then be able to identify how and where we need to work harder to ensure all our policies and procedures are Compact compliant. This work will complement the Commission for the Compact's baseline survey of central government departments.
- 5.28 To improve communications with the third sector we will work with our Third Sector Group to ensure that all our departmental messages to the third sector are clear, consistent and easily accessible. We will also ensure all DCSF funding opportunities appear on our Departmental website and on the new Funding Central website, **[www.fundingcentral.org.uk](http://www.fundingcentral.org.uk)**. Funding Central will provide a wide range of local, regional and national funding opportunities as well as tools and resources to help third sector organisations access finance.
- 5.29 We will continue to embed a culture of awareness and understanding across DCSF of the added value and benefits that the third sector can bring. We will organise:
- a series of workshops with policy makers, academics and practitioners and begin work to establish a firmer evidence base of the impact of third sector activities, and
  - ad hoc discussion fora between DCSF, third sector partners, local authorities, and partners in other relevant organisations to discuss matters of mutual concern
- 5.30 We will work closely with our Third Sector Group to put in place effective arrangements to assess, monitor and challenge our performance against the pledges and commitments detailed in this strategy. This will include early preparation of a detailed action plan.

## Annex A – DfES Strategy and Action Plan 2007: examples of progress against commitments

### **(i) Voice and campaigning – enabling individuals’ and groups’ voices to be heard by...**

- encouraging third sector representation on Children’s Trust Boards
- holding biannual liaison days with the disability lobby and Voice stakeholders
- quarterly meetings with Youth Empowerment Stakeholder Group
- launching Youth4U to give young people greater influence over services in their areas
- creating a DCSF Third Sector Group

### **(ii) Strengthening communities by...**

- funding the establishment of black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) and faith-based VCS practitioners’ networks
- embedding community cohesion objectives in funding opportunities e.g. through the *myplace* initiative
- reviewing the effects and benefits of citizenship in education. Working with QCA on the development of a full GCSE in citizenship studies
- including a new element in the curriculum entitled *Identity and Diversity: Living together in the UK*
- developing a Peer Mentoring Programme which focuses on improving attainment, behaviour and anti-bullying measures
- developing and implementing a Departmental volunteering strategy

### **(iii) Transforming public services by...**

- setting up a £20 million Commissioning Support Programme to improve the commissioning of services by Children’s Trusts
- establishing new academies and schools sponsored by co-operatives, trusts and charities

### **(iv) Encouraging social enterprise by...**

- adding an understanding of the values of social enterprise into the curriculum under ‘economic well-being’, through Enterprise Education funding and materials such as Trailblazers and Make Your Mark: Change Lives partnerships
- including social enterprise in the criteria for GCSE business studies
- including a new category for “Social Enterprise in Schools” in the Social Enterprise Awards
- encouraging young people to become activists for sustainable development through the Young Activists Programme

**(v) Supporting the environment for a healthy third sector by...**

- awarding almost 90% grants for three years, giving third sector organisations greater security
- awarding over £35 million in 2009-10 through the Children, Young People and Families Grant
- providing all 110 third sector projects funded through the Parenting Fund with a tailored package of support to enhance their skills and ability to progress towards longer term sustainability

**Annex B – DCSF's Third Sector Group membership**

The Group comprises key third sector infrastructure organisations, representative umbrella groups and direct delivery organisations who can speak on behalf of children, young people and families. The Group's role is to:

- help strengthen the position of the third sector, thus enabling it to play an increasingly active part in contributing to our agenda; and
- hold the Department to account and enable us to understand more fully the implications of our policies for and on the third sector

Members are:

- British Youth Council – James Cathcart
- Catch22 – Joyce Moseley
- Children England – Maggie Jones
- Community Matters – David Tyler
- Council for Disabled Children – Sally Whitaker
- Family and Parenting Institute – Mary MacLeod
- National Association for Voluntary and Community Action – Angela Barnes
- National Council for Voluntary Youth Services – Susanne Rauprich
- Social Enterprise Coalition – George Leahy
- Third Sector National Learning Alliance – Jane Slowey
- Voice4Change England – Jeremy Crook



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