

narrowing the gap in outcomes:

governance

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Key messages

This report/paper is based on research conducted by the NFER and commissioned by the LGA for the national Narrowing the Gap team. It aims to identify whether or not governance has an effective role in narrowing the gap between vulnerable children and young people, and other children. The study included a literature review and interviews with case-study local authorities.

Has governance helped narrow the gap in outcomes?

The literature provides very **little evidence of narrowed gaps** or improved outcomes that are **directly related to governance**. A recent review of children's trusts (Audit Commission, 2008) concluded that whilst professionals were working together in ways they were not prior to the *Every Child Matters* agenda, there was little evidence that the requirement to put in place formal governance arrangements for the coordination of children's services had as yet resulted in improved outcomes for children and young people.

However, perceptions and anecdotal evidence from the case studies, demonstrate that **governance arrangements** (processes, frameworks and participants) **have the potential to improve outcomes for young people**, and to narrow the gap between the disadvantaged and other children. Interviewees feel that effective governance can contribute to improvements in educational outcomes, safeguarding outcomes and young people's participation and voice, although provable links are difficult to ascertain.

How has governance helped to narrow the gap?

Effective governance for narrowing the gap is not fundamentally different from effective governance generally. However, the **gap appears to be narrowed through governance which emphasises the following ingredients:**

- processes: a vision that explicitly sets out which outcomes and for which vulnerable groups need to be narrowed, the allocation of appropriate resources, and opportunities for reviewing progress
- frameworks: protocols, roles, responsibilities and lines of accountability which provide opportunities for people to come together to focus on the goal of narrowing the gap
- participants: wide and representative participation, including service users, the voluntary, community and faith sectors, and staff at all levels, which provides real opportunities for all stakeholders to influence decisions.

Underpinning the key elements outlined above, there needs to be a collective '**can do**' ethos that is not afraid of '**challenge**', and, crucially, the **flexibility to respond to emerging needs**. This means being able to shift resources to areas of need, to include new representatives in governing bodies so that the identified group is represented, and to align roles, responsibilities and lines of accountability with shifting foci. Constantly reviewing progress towards the goal of narrowing the gap is important.

What are the gaps in the evidence and issues for attention?

Both the case studies and the literature provide substantial evidence of effective practice in relation to the general governance of public services. However, there are gaps in the evidence in relation to narrowing the gap:

- in the research literature there is little evidence on governance *for* narrowing the gap, and little evidence that clearly demonstrates a link between practice and outcomes
- in the case studies, a rhetoric of governance *for* narrowing the gap does not exist. Rather, interviewees provide examples of how key features of governance *contribute* to narrowing the gap.

Children's services' leaders and practitioners need support to develop a language to articulate the links between governance practice and outcomes.

For effective governance generally, the literature recommends that executive boards should focus on the strategic and not on operational details (ICGGPS, 2004). There is a tension in this for narrowing the gap, where the information, data and issues do come from the operational level. Indeed, the literature (HM Government, 2005) and the case-study interviewees recommend the **inclusion of frontline experiences to inform decision-making**. Getting governance right at different levels becomes all the more important then for narrowing the gap. The details for these marginalised groups do need to be considered.

Written terms of reference for all parties involved in governance may be important to ensure clarity about roles and responsibilities. Voluntary and community sector representation for these groups is important at the strategic level. Service users and community engagement in governance can be increased at the locality level, through representation on, for example, shadow boards and sub-corporate parenting boards. Greater engagement of individual schools and GPs in governance arrangements could be achieved through thematic groups or particular work streams, for example around 'be healthy' and 'enjoy and achieve' outcomes.

1 Introduction

Through the Local Government Association (LGA) research programme, the national Narrowing the Gap (NtG) team commissioned NFER to conduct research into governance in relation to the narrowing the gap agenda. The research focuses on the key features of governance necessary to narrow the gap in outcomes for vulnerable groups, and explores whether governance that is effective for narrowing the gap is different from governance that is effective generally. This report will be of interest to directors of children's services (DCSs), children's trust board members, policy makers, and senior leaders and managers within local authorities, the National Health Service (NHS), schools, and the voluntary sector. A parallel research report by NFER focuses on leadership for narrowing the gap (Martin *et al.*, 2009). Further information can also be found in a joint paper on the relationship between leadership and governance for narrowing the gap (Lord *et al.*, 2009).

1.1 Background

The *Every Child Matters* (ECM) agenda introduced in 2003 has brought about systemic change to improve outcomes for every child through the effective working of integrated services. The Children Act (England and Wales, Statutes, 2004) 'duty to cooperate' has led to the appointment of a director of children's services in every local authority, and the creation of children's trusts, Children and Young People's Plans, and local safeguarding children boards which bring together the key agencies to deliver more outcome-focused services. The role of governance in these new arrangements is important.

1.1.1 Governance: is there an agreed definition?

In the literature, **governance is defined** in terms of its form (e.g. frameworks, structures and protocols), its function (e.g. accountability, analysing needs and managing resources) and its composition (i.e. which agencies and stakeholders are involved). The Audit Commission report (2008) argues that 'form should follow function' (p. 21) and that function should to some extent be locally determined. A review of *The Good Governance Standard for Public Services* suggests that governance entails the provision of 'leadership, direction and control' in order to achieve 'good management, good performance, good stewardship of public money, good public engagement and, ultimately, good outcomes' (ICGGPS, 2004).

Box 1 Principles of good governance in public services

Good governance means:

- **focusing on the organisation's purpose and on outcomes** for citizens and service users
- **performing effectively in clearly defined functions and roles**
- **promoting values for the whole organisation and demonstrating** the values of good governance through behaviour
- **taking informed, transparent decisions and managing risk**



- **developing the capacity and capability of the governing body** to be effective
- **engaging stakeholders and making accountability real**

(ICGGPS, 2004, p.5)

1.1.2 What is the function of governance in children's services?

For children's services, the literature states that the functions fulfilled by children's trusts boards and their associated structures should include: ensuring accountability, creating trust, enabling the sharing of resources, and leading the planning and commissioning of services (DfES, 2005). The Audit Commission report (2008) states that, at the executive level, governance relates to directing resources and performance management. At the strategic level, governance relates to championing children's interests and developing collaborative working, whilst operational functions relate to the assessment and provision of services to individual children and families (Audit Commission, 2008).

However, children's trusts have so far only rarely been established as legal entities (UEA with NCB, 2007). As a consequence, there is considerable variation in the functions trusts propose to fulfil, and in their powers and responsibilities around commissioning and resourcing (UEA with NCB, 2007; Audit Commission, 2008). Similarly, where children's centre boards do not have a statutory basis with powers and functions prescribed in law, they are restricted in the functions that they can fulfil (Sure Start Extended Schools and Childcare Group, 2006). (The government is currently consulting on proposals to give Sure Start Children's Centres a statutory basis, in order to make them a legally recognised part of children's services' infrastructure.)

1.1.3 What is the form of governance in children's services?

Statutory guidance (HM Government, 2005) highlights that the cornerstone of the children's trust must be:

a strong integrated governing board or structure representing all key delivery partners at senior level, determined to drive whole-system change through clear leadership and effective local change programmes ... this will require sophisticated leadership of a high order to secure a genuinely joint outcome-focused vision, full engagement of all key partners, and clear lines of accountability.

Across authorities, **children's trust arrangements** vary in structure. Governance arrangements can be formalised through a) *a legal agreement*, where a children's trust board is established, or b) *a collaboration between partners*, where the local authority and health trusts are accountable bodies advised by a strategic partnership and bound by the duty to cooperate (UEA with NCB, 2007). Non-statutory guidance states that models of governance will become increasingly varied (DfES, 2007, p.13). In establishing a children's trust, partners are encouraged to consider the extent to which pre-existing local structures (for example, the children and young people strategic partnership) can be usefully built upon or rationalised. The governance models of Sure Start Children's Centres, for example, have developed along two lines:

- those having an advisory board or steering group modelled on the board of the precursor Sure Start local programme
- those involving a school governing body with the legal status that this confers (e.g. powers over resources) (SQW Limited, 2005; Sure Start Extended Schools and Childcare Group, 2006).

1.1.4 Who is involved in governance?

Research carried out by NFER for LGAR into the development of children and young people's plans (Lamont and Atkinson, 2008) identifies a variety of boards at different levels and with different titles, roles and responsibilities in children's services governance arrangements. These include age-range partnerships (e.g. 14–19 partnerships), local safeguarding children boards (LSCBs) and local strategic partnerships (LSPs). However, the vision of children's trusts refers not simply to strategic partnership boards, but to the totality of change needed to deliver better and more responsive integrated services. To achieve this, a wide range of partners should be involved in governance. The Children Act (England and Wales. Statutes, 2004) stipulates the expected composition of children's trust boards, specifying agencies and individuals who should be involved. Subsequent guidance (HM Government, 2005) distinguishes those agencies and stakeholders that must be involved from those that *should*.

Agencies which must be included are: the local authority (with both social services and education having representation), the strategic health authority and primary care trust, district councils in two-tier authorities, the police authority, probation board, youth offending team, the local learning and skills council, and agencies providing services under section 114 of the Learning and Skills Act (2000), e.g. Connexions.

Trusts are encouraged to engage a far wider range of organisations and agencies, and should involve voluntary and community sector (VCS) providers, and children, young people and families. The national evaluation of children's trust pathfinders (UEA with NCB, 2007) found around 70 per cent of the 35 trusts looked at had VCS representation, and a similar proportion had involved service users in some way.

DCSF (2008a) guidance highlights that children's trust boards need to give clear strategic direction for interagency cooperation, systematically monitor and evaluate outcomes, and, importantly, be responsive to the needs of children, young people and parents. The arrangements need to take account of the range of different key partnership bodies that interface with each other, their roles and responsibilities, and aspects such as accountability, decision-making, conflict-resolution and commissioning.

Appendix 3 provides further details on effective features of good governance generally.

1.2 About the study

In order to inform the DCSF and LGA work on Narrowing the Gap, this study aimed to identify what is known about the extent to which governance arrangements and features of governance can narrow the gap in outcomes for vulnerable groups of children and young people.



Through a literature review and case studies, this research aimed to address:

- Which gaps have been narrowed with the contribution of governance?
- What are the key features of governance necessary to achieve change and narrow the gap in outcomes for vulnerable groups?
- Is governance that is effective for narrowing the gap different from governance that is effective generally?

The project was carried out in two main phases:

- Phase one: a literature review of evidence on governance arrangements and their application including examples of current practice obtained through an email request to local authorities (August-October 2008)
- Phase two: case studies in five local authorities (November 2008-February 2009), involving 25 interviews with a range of staff including directors and assistant directors of children's services, councillors or lead members, strategic managers, and chairs of governing boards.

Demonstrating the impact of governance activity on outcomes for children, young people and families is problematic, given its remove from those outcomes. Interim or proxy indicators can be identified, for example, the recent Audit Commission review (2008) used the redirection of mainstream funding as an indicator of impact. Whilst much research does evidence the features and principles of good governance, this is largely through consensus of opinion, rather than empirical evidence of causal links. This study acknowledges these limitations. However, from the reviewed literature, we draw out the features of governance which might underpin narrowing the gap. And the case study material provides insights into how governance activity filters through from the executive and strategic levels to the service user, and thus contributes to improved outcomes for vulnerable groups.

Further details about the literature review, including the search strategy, can be found in Appendix 1. Appendix 2 provides further details on case studies.

1.3 Structure of the report

Findings from the research are presented under the following chapter headings:

- Chapter 2: Governance: has the gap been narrowed?
- Chapter 3: Governance: how has the gap been narrowed?
- Chapter 4: Conclusions, including:
 - What gaps are there in the evidence?
 - What gaps have been narrowed?
 - What are the distinctive features of governance for narrowing the gap?

2 Governance: has the gap been narrowed?

In this section, we set out the evidence which indicates that governance has contributed to narrowing the gap in outcomes between vulnerable groups and other children. The literature provides very little evidence of narrowed gaps or improved outcomes that are directly related to governance. A recent review of children's trusts (Audit Commission, 2008) concluded that whilst professionals were working together in ways they were not prior to the *Every Child Matters* agenda, there was little evidence that the requirement to put in place formal governance arrangements for the coordination of children's services had as yet resulted in improved outcomes for children and young people. However, interviewees highlight examples where governance has contributed to narrowing the gap in terms of:

- educational outcomes
- safeguarding outcomes
- participation and voice
- post-16 education, employment and training outcomes (EET)
- health-related outcomes.

Quantification of narrowed gaps depends on year-on-year trends (i.e. through comparison of year-on-year cohorts), and this presents issues for local authorities when assessing their progress towards narrowing the gap. Three key issues were raised by the interviewees:

- the numbers of young people for whom such measures apply are small compared with the general local population (thus statistical comparison with the whole population can be seen as 'crude')
- each cohort, indeed each individual, is different (thus year-on-year comparisons are not comparing like with like)
- results for all children can shift upwards (as in one of the case-study authorities): the gap is not necessarily being narrowed. The challenge to narrow the gap thus becomes even greater.

2.1 Educational outcomes

Evidence that effective governance contributes to narrowing the gap in educational outcomes is provided by interviewees in the case-study authorities. Examples refer to the **educational achievement** of looked after children (LAC) and black and minority ethnic (BME) groups, **school attendance** for LAC, and **better school transitions** for children with learning difficulties and disabilities (CLDD).

Box 2 Narrowing the gap in educational outcomes

- The educational progress of LAC has improved in a local authority where governance arrangements require school governors and the authority to meet once a term to focus on pupil performance issues. This moves away from autonomous school governance (Authority C). Similarly, in another authority, school governors have a key role in holding schools to account (Authority B).



- Achievement for LAC and BME groups at key stages 2 and 4 has improved in another local authority where a clear governance framework is felt to underpin the Children and Young People's Plan, which in turn identifies the priority to focus on vulnerable groups (Authority E).
- The gap between poor white boys' and other groups' educational achievement is being narrowed in an authority that has veered school funding support to its more deprived areas. A scrutiny committee will examine how schools have spent the money, and its effectiveness and impacts. This committee holds the cabinet member and schools to account (Authority B).
- Outcomes for CLDD (especially around school exclusions) have improved in a local authority where an executive group on the children's trust focuses on strategic service planning rather than operational issues. People feel that a real quality of dialogue amongst this group is making a difference. All schools in this authority are being improved to allow access by CLDD, and a small number of special educational needs schools are being developed (Authority D).
- An authority has improved LAC school attendance. The Local Safeguarding Children's Board (LSCB) drives school performance and encourages staff training (Authority A).
- School exclusions for vulnerable groups have decreased in an authority where school governance arrangements are changing to involve other services such as those engaged with extended schools (Authority D).

2.2 Safeguarding outcomes

There is some case-study evidence that effective governance contributes to improving safeguarding outcomes. These outcomes are mainly described in terms of **agencies' and communities' understanding and developing the safeguarding agenda** (e.g. around bullying, sexual exploitation and child protection). Such outcomes may, in turn, narrow the gap in 'stay safe' outcomes for children and young people, although examples of outcomes for children themselves are rarely identified in the case studies. The role of the LSCB and its accountability arrangements seem crucial to achieving better 'stay safe'-related outcomes.

Box 3 Narrowing the gap: safeguarding outcomes

- Local area children's boards are working with the ethnic minority population on safeguarding issues, increasing communities' understanding of child protection (Authority C and Authority E).
- Awareness has been raised amongst governing bodies of the impact on children of domestic violence or parents with substance and alcohol misuse problems. This is felt to be having a positive impact on vulnerable children's safety, although no measurable outcomes or narrowed gaps are identified (Authority C).
- A local authority has improved child protection and LAC outcomes: 100 per cent of its child case conferences are held on time, and 100 per cent of children are now placed within a 15-mile area of the local authority. The LSCB drives performance around child protection plans, and emphasises staff training and supervision (Authority A).

2.3 Participation and voice

Through governance arrangements for engaging service users in needs analyses and decision-making, opportunities for vulnerable groups' (including parents) participation have increased. Local boards have a role in this, particularly around community engagement. In addition, school-based governance arrangements that encourage school forums, input from school governors and challenge from school improvement partners are cited as contributing to improving the level of participation of vulnerable groups and their parents.

Box 4 Narrowing the gap: participation and voice

- Local area children's boards have worked with their ethnic minority communities to understand community issues and improve community engagement (Authority C).
- The involvement of children in decisions concerning them has increased significantly in an authority where the LSCB has a strong performance monitoring role of agencies (Authority A).
- One local authority is achieving a seamless service for parents from pre-birth, through early years' and children's centre support, to extended services. Parents are involved more in decisions about their child. This is achieved through governance arrangements around age groupings (pre-birth to 5, 5 to 13, and 13+) which also emphasise services' accountability to each other (Authority C).

2.4 Post-16 education, employment and training (EET) outcomes

There is some case-study evidence that effective governance contributes to narrowing the gap for those progressing to post-16 education, employment and training (EET) (i.e. economic wellbeing outcomes). Gaps have been narrowed particularly for care leavers and young offenders. The use of the Children and Young People's Plan as a framework to focus actions on families, children and communities that are not achieving as well as others seems key.

Box 5 Narrowing the gap: progression to post-16 education, employment and training (EET)

- Reductions in the number of LAC not in education, employment and training (NEET) have been recorded in one local authority, where senior executive managers report to the children's board on ECM outcomes (Authority A).

2.5 Health-related outcomes

'Being healthy' outcomes are being improved for vulnerable groups in some of the case-study authorities. The relationship with governance is generally unclear. However, in one authority improvements in services for teenage parents seem firmly related to governance arrangements on the ground. Here, there are lines of accountability between local extended service partners (e.g. Connexions and Children's Centres) to local partnership coordinators, who, in turn, report to a senior extended partnerships' group. '*Forming a local picture with partners*' and governance for the locality is important (Authority C).



3 Governance: how has the gap been narrowed?

3.1 Introduction and overview

This chapter sets out the features of governance suggested by interviewees and a review of the literature to be instrumental in narrowing the gap in outcomes. **Neither data sets provide much support for the hypothesis that governance for narrowing the gap is fundamentally different from governance for other purposes.**

Only one of 25 interviewees states definitively that governance for narrowing the gap is different. **However, the case-study narratives suggest that certain features of good governance in general are particularly critical to driving forward the narrowing the gap agenda.** These key features are summarised in Box 6.

The literature offers some implicit reinforcement for these key features – although rarely cites them in relation to narrowing the gap. Appendix 3 sets out the key features of good governance in general which appear in the literature. Appendix 4 outlines the 16 sources reviewed fully as part of this project.

Box 6 Key features of effective governance for narrowing the gap

Processes include:

- agreeing a vision which sets out explicitly what the core business is – which gaps, in which outcomes, for which children, need to be narrowed
- deciding on the actions and resources necessary to achieve this vision, explicitly targeting disadvantage and vulnerability, and addressing any resistance to this shift head-on
- reviewing progress towards that vision, providing challenge and support where insufficient progress is made, i.e. gaps fail to be closed
- making sure that the above processes are all grounded in and make use of good quality information about the circumstances of disadvantaged and vulnerable groups

Frameworks provide:

- opportunities for people to come together to focus on the goal of narrowing the gap
- clarity about roles and responsibilities, particularly in relation to children at risk
- clear lines of accountability, with a focus on challenge rather than blame where insufficient progress is made

Composition and participation:

- is wide and representative – offering channels and opportunities for all stakeholders to influence and challenge decisions
- extends to the voluntary, community and faith sector, service users and staff at all levels

- of individuals with drive, passion, and authority (i.e. senior leadership) and a visible commitment to narrowing the gap is secured

Overarching features are:

- an ethos of collective responsibility and a ‘can do’ culture
- flexibility, in particular the capacity to respond to emerging needs and willingness to work across boundaries

3.2 Processes: key features of effective governance

This section sets out the processes and activities our interviewees believe to be central to effective governance for narrowing the gap and, where available, provides evidence from the literature.

3.2.1 Agreeing a vision

Interviewees stress the importance of agreeing a vision which sets out clearly what the core business is. The vision needs to identify and make a specific commitment to privileging and prioritising the most vulnerable children and young people. It must set out clearly which gaps are to be narrowed and which specific outcomes matter:

There is a need to have clarity about what it is that we are going to narrow the gap on. To ensure that all policies and strategies have a focus on the priorities within the Children’s Plan ... and that we are not woolly about things. To be clear on targets ... by which the programme will be judged (Authority C).

Whilst the literature does not explicitly offer up features of governance processes for narrowing the gap, the importance of knowing the purpose and *raison d’être* for governance arrangements is implied. Glasby and Peck (2006, p. 15) say: ‘if partnership is the answer, what is the question?’ Fox and Butler (2004) argue that, even where the need for a formal partnership is clear, an explicit statement of desired outcomes will still be required. Similarly, an early report on the pathfinder children’s trusts notes that the success of these trusts would be contingent on, and measured by, ‘a focus on improved outcomes for children and young people’ (UEA with NCB, 2005, p. v).

3.2.2 Deciding on actions and resources

The vision needs to be backed up by properly resourced strategies and interventions. There has to be an explicit **shifting of investment towards disadvantaged groups** and localities. The de-commissioning of services not in line with the vision, e.g. ‘from an area of low need [but] where the population is very articulate’ (Authority A), is testing the strength of both governance and leadership. Resistance should be expected (more so, if budgets are ‘squeezed’ in the years ahead) and must be dealt with. To achieve consensus on difficult decisions such as the shifting of resources, time needs to be invested in discussion and dialogue. Interviewees believe that informal communication is essential to the development of stakeholder support.



Box 7 Deciding on actions and resources

Interviewees in one of our local authorities explained how the decision had been taken to **review the rationale behind the distribution of funding to schools, and to substantially increase the weighting given to vulnerability** and deprivation. The element relating to school floor area has now been abolished, and the released funds allocated on the basis of deprivation indicators (free school meal eligibility and the Index of Multiple Deprivation). In addition, the ‘loading’ for having an LAC on roll has been tripled, with no distinction being made between authority and ‘out of area’ children.

It shifted pretty much all our available resource around deprivation, and this meant that the most deprived primary schools, for example, might be getting £70–80,000 more ... and in the case of the most deprived secondary schools, into the hundreds of thousands of pounds ... we’re following that up obviously, with what used to be called the inspection team, and Narrowing the Gap people and all that, but also our politicians, our scrutiny committee, have given prior notice to schools that they will scrutinise ... how that money’s been used and what the impact has been (Authority B).

Maximum impact in narrowing the gap requires agencies to coordinate their investment. The ideal might be the creation of a single ‘pot’ from which to commission services. This pooling of budgets is an ambition which continues to present a challenge for some of the case-study authorities.

3.2.3 Reviewing progress in narrowing the gap

Arrangements need to be in place to support review or scrutiny of progress at all levels, with appropriate officer support provided. The relationship between those scrutinising and being scrutinised needs to be made explicit. Interviewees believe review and scrutiny is most productive when framed as ‘supportive challenge’. Once challenges and associated recommendations are accepted, it is essential to be clear where responsibility lies for ensuring that the appropriate actions are taken.

Box 8 Reviewing progress in narrowing the gap

Local authority interviewees provide a number of examples of how this process is played out and how they personally are involved. In one authority **review and scrutiny underpins the re-conception of the authority’s relationship with schools** and its contribution to narrowing the gap:

The real change has been the focus on school improvement and under-performing groups. This has got us away from giving support in a more generic fashion. We now signpost skills and external support that schools can buy. This leaves us with a very clean role, which is challenging schools and offering a supportive analysis of their performance (Authority C).

In another local authority there has been a re-framing of its expectations of school governors, and the provision of support and training to help governors meet these expectations:

We have made it clear that governors hold their schools to account and that they should be asking good questions of their school about what they are

doing for all groups of students ... governors know what is going on and can see that certain groups are under-achieving, and are now better equipped [through the training that the authority has provided] to analyse the relevant data (Authority B).

The literature also suggests that, for good governance in general, local authorities and their partners should 'review current governance and management arrangements for children's services to focus on delivering improved outcomes' (Audit Commission, 2008, p.7). A performance management system that reflects a focus on improving outcomes is also important for good governance generally (Fox and Butler, 2004).

3.2.4 Making use of good quality information and data

Each of the three governance processes described above should be grounded in solid evidence. Good quality data should underpin the identification of vulnerable groups, the setting of targets, agreement of actions and reviews of progress. Not all data is good or useful data; information must be selected and interpreted with intelligence. Interviewees recommend that quantitative data are supplemented with a more human understanding of the specific circumstances of the most vulnerable. This can be developed through personal tracking systems and direct contact with these children and young people.

Box 9 Making use of good quality information and data

An interviewee (Authority A) describes how the local authority's Corporate Parenting Councillor Sub-Group initially arranged 'coffee mornings' for LAC and councillors to meet but these had limited success. Recognising that there was a need to find more imaginative ways of engaging these young people, it was agreed to trial a more fun and relaxed activity for the children and their families. A ten-pin bowling session was arranged, with councillors captaining teams made up of the young people and their families. Arrangements were also made for these people to meet the local football team and attend a training match. These activities provided a **much more relaxed environment in which elected members and young people could communicate**, and brought particular concerns, about access to computers and key worker changes, to councillors' attention. LAC have since been provided with laptops and efforts made to ensure greater stability in key workers, and it is hoped that this will contribute to improved outcomes for these young people, though 'it's a bit early to judge' (Authority A).

The reviewed literature also highlights that effective decision-making generally within children's trust arrangements should be 'informed' (SQW Limited, 2005; Masterson *et al.*, 2004; NCB, 2006), including by the experiences of those at the frontline (HM Government, 2005). Access to information that is both robust and relevant is important (ICGGPS, 2004):

Good quality information and clear, objective advice can significantly reduce the risk of taking decisions that fail to achieve their objectives or have serious unintended consequences (ICGGPS, 2004, p.16).



They argue that a governing body does not need to be provided with detailed information on operational or management issues, as these might obscure key facts. This issue might be particularly important in the context of narrowing the gap, where detailed operational work and data is important, but where governance needs to take a strategic view of that data.

3.3 Frameworks: key features of effective governance

This section describes the features of governance frameworks which interviewees believe promote success in narrowing the gap, and where available provides evidence from the literature.

3.3.1 Opportunities for people to come together

Effective arrangements provide opportunities for people to come together to focus on the goal of narrowing the gap. Interviewees emphasise that different stakeholders need to work together, aligning their expertise, activities and resources to address the most deep-seated inequalities. Where this happens, immediate benefits can be seen:

We now understand each other's business that much better, and the cross-agency, cross-departmental, cross-partnership working ... allows us, with some of our meeting groups and structures, to support particular agendas better than we've ever been able to do (Authority B).

Contributory arrangements include those underpinning wider local authority decision-making (cabinet, scrutiny committees and associated groups) and interagency work (partnerships with a geographic or thematic focus). Interviewees believe that for the gap in outcomes to be narrowed, vulnerable children need to feature high on the agenda of all these groups.

Whilst good systems and structures support good decision-making, interviewees suspect imperfection is inevitable. They believe that care needs to be taken that the development of structures does not become a distraction from process. This position finds support in the literature (Audit Commission, 2008). Revised guidance from central government (DCSF, 2008a) draws attention to the need for structures and processes to support relationships within and beyond the children's trust.

3.3.2 Clarity about roles and responsibilities

The majority of our interviewees believe that clarity about roles and responsibilities is important for narrowing the gap. They are confident that such clarity has been achieved in most contexts:

We are quite good here at identifying what the issue is that needs to be dealt with, who is the best person to lead on it, who needs to make the contributions, who needs to sign it off and in what order (Authority C).

In one of our authorities, the LSCB ensures clarity by providing a contract and handbook to all members. This may be an approach LSCBs in other areas could adopt, to avoid misunderstandings (such as those revealed by the use of a governance assessment tool in another of the local authorities).

In addition to defining and allocating generic roles and responsibilities to board, committee or group members, there are numerous examples from

the case studies of individuals taking on the role of 'champion' for a particular group of children (most commonly LAC). The consensus is that this is helpful to their cause; some authorities are taking the approach further and assigning responsibility for LAC of different ages.

The literature similarly identifies clarity as important to good governance (see, for example, SQW Limited, 2005; UEA with NCB, 2005) and encourages boards, committees and groups of all sorts to set out roles and responsibilities in writing (e.g. Masterson *et al.*, 2004). Early research on the pathfinder children's trusts concluded that the success and long-term viability of trust arrangements would be contingent on the agreement of clear terms of reference for interagency governance activity. However, subsequent research (UEA with NCB, 2007) suggests that amongst the pathfinder trusts, clear and comprehensive terms of reference were not routinely in use, though legal agreements often underpinned the partnerships. In the context of narrowing the gap, it may be particularly pressing that written terms of reference are employed, in order to further underline this agenda and keep it to the fore for all partners amongst the many other remits they have.

3.3.3 Clear lines of accountability

Interviewees believe clear lines of accountability, both within and between organisations, are of considerable importance in the context of narrowing the gap. However, in holding individuals and organisations to account, they believe the focus should be on challenge rather than blame.

In general they feel structures are in place in their local authorities for the executive to report to the board, and for the board to issue a challenge, if appropriate. In respect of child welfare and protection, interviewees emphasise that the communication of expectations and the protocols according to which relationships should be conducted and concerns raised need to be set out particularly clearly.

Interviewees draw attention to the possibility of statutory responsibility but limited control (where programmes of work are devolved) and also to situations where there is no expectation of direct accountability, but an acceptance nonetheless of responsibility. As such, holding partners to account often means offering respectful challenge:

I think the atmosphere that has been created [on the CYPSP board] is one of high expectations of partners, respect for each other's work, but also a challenge. We have, I think, achieved that really difficult balance. People come to those meetings knowing that they have to represent their agency and the services for children and know that they will be challenged if they haven't made the strides we need them to make. But this is all done in a very cooperative way (Authority C).

The literature also stresses the importance of clear lines of accountability, particularly to the functioning of complex partnerships (Fox and Butler, 2004; SQW Limited, 2005; UEA with NCB, 2005).

3.4 Composition and participation: key features of effective governance

Interviewees believe that there are a number of ways in which the composition of governing boards in terms of who participates influences



success in narrowing the gap. This section describes the features of particular importance and, where available, provides evidence from the literature.

3.4.1 Opportunities for all stakeholders to influence decisions

Both interviewees and the literature stress that if decision-making bodies are to be responsive to the needs of vulnerable children and their families, there needs to be wide, representative participation. However, they recognise that participation need not necessarily mean formal involvement in high-level boards, committees or the like. Instead what it means is that there must be channels and opportunities for a wide range of stakeholders to influence and challenge decisions. Several case-study authorities draw attention to their efforts to ensure less powerful stakeholders have meaningful influence.

The literature suggests that this might be achieved by establishing different tiers of governance, for example:

- top level boards, to decide upon strategic matters
- second tier groups of senior or service managers dealing with more technical matters
- third tier groups concerned with particular work streams and providing information to higher tier groups (HM Government, 2005).

The duty to cooperate set out in the Children Act (England and Wales. Statutes, 2004) does not extend to individual schools or general practitioners. The Audit Commission (2008) identifies this as a weakness in trust arrangements and recommends that 'individual schools need to be much more closely engaged' (p.5). For narrowing the gap, individual schools and GPs could be involved in the kind of third tier groups suggested above.

The literature further suggests that whilst there is value to extending the net and involving a wider, more representative pool of contributors, capacity building activity may be necessary to realise the benefits of wider participation in governance activity (SQW Limited, 2005; DfES, 2007; Fox and Butler, 2004; Russell, 2005). Less powerful or well-resourced stakeholders may also need to be supported to put in place the infrastructure necessary to ensure proper communication with, and accountability to, their parent organisation or constituency.

3.4.2 The engagement of service users and the voluntary, community and faith sectors

Interviewees believe strongly that service users must be engaged: vulnerable children and young people, their parents or carers, and families. There is some variation in the approaches local authorities are taking to involve service users, but most are looking to achieve some sort of balance between information gathering activities (involvement for intelligence purposes) and direct influence.

Box 10 The engagement of service users and the voluntary, community and faith sectors

When asked about governance for narrowing the gap, one interviewee described how steps were being taken in their authority to involve LAC. These **vulnerable children have been helped to establish their own panel**, which meets with the lead member and provides representatives to the youth council. Another local authority is still exploring the different possibilities for young people's involvement and representation.

Work is also in progress to look at the more formal involvement of parents in governance structures: in one local authority a parents' council was set up last year and the representations this has made to working groups have been found to be extremely valuable.

Interviewees also place a high value on the involvement of the voluntary, community and faith sectors. Case-study authorities are taking different approaches to involving these sectors. These include initiating targeted relationship building work (for example, with Imams around child protection issues) and establishing new reference groups. Some local authorities are using existing umbrella groups and providing induction and training activities to equip members to participate in formal governance activities. However, our interviewees remain conscious of the difficulties presented by the sectors' diversity and its lack of a central organising structure.

The literature (see, for example, Russell, 2005; UEA with NCB, 2005) identifies some additional issues. For example, many representatives from these sectors lack the authority or influence to take actions forward. Their involvement may come at considerable (personal or organisational) cost and it is not yet clear whether the returns on their involvement are commensurate with these costs. Government guidance in relation to the establishment of children's trusts recommends that all boards, their associated groups and committees should have a clear rationale for their membership (HM Government, 2005). Alternative ways of involving groups in governance, other than through assignment to a governing body should be considered (ICGGPS, 2004). Service users might be involved as members of consultative groups or thematic forums, rather than sitting on an executive board.

3.4.3 The involvement of individuals with drive, visible commitment and authority

There is a strong case for involving staff at all levels but, like participants from the voluntary, community and faith sectors and service users, care needs to be taken to involve them in the most appropriate forums and ways. Interviewees believe a genuine passion to improve outcomes for the most vulnerable is important, but this needs to be backed up by the authority to effect change. Committed, senior leadership involvement (both political and executive) is critical at the highest levels of governance.

This belief finds support in the literature: early research on children's trusts suggests that chief executive level involvement is a significant determinant of the impact of these partnerships (UEA with NCB, 2005). Key players such as lead members for children's services and directors of children's services need to make a visible commitment to narrowing the gap and to model in



their behaviour a willingness to collaborate and work across agency boundaries to achieve this.

Box 11 The involvement of individuals with drive, visible commitment and authority

Several interviewees comment on the importance of senior leadership commitment to narrowing the gap, and their willingness to champion the cause of particularly disadvantaged groups, for example LAC:

Elected members are corporate parents, and we should be pushy parents. We should look at it as though they are our children – which they are – and we should be as pushy for them as we are for our own children. And the same goes for children who are living at home but whose parents aren't as articulate as other parents – they should have an equal voice. And I think it's our job as elected members to ensure their voice is heard (Authority B).

They also said that for staff at all levels to be clear that narrowing the gap was 'on the desk of the leader, as it were', the vision, and the rhetoric, needed to carry through into the detail of the leader's work. So, in one authority, the DCS was in the habit of writing to all headteachers and Connexions personal advisors to enquire about the progress (e.g. examination results and agreement of an action plan) of specific LAC with whom they were working. This 'brought it back onto people's agenda' (Authority B).

3.5 Overarching features

Interviewees draw attention to some critical overarching features which span processes, frameworks *and* participation, and seem to be crucial to underpinning governance which contributes to narrowing the gap.

3.5.1 Ethos and culture

It seems that governance for narrowing the gap may be qualitatively distinct, with a particular ethos and culture permeating its processes, frameworks and patterns of participation. Comments from interviewees suggest that a tangible difference emerges between governance for narrowing the gap, and governance more widely in relation to ethos and culture:

I would say it [governance for narrowing the gap] is better. Because we've got this will to change things, to improve things... we're all signed up to the process, and to the governance and checking that everything is being done correctly (Authority B).

This acceptance of collective responsibility for achieving change and commitment to public service is significant. Also important is the creation of a 'can do' culture and environment, where people and practices are focussed on developing solutions, rather than identifying problems and apportioning blame:

There is now significantly more trust between the organisations. I have worked in this local authority for many years now and I think that the culture is very different. It's much more open and we share challenges, rather than tending to blame one another (Authority A).

The literature provides support for the notion that good governance may be as much about ethos and culture as processes and frameworks (Audit Commission, 2008; ICGGPS, 2004).

3.5.2 Flexibility and responsiveness

Interviewees emphasise that vulnerability 'is not a set category' and there is an ongoing requirement to be alert to emerging needs. Processes, frameworks and people need to be tailored to local circumstances and responsive to changes in these. Flexibility, including the willingness to work across boundaries of all sorts, is critical.

Interviewees largely welcome the shifts in the children's services landscape consequent on the Children Act (England and Wales. Statutes, 2004), and the focus on outcomes in the ECM model. However, they warn that in focusing on the five ECM outcome areas, new silos may develop.

Suggestions for fostering flexibility include devolution of funds to localities, and – having made sure that expectations are clear and that procedures are in place to review performance against these expectations – taking a fairly hands-off approach (i.e. avoiding micro-management):

It's about making sure that everybody is clear about what it is we are trying to achieve, and then freeing people up to get on with it (Authority D).

3.6 Features of effective governance at different levels for narrowing the gap

Our case-study interviewees did not cover all agencies or all levels of children's services involvement. Most of our interviewees had roles at the strategic level within local authorities. However, from the data available, it would seem that, at different levels, governance needs to take particular account of certain features to be effective for narrowing the gap:

- effective governance **at strategic level** for narrowing the gap needs to focus on **managing performance and creating a culture of supportive challenge**; it should not focus on operational details
- effective governance **at locality level** should emphasise **service user and community engagement** – for example, through the representation of LAC on shadow boards and sub-corporate parenting boards
- effective governance of local bodies, for example schools, should **link with the agreed vision** to focus on the most vulnerable groups and outcomes as articulated in governance approaches at the children's service strategic level. Schools in particular are being encouraged to be less autonomous in their governance arrangements and to link vertically with local authority governance priorities.



4 Conclusions

This final chapter draws together the broad messages from the case studies and the literature review on the contribution of governance to narrowing the gap in outcomes for vulnerable groups.

4.1 What gaps are there in the evidence?

Both the case studies and the literature provide substantial evidence of effective practice in relation to the general governance of public services. Guidance and policy documents provide frameworks for good practice, and the case-study authorities provide examples of governance in terms of frameworks, processes and who is involved. However, there are gaps in the evidence in relation to narrowing the gap. In the research literature there is:

- little evidence on governance for narrowing the gap
- little evidence that clearly demonstrates a link between practice and outcomes.

In the case studies, a rhetoric of governance *for* narrowing the gap does not exist. Rather, interviewees provide examples of how key features of governance *contribute* to narrowing the gap. **Children's services leaders and practitioners need support to develop a language to articulate the links between governance practice and outcomes.**

4.2 What gaps have been narrowed?

In general, the evidence demonstrates that governance arrangements (processes, frameworks and participants) have the potential to improve outcomes for young people, and to narrow the gap between the disadvantaged and other children. Improvements in educational outcomes, safeguarding outcomes and young people's participation and voice can be achieved. However, the evidence for such outcomes is based mainly on perception, rather than demonstrable links.

4.3 What are the distinctive features of governance for narrowing the gap?

Effective governance for narrowing the gap is not fundamentally different from effective governance generally. Appendix 3 provides details on the features of general effective governance in public and children's services. For narrowing the gap, governance should emphasise the following ingredients:

- a vision which sets out explicitly which outcomes and for which vulnerable groups need to be narrowed, with commensurate resource allocation and opportunities for reviewing progress
- frameworks, protocols, roles, responsibilities and lines of accountability which provide opportunities for people to come together to focus on the goal of narrowing the gap
- wide, representative participation, including service users, the voluntary, community and faith sectors, and staff at all levels, which provides real opportunities for all stakeholders to influence decisions.

Underpinning the key ingredients outlined above, there needs to be a collective **'can do' ethos that is not afraid of 'challenge'**, and, crucially, the **flexibility to respond to emerging needs**. This means being able to shift resources to areas of need, to include new representatives in governing bodies so that the identified group is represented, and to align roles, responsibilities and lines of accountability with shifting foci. Constantly reviewing progress towards the goal of narrowing the gap is important.

For effective governance generally, the literature recommends that executive boards should focus on the strategic and not on operational details (ICGGPS, 2004). There is a tension in this for narrowing the gap, where the information, data and issues do come from the operational level. Indeed, the literature (HM Government, 2005) and the case-study interviewees recommend the **inclusion of frontline experiences to inform decision-making**. Getting governance right at different levels becomes all the more important then for narrowing the gap. The details for these marginalised groups do need to be considered.

Written terms of reference for all parties involved in governance may be important to ensure clarity about roles and responsibilities. Voluntary and community sector representation for these groups is important at the strategic level. Service user and community engagement in governance can be increased at the locality level through, for example, representation on shadow boards and sub-corporate parenting boards. Greater engagement of individual schools and GPs in governance arrangements could be achieved through thematic groups or particular work streams, for example around 'be healthy' and 'enjoy and achieve' outcomes.



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Appendix 1 About the literature review

The literature review aimed to identify empirically-based research on governance carried out in the UK since 2002 with a particular focus on narrowing the gap in outcomes for vulnerable groups.

A1.1 The search strategy

The search strategy involved three key lines of enquiry:

- systematic scanning and identification of evidence from a range of relevant academic databases
- scanning and collection of information and documents from appropriate websites and internet subject gateways
- the collection of current policy and practice documents from local authorities via the EMIE at NFER link network (supplemented by an email request from researchers to directors of children's services involved in the national Narrowing the Gap work).

The criteria for inclusion were:

- evidence from empirically-based research and evaluation
- evidence on effective features of governance
- evidence of impact (including narrowed gaps) for vulnerable groups
- evidence relating impacts and outcomes to effective governance practice
- evidence from the UK from 2002 onwards.

A1.2 Databases and key words

Database searches for the project sought to identify evidence of how governance arrangements are contributing to narrowing the gap in outcomes for vulnerable groups. Research carried out in the UK since 2002 was included, with a particular focus on England and on research undertaken since 2004. Searches were conducted during the period 15 August – 5 September 2008.

Search strategies for all databases were developed by using terms from the relevant thesauri where these were available, along with free-text searching. A set of terms was developed to explore the concept of governance, and this was combined with sets covering individual service-providing agencies, the integrated and/or collaborative working between them, and the outcomes and effectiveness of such working. The keywords used in the searches, together with a brief description of each of the databases searched, are outlined below. Throughout, the * symbol has been used to denote truncation of terms, (exp) the 'explosion' of a thesaurus term to include all narrower terms, and (ft) the use of free-text search terms.

Applied Social Sciences Index and Abstracts (ASSIA)

ASSIA is an index of articles from over 600 international English language social science journals. The database provides unique coverage of special educational and developmental aspects of children.

Governance set

- #1 Accountability
- #2 Administration
- #3 Budgeting
- #4 Clinical governance
- #5 Collaborative decision making
- #6 Conflict resolution
- #7 Coordination
- #8 Corporate governance
- #9 Decision making
- #10 Governance
- #11 Governance structure
- #12 Joint commissioning
- #13 Joint planning
- #14 Legitimacy
- #15 Local governance
- #16 Management teams
- #17 Planning
- #18 Public administration
- #19 Regional governance
- #20 Resource allocation
- #21 Shared governance
- #22 Social work administration
- #23 Strategic planning
- #24 #1 or #2 or #3 ... or #23

Individual agencies set

- #25 Agencies
- #26 Child care agencies
- #27 Health care
- #28 Local authorities
- #29 Local education authorities
- #30 Police
- #31 Primary care trusts
- #32 Primary health care
- #33 Primary schools
- #34 Public agencies
- #35 Public health agencies
- #36 Public services
- #37 Schools
- #38 Secondary schools



- #39 Social care
- #40 Social services
- #41 Social services agencies
- #42 Social welfare agencies
- #43 Social work agencies
- #44 Voluntary organizations
- #45 Welfare services
- #46 Youth services
- #47 Youth offending team* (ft)
- #48 #25 or #26 or #27 ... or #47
- #49 #24 and #48

Integrated/collaborative working set

- #50 Integrated management
- #51 Integrated services
- #52 Interagency collaboration
- #53 Joint ventures
- #54 Joint working
- #55 Service integration
- #56 Children* centre* (ft)
- #57 Children* service* (ft)
- #58 Children* trust* (ft)
- #59 Local strategic partnership* (ft)
- #60 Local safeguarding* (ft)
- #61 LSCB* (ft)
- #62 Multiagency (ft) or multi agency (ft)
- #63 #50 or #51 or #52 ... or #62
- #64 #24 and #63

Outcomes/effectiveness set

- #65 Best practice
- #66 Effectiveness
- #67 Evaluation
- #68 Models
- #69 Organizational effectiveness
- #70 Outcomes
- #71 Performance
- #72 Performance indicators
- #73 Performance management
- #74 Theory
- #75 *Every Child Matters* (ft)

- #76 ECM (ft)
- #77 Good practice (ft)
- #78 Narrowing the gap (ft)
- #79 What works (ft)
- #80 #65 or #66 or #67 ... or #79
- #81 #24 and #80

British Education Index (BEI)

BEI provides bibliographic references to 350 British and selected European English-language periodicals in the field of education and training, plus developing coverage of national report and conference literature.

Governance set

- #1 Accountability
- #2 Administration
- #3 Administrative organisation
- #4 Budgeting
- #5 Conflict resolution
- #6 Coordination
- #7 Decision making
- #8 Governance
- #9 Management teams
- #10 Organisation
- #11 Planning
- #12 Programme budgeting
- #13 Resource allocation
- #14 Strategic planning
- #15 Commissioning (ft)
- #16 Joint planning (ft)
- #17 Legitimacy (ft)
- #18 #1 or #2 or #3 ... or #17

Individual agencies set

- #19 Schools (exp)
- #20 Local education authorities
- #21 Local authorit* (ft)
- #22 Public agencies
- #23 Public service occupations
- #24 Social agencies
- #25 Voluntary agencies
- #26 Voluntary service
- #27 Welfare agencies



- #28 Youth agencies
- #29 Youth service
- #30 Youth offending team* (ft)
- #31 Police
- #32 Social care (ft)
- #33 Primary care (ft)
- #34 Primary health care
- #35 Primary care trust* (ft)
- #36 PCT* (ft)
- #37 #19 or #20 or #21 ... or #36
- #38 #18 and #37

Integrated/collaborative working set

- #39 Agency cooperation
- #40 Children* service* (ft)
- #41 Integrated service* (ft)
- #42 Integrated children's service* (ft)
- #43 Partnership* (ft)
- #44 Children* trust* (ft)
- #45 Children* centre* (ft)
- #46 Local strategic partnership* (ft)
- #47 Local safeguarding children* board* (ft)
- #48 LSCB* (ft)
- #49 Interagency (ft) or inter agency (ft)
- #50 Multiagency (ft) or multi agency (ft)
- #51 Joint working (ft)
- #52 Team working (ft)
- #53 Integrated working (ft)
- #54 *Every Child Matters* (ft)
- #55 ECM (ft)
- #56 #39 or #40 or #41 ... or #55
- #57 #18 and #56

Outcomes/effectiveness set

- #58 Models
- #59 Theories
- #60 Theoretical framework* (ft)
- #61 Evaluation
- #62 Organisational effectiveness
- #63 Programme effectiveness
- #64 Performance

- #65 Performance indicators
- #66 Evaluation criteria
- #67 Effective (ft) or effectiveness (ft)
- #68 Outcome* (ft)
- #69 Narrowing the gap (ft)
- #70 What works (ft)
- #71 Good practice (ft)
- #72 Best practice (ft)
- #73 #58 or #59 or #60 ... or #72
- #74 #18 and #73

Current Educational Research in the United Kingdom (CERUK plus)

CERUK plus contains current and recently-completed commissioned research, PhD level work and practitioner research, covering all aspects of education (all age ranges from early years to adult) and children's services. Records retrieved by any relevant keyword were examined.

- #1 Governance
- #2 Services integration
- #3 Budgeting
- #4 Resource allocation
- #5 Decision making
- #6 Conflict resolution
- #7 Commissioning
- #8 Accountability
- #9 Joint commissioning (ft)
- #10 Joint planning (ft)
- #11 Legitimacy (ft)
- #12 Interagency collaboration
- #13 Multi agency working
- #14 Planning
- #15 Strategic planning
- #16 Local safeguarding children boards
- #17 Childrens centres
- #18 Childrens trusts
- #19 *Every Child Matters* agenda
- #20 Organisation effectiveness
- #21 #1 or #2 or #3 ... or #20

ChildData

ChildData is produced by the National Children's Bureau. It has four information databases: bibliographic information on books, reports and



journal articles (including some full text access); directory information on more than 3,000 UK and international organisations concerned with children; Children in the News, an index to press coverage of children's issues since early 1996; and an indexed guide to conferences and events.

Governance set

- #1 Accountability
- #2 Administration
- #3 Budgets
- #4 Commissioning
- #5 Conflict resolution
- #6 Coordination
- #7 Decision making
- #8 Governance
- #9 Joint commissioning
- #10 Management
- #11 Organisation theory
- #12 Planning
- #13 Resource allocation
- #14 #1 or #2 or #3 ... or #13

Outcomes/effectiveness set

- #15 Effectiveness
- #16 Evaluation
- #17 Outcomes
- #18 Practice
- #19 #15 or #16 or #17 or #18
- #20 #14 and #19

Individual agencies set

- #21 Local government
- #22 Police
- #23 Primary care
- #24 Primary care trusts
- #25 Schools
- #26 Social services
- #27 Voluntary and community organisations
- #28 Youth offending teams
- #29 Youth work
- #30 #21 or #22 or #23 ... or #29
- #31 #20 and #30

Integrated/collaborative working set

- #32 Childrens centres
- #33 Childrens services
- #34 Childrens trusts
- #35 Cooperation
- #36 Integrated care
- #37 Interagency relations
- #38 Multiagency
- #39 Multiagency centres
- #40 Partnership
- #41 Partnership schemes
- #42 Teams
- #43 #32 or #33 or #34 ... or #42
- #44 #20 and #43

Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC)

ERIC is sponsored by the United States Department of Education and is the largest education database in the world. It indexes over 725 periodicals and currently contains more than 7,000,000 records. Coverage includes research documents, journal articles, technical reports, program descriptions and evaluations and curricula material.

Governance set

- #1 Governance
- #2 Administration
- #3 Administrative organization
- #4 Organization
- #5 Planning
- #6 Strategic planning
- #7 Budgeting
- #8 Program budgeting
- #9 Coordination
- #10 Resource allocation
- #11 Decision making
- #12 Conflict resolution
- #13 Accountability
- #14 Legitimacy (ft)
- #15 Joint planning (ft)
- #16 Commissioning (ft)
- #17 #1 or #2 or #3 ... or #16



Individual agencies set

- #18 Schools (exp)
- #19 School districts
- #20 Local authority* (ft)
- #21 Public agencies
- #22 Social agencies
- #23 Voluntary agencies
- #24 Youth agencies
- #25 Welfare services
- #26 State departments of education
- #27 Public service occupations
- #28 Youth offending team* (ft)
- #29 Police
- #30 Social care (ft)
- #31 Primary care (ft)
- #32 Primary health care
- #33 #18 or #19 or #20 ... or #32
- #34 #17 and #33

Integrated/collaborative working set

- #35 Agency cooperation
- #36 Integrated services
- #37 Childrens service* (ft)
- #38 Integrated childrens service* (ft)
- #39 Partnerships in education
- #40 Childrens trusts (ft)
- #41 Childrens cent* (ft)
- #42 Local strategic partnership* (ft)
- #43 Local safeguarding children* (ft)
- #44 LSCB* (ft)
- #45 Interagency (ft)
- #46 Inter agency (ft)
- #47 Multiagency (ft)
- #48 Multi agency (ft)
- #49 Joint working (ft)
- #50 Team working (ft)
- #51 Joint venture* (ft)
- #52 Integrated working (ft)
- #53 *Every Child Matters* (ft)
- #54 ECM (ft)
- #55 #35 or #36 or #37 ... or #54

- #56 #17 and #55
- #57 #17 and #33 and #55

Social Care Online

This database, compiled by the Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE), provides information about all aspects of social care, from fostering, to mental health and human resources.

- #1 Governance (ft)

Individual agencies set

- #2 Health authorities
- #3 Local authorities
- #4 NHS trusts
- #5 Police
- #6 Primary care
- #7 Primary care trusts
- #8 Public sector
- #9 Schools
- #10 Social welfare
- #11 Social care provision
- #12 Strategic health authorities
- #13 Voluntary organisations
- #14 Voluntary sector
- #15 Youth offending teams
- #16 Youth work
- #17 #2 or #3 or #4 ... or #16
- #18 #1 and #17

Integrated/collaborative working set

- #19 Childrens services
- #20 Childrens trusts
- #21 Collaboration
- #22 Integrated services
- #23 Interagency cooperation
- #24 Joint working
- #25 Multi-disciplinary services
- #26 Teamwork
- #27 #19 or #20 or #21 ... or #26
- #28 #1 and #27



A1.3 Identification of the most relevant sources

Initial searches by library and EMIE at NFER staff identified a large body of literature addressing good governance in public services. A proportion of this literature made reference to children and family services (although none made explicit reference to governance and narrowing the gap). These sources were obtained and examined for further relevance. Sixteen sources were reviewed in detail. These sources refer to the governance of children's trusts, children's centres, multi-agency working, and cover a range of services including health, social care, education and youth justice, as well as wider auditing reports of children's trust arrangements. Appendix 4 provides a summary of the reviewed sources.

A1.4 Extent and robustness of the evidence

Much has been written in recent years on the governance of public services. The review identified a number of key documents including *The Good Governance Standard for Public Services* (prepared by the Independent Commission for Good Governance in Public Services (ICGGPS) in 2004), a review of the *Children's Trust Pathfinders* (UEA with NCB, 2007), and the recent national state of play in relation to governance and resource management in 'Are we there yet?' from the Audit Commission (2008).

However, the literature relating explicitly to governance for narrowing the gap is relatively limited (see Appendix 4 for information about our 16 key sources). Demonstrating the impact on young people at a remove from an 'activity' such as governance is problematic. Interim or proxy indicators can usually be identified (for example, the recent Audit Commission review (2008) used the redirection of mainstream funding as an indicator of impact). However, empirical links between the central elements of good governance and pre-specified outcomes are difficult to ascertain. Moreover, the review does not support the hypothesis that governance for narrowing the gap is fundamentally different from governance elsewhere, though the governance of multi-agency partnerships (such as children's trusts) does differ in a number of ways from the governance of a single, autonomous organisation (for example, a school) (Audit Commission, 2008).

Taking this into account, we set out a brief overview of the characteristics of the reviewed literature, which showed that:

- the majority of sources focus on governance in the context of children's trust arrangements, including local strategic partnerships and children's services more widely
- two of the sources focus specifically on the governance of Sure Start Children's Centres and extended schools
- two consider governance in the context of crime reduction partnerships and youth offending teams
- one focuses on health and social care, and another on schools
- the majority of texts included in the review look at the form and function of governance arrangements, as well as effective features of governance
- there is little evidence on the outcomes of governance practices for children and young people

- most of the sources refer to wide multi-agency representation in governance arrangements, including in some cases the voluntary sector, and in one case parent and community representation is particularly emphasised
- around a third of the sources reviewed are evaluation or research reports, a third are frameworks, guidance or standards documentation, and a third are discussion papers based on initiatives or particular partnership arrangements.

There was no longitudinal, robust evidence on narrowing the gap for specific groups. A comprehensive review of the state of national play concerning governance and resource management (Audit Commission, 2008) could provide a baseline for such longitudinal assessment in the future.



Appendix 2 About the case studies

The case studies aimed to identify practice-based evidence on governance with a particular focus on narrowing the gap in outcomes for vulnerable groups. (The same case-study sample was also used for the sister research project on leadership.)

A2.1 Identifying case-study authorities

In order to inform the selection of case-study local authorities, researchers scanned the documentation received from the email requests to local authorities for relevant leads on effective practice and evidence of improved outcomes for vulnerable groups. In addition, researchers examined the most recent Joint Area Review report for a sample of Narrowing the Gap local authorities to note where strong governance practice had been identified.

A2.2 The case-study sample

Researchers conducted semi-structured interviews with a range of staff in five children’s services authorities. A total of 25 interviews were conducted. This included interviews with six directors or assistant directors of children’s services and four councillors/lead members for children’s services. The sample also included other senior strategic managers, such as the head of policy and planning, head of universal services, the chair of the LSCB and executive board. Table A2 provides a full breakdown of the interviewees by authority and role.

A2 Breakdown of interviewees by authority

Authority	Interviewee role	Number of interviewees
A	Director/assistant director of children’s services	2
	Councillor: lead member for children’s services	1
	Chair (of executive governing board)	1
	Strategic manager (head of specialist services)	1
B	Director/assistant director of children’s services	1
	Councillor	2
	Strategic manager (head of learning and achievement, head of participation and inclusion, head of leadership, management and succession planning, school improvement)	4
C	Director/assistant director of children’s services	1
	Chair (of LSCB)	1
	Councillor (lead member for children’s services)	1
	Strategic manager (assistant director of strategic services, senior strategy manager, head of universal services, acting assistant director of specialist services, services manager for safeguarding children)	5

A2 Breakdown of interviewees by authority *cont'd*

Authority	Interviewee role	Number of interviewees
D	Director/assistant director of children's services	2
	Strategic manager (head of strategic planning for change, head of innovation, learning and care)	2
E	Strategic manager (head of policy and planning)	1



Appendix 3 Key features of effective governance from the literature

Effective governance provides clarity of roles and responsibilities

- understanding what responsibilities are and where they lie helps to ensure they are fulfilled and that lines of accountability are unambiguous (ICGGPS, 2004)
- the development of a clear framework within which individuals from different organisations work together is critical to the effective functioning of complex partnerships (SQW Limited, 2005; UEA with NCB, 2005; Fox and Butler, 2004)
- there is a need to set out a framework (i.e. functions, roles and the relationships between them) in writing in a formal, public document (Masterson *et al.*, 2004)
- the success and long-term viability of trust arrangements is contingent on the agreement of clear terms of reference for interagency governance activity (UEA with NCB, 2005).

Effective governance involves informed and transparent decision-making

- decisions made must be well informed and follow due process (HM Government, 2005; SQW Limited, 2005; Masterson *et al.*, 2004; NCB, 2006)
- decision-making should be informed by the experiences of those at the frontline (HM Government, 2005)
- being well informed means having access to information that is both robust and relevant: ‘good quality information and clear, objective advice can significantly reduce the risk of taking decisions that fail to achieve their objectives or have serious unintended consequences’ (ICGGPS, 2004, p.16)
- it is important that key decisions are made in an open forum, ‘not between more powerful partners away from the partnership setting’ (Fox and Butler, 2004, p.41)
- It is important to be seen to judiciously balance competing responsibilities and to admit and learn from past mistakes (Audit Commission, 2008)
- information derived from systematic monitoring and evaluation activity should be used as a guide for subsequent decisions (DfES, 2007)
- relevant decisions need to be made within a system or framework for the systematic identification, assessment and response to internal risks (ICGGPS, 2004).

Effective governance involves wide representative participation, including service-user involvement

- where governance is in the hands of a diverse group of people, reflective of the community, public trust and confidence in governance activities and outcomes will increase (ICGGPS, 2004)
- whilst the literature points to the importance of engaging ‘the important’, it commonly also suggests that there is value to extending the net and involving a wider, more representative pool of contributors (SQW Limited, 2005)
- inclusion and engagement does not necessarily mean that the public or service users should be recruited to boards and be expected to contribute in such a formal manner; what is important is that there is dialogue between organisations and the public and service users (ICGGPS, 2004)
- formal governance activity should be seen as one of a number of ways in which organisations can secure meaningful dialogue with service users and the wider public (ICGGPS, 2004)
- service users might be expected to demonstrate considerable diversity, and ‘approaches to developing a dialogue have to recognise these differences, so that the views of a full range of people are heard’ (ICGGPS, 2004, p. 24)
- VCS involvement in local strategic partnerships provides a conduit to excluded or vulnerable groups (Russell, 2005).

Effective governance is responsive to need and focuses on outcomes

- one of the characteristics of an effective board is that is responsive to the needs of children, young people and their parents (HM Government, 2005; DfES, 2007)
- the success of trusts will be contingent on, and measured by, ‘a focus on improved outcomes for children and young people’ (UEA with NCB, 2005, p.v).
- local authorities and their partners should ‘review current governance and management arrangements for children’s services to focus on delivering improved outcomes’ (Audit Commission, 2008, p.7).

Effective governance ensures clear lines of accountability

- clear roles and responsibilities help to ensure that lines of accountability are unambiguous (ICGGPS, 2004)
- the development of a clear framework within which individuals from different organisations can work together and be held to account is critical to the effective functioning of complex partnerships (e.g. SQW Limited, 2005; UEA with NCB, 2005; Fox and Butler, 2004)
- clear terms of reference for interagency governance activity will ensure accountability, set the parameters for the development of new relationships, and provide a basis of a succession strategy (UEA with NCB, 2007).



Effective governance ensures a clear sense of purpose and a focus on outcomes

- there needs to be a firm rationale for partnership: ‘sometimes, insufficient consideration is given to whether a partnership is actually required to achieve the goal in question’ (Fox and Butler, 2004, p.38)
- a test of governance arrangements might be ‘their capacity to deliver and implement a comprehensive, integrated plan for children and young people in the locality ... and a shared strategy for improving those services’ (HM Government, 2005, p.18)
- an explicit statement of desired outcomes is required and a performance management system that reflects that focus (Fox and Butler, 2004).

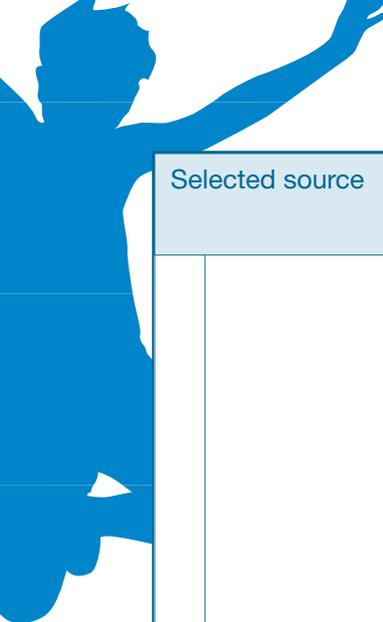
Effective governance develops capacity, capability and sustainability

- if organisations are to be directed and controlled effectively, ‘people with the right skills’ need to be involved in governance (ICGGPS, 2004, p. 19)
- work will need to be done to enable wider stakeholders to participate meaningfully and to build the capacity of the membership (SQW Limited, 2005)
- the status of members within their own organisations, and ability to take actions forward is critical to the impact of the partnership (UEA with NCB, 2005)
- to realise and maximise the benefits of wider participation, concerted efforts must be made to ensure that all board members and the like are helped to develop the skills and confidence to participate fully (DfES, 2007).

Appendix 4 Information about our 16 key sources

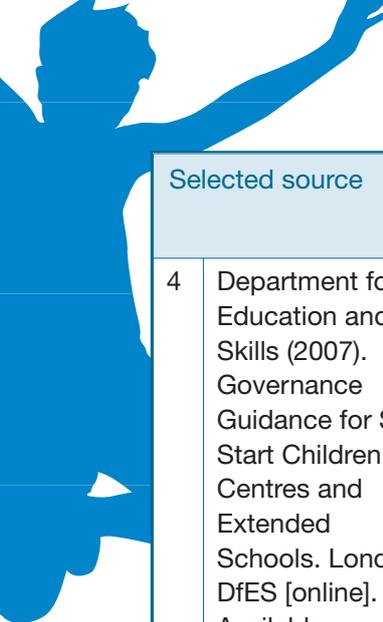
Selected source	About this study	Governance context	Actors and agencies ¹
<p>1 Audit Commission (2008). <i>Are We There Yet? Improving Governance and Resource Management in Children's Trusts</i>. London: Audit Commission [online]. Available: http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk/Products/NATIONAL-REPORT/17AEBDA5-657E-4ef7-80BB-92214D4C04FF/AreWeThereYet29Oct08REP.pdf [3 March, 2009].</p>	<p>This study investigated the progress made by local authorities and their partners in establishing children's trusts. Particular attention is given to: the governance and accountability arrangements in place; the way resources are used by children's trusts; and how trusts relate to other local partnerships (e.g. local strategic partnerships) and local area agreements.</p> <p>The researchers found evidence of some confusion as to what was meant by a 'children's trust', in particular whether this was a requirement to work in partnership or a new statutory body, and what its core purpose was intended to be. However by 2008 almost all areas had altered the way they coordinated children's services and though arrangements were still evolving collaborative working had improved. Key agencies were found to be engaged with trusts (PCTs, the police and schools felt they wielded influence over the operation of the trusts; the voluntary, community and private sector appeared less engaged), with board meetings being well attended, though not all representatives to the board were in a position to commit resources or had well developed mechanisms for reporting back to their parent organisation.</p> <p>Insufficient distinction appeared to be made between strategic, executive and operational issues; other areas listed for development include financial and performance management systems. Obstacles to pooling budgets remain, and the preference continues to be to align rather than pool resources. Where budgets have been pooled, the services involved tend to have a history of collaboration that predates the establishment of the relevant children's trust.</p> <p>In most respects the principles of good inter-agency governance are those that prevail in autonomous organisations, though processes will necessarily be different. The authors emphasise, however, that the focus should be on outcomes, not</p>	<p>Children's trusts</p>	<p>Various: multi-agency partnership, the establishment of which will be led by the relevant local authority.</p>

¹ Where details provided.



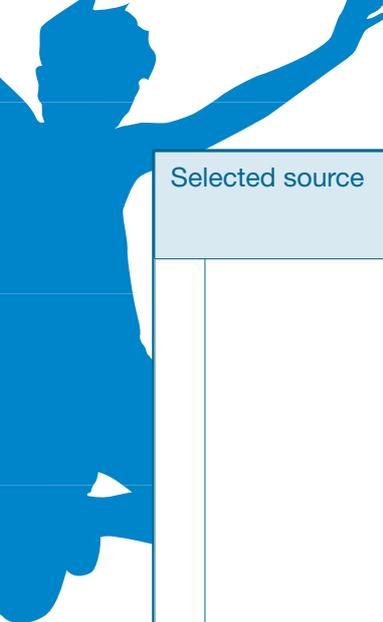
Selected source	About this study	Governance context	Actors and agencies ¹
	<p>structures and processes, and that function should precede form. Local authorities and their partners should 'review current governance and management arrangements for children's services to focus on delivering improved outcomes' (p.7). Central government should support this, with future guidance focusing on what trusts are expected to achieve, rather than the forms and processes they should comprise.</p> <p>The researchers concluded that whilst progress had been made on the ground, and professionals were working together in ways they were not prior to the publication of the <i>Every Child Matters</i> green paper, there was little evidence that the requirement to put in place formal arrangements for the coordination of services had as yet resulted in improved outcomes for children and young people.</p>		
<p>2 Balarin, M. and Lauder, H. (2008). <i>The Governance and Administration of English Primary Education</i> (Primary Review Research Survey 10/2: Interim Reports). Cambridge: University of Cambridge [online]. Available: http://www.primaryreview.org.uk/Downloads/Int_Reps/7.Governance-finance-reform/RS_10-2_report_Governance_administration_080229.pdf [3 March, 2009].</p>	<p>The paper reports on changes in respect of the control of the school system in England and the progressive decentralization of some aspects of decision-making consequent on the passing of the Education Reform Act 1988. It outlines the current approach to educational governance and the difficulties and possibilities this presents. School governance bodies are described with reference to their functions (leadership and accountability), areas over which they have control (use of resources, employment of staff, development of key policies) and composition (see 'Participants', across).</p> <p>This paper argues that these developments (changes in control of the school system) have had a radical impact on the way that policies are formulated and implemented, and are indicative of a major shift in the balance of power, which now lies between central government (in the form of setting and monitoring national curricula, strategies and standards) and local (neighbourhood level) partners, rather than being significantly vested in local authorities. The authors note that local authorities 'are probably the level most</p>	<p>Schools</p>	<p>Movement away from dominance by local politicians and local (education) authority officers and towards increased representation of parents (albeit rarely a representative cross-section) and the wider community, with the precise composition being determined by formula.</p>

Selected source	About this study	Governance context	Actors and agencies ¹
	<p>affected by the introduction of governance policies' (p.9), being left with responsibilities that they lacked the authority to ensure were fulfilled. In effect, the move towards the independent governance of schools may have led to a conflict, or at least incompatibility, of interests. The authors also report considerable variation in the form and function of school governing bodies, with a consequent variation on their impact on the school and school improvement. They conclude that 'Whilst research suggests that governance can definitely have a positive effect on school improvement, this is not necessarily so, and will depend on a combination of variables' (p.14).</p>		
<p>3 HM Government (2005). <i>Statutory Guidance on Inter-Agency Co-Operation to Improve the Wellbeing of Children: Children's Trusts</i>. London: DfES [online]. Available http://publications.teachernet.gov.uk/eOrderingDownload/1680-2005PDF-EN-01.pdf [3 March, 2009].</p>	<p>One of the key features of the Children Act (England and Wales. Statutes, 2004) was the introduction of a duty for agencies with strategic influence to cooperate to improve the wellbeing of children. Children's trusts were conceived as a vehicle or framework for ensuring this co-operation, cutting across 'long established professional and organisational boundaries' (p.4) to achieve whole-system change and achieve improved outcomes for all children, including the most disadvantaged. This document, one of five providing guidance relevant to the establishment of children's trusts, states that 'improving their [disadvantaged children's] wellbeing means narrowing the gap between disadvantaged children and their peers in achieving these outcomes' (p.11). It describes the government's expectations, the legislative provisions to support inter-agency cooperation and the establishment of children's trusts, and the essential features of these trusts. Though it acknowledges that there will be a need for local discretion in determining the exact configuration of trusts, it emphasises that all should have clear lines for reporting and accountability and must include those partners specified in Section 10 of the Children Act.</p>	<p>Children's trusts</p>	<p>Various: multi-agency partnership, the establishment of which will be led by the relevant local authority.</p>



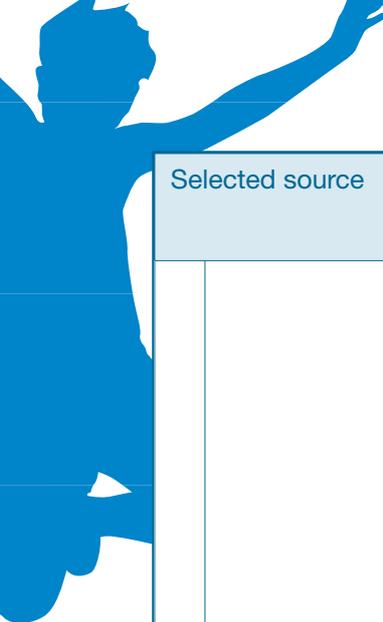
Selected source	About this study	Governance context	Actors and agencies ¹
<p>4 Department for Education and Skills (2007). Governance Guidance for Sure Start Children's Centres and Extended Schools. London: DfES [online]. Available: http://publication.s.teachernet.gov.uk/eOrderingDownload/Governance%20guidance.pdf [3 March, 2009].</p>	<p>This (non-statutory) guidance 'provides clarity about decision-making, the roles and responsibilities of different parties, and a range of governance models that Sure Start Children's Centres and schools may choose to adopt' (p.2). The document 'uses the term governance to mean the system of decision-making which will determine the services offered through Sure Start Children's Centres and extended schools, and applies to all levels at which decisions are made' (p.12). It notes the expectation that models will become increasingly varied but are likely to include steering groups, advisory boards, or school governing bodies (acting in a range of different capacities). Governance arrangements should enable children's centres and extended schools to ensure that their services meet local needs and contribute to improvements in outcomes. The document emphasises that both children's centres and extended schools will operate and be governed within a framework created by the children's trust. It also notes that children's centres do not as yet have a statutory basis for a governance system and this will necessarily limit the roles and responsibilities any board or steering group can take on. 'Because advisory boards do not have a legal status, they cannot have responsibility for a budget, enter into contracts or legal agreements, or be held legally liable in the way that, for example, a school's governing body can. These responsibilities remain with the local authority' (p.35). In such circumstances the local authority might be expected to coordinate the formation of the board, deciding for example, how members will be appointed, the time for which they will serve, and how their work should complement that of the (local authority appointed) centre manager. Where a children's centre is on a school site, the model and powers of the board can vary: for example, where a children's centre is part of a school's portfolio of extended services, the school governing body will be legally accountable.</p>	<p>Sure Start Children's Centres and extended schools</p>	<p>It is expected that a variety of actors and agencies will be involved, but parents in particular should have substantial involvement and, in respect of children's centres, 'Local authorities may choose to adopt the Sure Start Local Programme model of one third parents, one third from the statutory sector and one third from the private, voluntary and independent sectors, as a basis for their arrangements' (p.5).</p>

Selected source	About this study	Governance context	Actors and agencies ¹
<p>5 Fox, C. and Butler, G. (2004). 'Partnerships: where next?' <i>Community Safety Journal</i>, 3, 3, 36–44.</p>	<p>This paper reports that whilst there has been a marked growth in formal partnerships, 'for many of those involved, partnership working can often feel frustrating and ineffectual' (p.36). It identifies four critical elements in effective partnership working:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a firm rationale for partnership • sustainable involvement of service users/community members • good governance arrangements • performance management arrangements. <p>With regard to the first of these, the authors argue that 'the orthodoxy of partnership working has become so embedded that sometimes, insufficient consideration is given to whether a partnership is actually required to achieve the goal in question... Sometimes the(se) benefits can be achieved through multi-agency working without the creation of a formal partnership (p.38, authors' emphasis). They warn that the costs of partnership working can be considerable and need to be balanced by the perceived benefits. It also needs to be considered whether sufficient resources are available to cover those costs and enable partnerships to achieve the desired goals within an appropriate timeframe. They suggest that partnerships can take different forms and fulfil different functions, potentially concerning themselves with strategic (for example, a CDRP), commissioning and delivery activity (for example, a YOT), and present a two-dimensional typology with function on one axis and level of collaboration on the other.</p> <p>Next, they discuss inclusion and service-user involvement, commenting that this is 'an area of partnership working that is often characterized by under-developed strategies and short-term, tokenistic solutions to complex problems' (p.40).</p> <p>The authors regard the development of governance arrangements, in particular a clear framework within which individuals</p>	<p>Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships (CDRPs) and youth offending teams (YOTs)</p>	



Selected source	About this study	Governance context	Actors and agencies ¹
	<p>from different organizations can work together and be held to account, as critical to the effective functioning of any partnership. However they reiterate that processes and structures will need to be appropriate to the specific type and functions of any given partnership.</p> <p>With regard to their final ingredient, performance management, they argue that there are two component issues: the identification of clear aims and objectives and ‘a performance management system that reflects the complexity of partnership working, with a clear focus on outcomes’ (p.42). The first of these, they warn, can present considerable difficulties, as partners may be unwilling or unable to fully commit themselves to aims and objectives which have limited connection with the core mission of their own organization. With regard to the second, they acknowledge that: ‘The complexity and multitude of targets, performance management and assessment regimes often diffuse the focus of partnership working making it difficult for the organisations, staff and communities who have a stake in the partnership to identify what exactly the partnership is trying to achieve and whether it has succeeded’ (p.43). They suggest that this can probably only be remedied through the development of bespoke performance management systems.</p>		
<p>6 Glasby, J. and Peck, E. (2006). <i>We Have to Stop Meeting Like This: the Governance of Inter-Agency Partnerships. A Discussion Paper</i>. London: Integrated Care Network [online]. Available: http://networks.csip.org.uk/_library/Resources/ICN/ICN_Governance_final_3_11_06.pdf [3 March, 2009].</p>	<p>This paper investigates the work of governing boards and bodies and draws attention to the difference between their portrayal in the policy literature (where ‘board members are tasked with setting strategy, determining priorities, ensuring financial probity and working constructively with fellow board members and officer, but also representing their own external constituencies and acting as a check on the power of managers’, p.5) and the reality of practice, marked by a failure to achieve these things and consequent disillusionment of membership. Case studies conducted by the authors and others lead them to conclude that in many circumstances the impact, in instrumental terms, of governance bodies and</p>	<p>Partnerships in health and social care</p>	<p>Primary Care Trusts (PCTs), local authorities and others</p>

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	<p>governance processes is limited. However, considering the wider literature on partnerships, the paper highlights the symbolic role of multi-agency governing boards (potentially both positive and negative) and argues that this is both valid and important. The authors also report on key tensions and challenges, and outline some key models and frameworks, with a view to providing local partnerships with a foundation of knowledge from which they can begin to debate the kind of arrangements best suited to meeting their needs. They argue that ultimately some of the reported tensions (for example between depth and breadth, or representative or expert membership) are likely to be recurrent and irresolvable, in the light of which ‘the aim must be to produce the most acceptable and sustainable compromise’ (p.9). They suggest a set of measures of effective governance (covering accessibility, internal arrangements, member conduct and accountability) but stress that governance systems should be proportionate to the risks and responsibilities a particular partnership has to manage. Throughout they emphasise that there is a need to ‘be realistic about the limits of the instrumental impact’ (p.13) – that is the tangible outcomes of governance.</p>		
<p>7 Hudson, B. (2005). ‘Partnership working and the Children’s Services Agenda: is it feasible?’ <i>Journal of Integrated Care</i>, 13, 2, 7–12.</p>	<p>This article describes the re-shaping of public services and their governance, identifying a trajectory from separatism, through competition, to partnership (collaboration between agencies and professionals). The next step is to be ‘whole-systems working’, with the more systematic and systemic collaboration that defines this being precipitated by the Children Act (England and Wales. Statutes, 2004) and associated <i>Every Child Matters</i> agenda. This has been illustrated in successive policy documents by the ‘onion’ model, in which inter-agency governance appears as the final, all-encompassing layer; the author uses this model to provide a structure for an examination of the implementation of integrated working.</p>	<p>Children’s services</p>	<p>Education, health, social services, police and voluntary sector providers</p>



Selected source	About this study	Governance context	Actors and agencies ¹
	<p>The paper identifies a number of weaknesses in the model, for example it draws attention to the omission of some key stakeholders from the duty to cooperate (in particular individual schools and teachers) and the tensions between one set of policy directives which appear to promote the autonomy of schools and another which encourages the area-wide planning and delivery of services. GPs are similarly excluded, suggesting that whilst education, health and social services will have a duty to cooperate at strategic a level, this will not extend to all key providers at the operational level.</p> <p>The primary vehicle for inter-agency governance is to the children's trusts, and it is reported that 'it is anticipated that most localities will have a CT well before the 2008 deadline, the DoCS serving as the chief officer' (p.11). Writing in 2004, Hudson predicts that reconciling the different governance traditions of local authorities, PCTs and other agencies within and out with the public sector will present some challenges.</p> <p>The author reaches the conclusion that there are weaknesses in implementation, and that in addition to issues within the different layers of activity, the relationships between the layers are not sufficiently clear. Hudson warns that 'it cannot be assumed that getting it right within one layer (say inter-agency governance) means that there will be predictable consequences at another level such as integrated front-line delivery' (p.12).</p>		
8	<p>Masterson, A., Antrobus, S. and Smith F. (2004). 'National service frameworks: from policy to practice', <i>Paediatric Nursing</i>, 16, 9, 32-34.</p>	<p>Children's services (health focused)</p>	

Selected source	About this study	Governance context	Actors and agencies ¹
	<p>helpful in turning policy into practice. These initiatives related to, amongst other things, champions, targets, workforce, networks, infrastructure and governance, with children's trusts inevitably featuring in the discussion of the latter two. 'On the issue of effective governance, informants were clear that children's trusts will need joint targets and performance reviews, clear lines of financial accountability and good-quality information, options for intervention and likely outcomes' (p.33). Streamlining inspection activity was, in principle, felt to be a positive step.</p>		
<p>9 Robinson, M., Atkinson, M. and Downing, D. (2008). <i>Supporting Theory Building in Integrated Services Research</i>. Slough: NFER [online]. Available: http://www.nfer.ac.uk/publications/pdfs/downloadable/CYLe-report.pdf [10 September, 2008].</p>	<p>This literature review presents findings under the following thematic headings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the extent of integration: the 'stage' or depth of the collaborative activity in integrated services • the integration of structures: the supporting organisation and frameworks required at different organisational levels • the integration of processes: the actions or operations required at different organisational levels • the reach of integration: the extent to which partnerships in integrated services reach out to include diverse agencies. <p>Enablers to the effective integration of services include the incorporation of service deliverers' and users' perspectives, time to realise effective partnership and outcomes for users, and better understanding between professionals. Contextual barriers, organisational and cultural barriers will need to be addressed. The literature often suggests that users benefit from improved access to services and a speedier response, as well as better information and communication from professionals, who themselves gain a better understanding of the issues and of children's needs. The benefits for services centre primarily on quality and efficiency in service delivery.</p>	<p>Integrated children's services</p>	<p>Range of agencies</p>



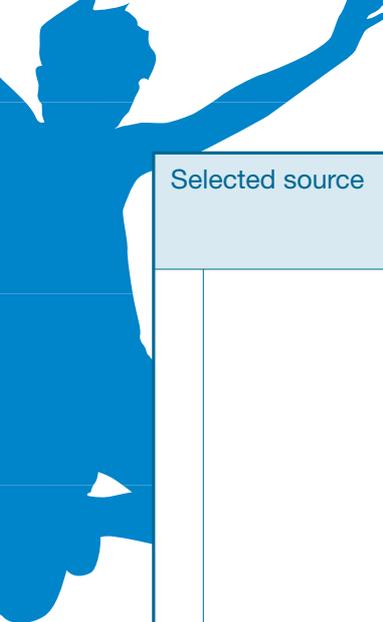
Selected source	About this study	Governance context	Actors and agencies ¹
<p>10 Russell, H. (2005). <i>National Evaluation of Local Strategic Partnerships: Issues Paper: Voluntary and Community Sector Engagement in Local Strategic Partnerships</i>. London: ODPM.</p>	<p>This is one of a series of reports arising from a national evaluation of local strategic partnerships (LSPs). It notes the changing (and growing) role of the voluntary and community sector (VCS) in relation to both service delivery and governance, and attempts to clarify this sector's nature and remit. Its main focus, however, is on VCS engagement with LSPs (described (p. i) as 'cross-sectoral, non-statutory, non-executive organisations'). Whilst government guidance specifies that the LSPs should engage the VCS, the diversity of the sector (organisations, activities and constituencies) makes this a complex task. The researchers found considerable variation in patterns of VCS representation on LSPs, with time, resources and partnership cultures being significant determinants of involvement. Existing relationships between the statutory and voluntary sector may limit the scope and effects of VCS involvement. Capacity-building activity was considered essential to ensuring full and meaningful participation, as was the development of infrastructure to support representation, communication and accountability. The impact of VCS involvement on decision-making remains uncertain and is probably limited: partnerships are advised to consider where within their structures the VCS might have most impact (the board might not be the best place). For the sector itself, whilst there are undoubtedly benefits to engagement, 'the question of the "costs" of partnership and whether the outcome is commensurate with all the effort expended remains a relevant one' (p.50).</p>	<p>Local Strategic Partnerships</p>	<p>Cross-sectoral and multi-agency</p>
<p>11 Sure Start Extended Schools and Child-care Group (2006). <i>The Governance and Management of Extended Schools and Sure Start Children's Centres</i>. London: Sure Start [online]. Available: http://www.surestart.gov.uk/_doc/P0002361.PDF [3 March, 2009].</p>	<p>This discussion paper is targeted, amongst others, at children's centre managers, school governing bodies, local authority, health service and school managers. It seeks to clarify the common aims and characteristics of children's centres and extended schools, and the services it is expected these will provide. It looks at emerging issues in respect of governance and management, and in relation to the former, how the legal status and location of a children's centre or extended school affects the governance options available and the functions a partnership board or</p>	<p>Sure Start Children's Centres and extended schools</p>	<p>See source 4.</p>

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	governing body can fulfil. It draws attention to the issues around membership, and the particular challenges posed by the involvement of service users and providers in governance activity (most obviously conflicts of interest).		
12	<p>SQW Limited (2005). <i>Research to Inform the Management and Governance of Children's Centres, Final report to DfES</i>. London: SQW Limited [online]. Available: http://www.sqw.co.uk/file_download/23 [3 March, 2009].</p>	Children's centres	
13	<p>University of East Anglia with National Children's Bureau (2005). <i>Realising Children's Trust Arrangements: National Evaluation of Children's Trusts. Phase 1 Report</i> (DfES Research Report 682). London: DfES [online]. Available:</p>	Children's trusts	At this point in the development of children's trusts, the researchers found that 'many sectors are included... although the police and the youth justice system are under-represented.



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<p>http://publications.dcsf.gov.uk/eOrderingDownload/R682.pdf [3 March, 2009].</p>	<p>users in strategic groups and activity. Information sharing and common assessment processes were not widely in use, and professionals expressed some concerns about data security. The researchers also noted some anxiety about the impact of restructuring on the roles and responsibilities of front-line staff.</p> <p>Integrated strategy was described as having ‘four interrelated components: joint planning and commissioning; budget pooling; involvement of voluntary and community sectors; and participation of service users’ (p.iii). Joint commissioning was developing but complex, with reported challenges including: the need to de-commission existing services; negotiate with multiple partners; and work with agencies with different geographical boundaries. Budget pooling arrangements were found to vary and to observe different levels of formality. The involvement of the VCS and services users was widely supported, though ensuring that the diverse interests of these groups were represented was acknowledged as a challenge.</p> <p>The strategic focus of inter-agency governance tended to be early intervention and prevention. Governance activity was suggested to be ‘effective if the children’s trust is part of the Children and Young People’s Strategic Partnership’ (p.iv) as this ensured the involvement of sufficiently senior officers. The authors warn that managing change is time-consuming and might need to be supported by the secondment of key personnel to dedicated inter-agency teams.</p> <p>Enabling factors in respect of governance and the development of productive inter-agency relationships were found to be: ‘a shared vision; a climate of trust; a willingness to cooperate and agreed terms of reference’ (p.iv). Difficulties arose, however, from the cost and complexity of reaching agreements with multiple partners and the need to formalize these agreements in order to ensure their</p>		<p>[And] general practitioners and representatives of the private sector are not included’ (p.iv).</p>

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	<p>sustainability. ‘The evidence suggests that the long-term viability of successful children’s trust arrangements is predicated on clear terms of reference for inter-agency governance’, with these ensuring clarity, accountability, a framework for the development of new relationships, and a succession strategy. (p91).</p> <p>Success in achieving change will both be measured by and contingent on ‘a focus on improved outcomes for children and young people’ (p.v).</p>		
<p>14 University of East Anglia with the National Children’s Bureau (2007). <i>Children’s Trust Pathfinders: Innovative Partnerships for Improving the Well-being of Children and Young People. National Evaluation of Children’s Trust Pathfinders Final Report</i> (DfES Research Report 839). London: DfES. [online]. Available: http://publications.dcsf.gov.uk/eOrderingDownload/R839.pdf [3 March, 2009].</p>	<p>This report is the final product of the national evaluation of children’s trusts. It reports on the experiences and influence on outcomes of the 35 ‘pathfinders’ over the period 2004-06.</p> <p>Across the pathfinder areas two distinct models² of inter-agency governance were identified:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a collaboration, where local authorities or health trusts functioned as an accountable body advised by a strategic partnership • a legal partnership, with delegated powers exercised through a trust board. <p>The roles and functions fulfilled by the board were dictated by its model and legal status. Legal partnerships were rare, and structurally complex as any merger involving a health trust will need to have the status of an NHS Health Trust, with clinical supervision and governance arrangements. An additional complication is that health staff must have litigation insurance, but the NHS Litigation Authority can only provide this to NHS employees. Insurance through other channels is extremely costly.</p> <p>The more common ‘Non-legal partnerships [i.e. collaborations] were often underpinned by legal agreements that clarified their status’ (p.25). However, clear and comprehensive terms of reference were not always in use, though these were deemed by the research team to be essential to the effective functioning of inter-agency partnerships.</p>	<p>Children’s trusts</p>	<p>As above</p>



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	<p>As with the earlier report, discussion and findings cover: structures, including relationships with other partnerships and plans, in particular the Local Strategic Partnership; leadership; joint planning, commissioning and funding; information sharing; new working practices and outcomes. In terms of outcomes, the authors warn that ‘The complexity of local changes made it difficult to distinguish the influence of pathfinders from other developments in the leadership and management of children’s services’ (p.2) and conclude that it is too early to expect to find evidence of the impact of the children’s trust pathfinders on outcomes for children and young people. They also note that nationally employed area level indicators ‘do not directly reflect pathfinder activity’ (p.6) and suggest further thought will need to be given to the most appropriate indicators or measures of influence/success. They warn that change may not necessarily be for the better – it can potentially lead to deterioration in services or diffusion of responsibility for care. However, they go on to state that there does appear to be some ‘evidence that services have changed in ways that can reasonably be expected to increase their effectiveness and so lead to better outcomes’ (p.97) and they report ‘encouraging signs’ (p.6) of improvement in service efficiency, which might in some localities enable investment in additional preventative activity.</p>		
<p>15 National Children’s Bureau (2006). Summary Interim Findings from the Research Study into the Developing Relationships Between Youth Offending Teams (YOTs) and Children’s Trusts. London: Youth Justice Board for</p>	<p>This paper reports on the developing relationships between youth offending teams (YOT) and children’s trusts, drawing on evidence from a survey of YOT managers and interviews with personnel in two ‘demonstration sites’. At the time of the study, there was considerable variation in the position of YOTs within local authority structures (in particular their alignment with children’s services or community safety agendas). In a little under half of the responding YOTs there were children’s trusts arrangements in place. There was consequent variation in how YOTs were linked with children’s services, and</p>	<p>Youth offending teams (YOTs) and children’s trusts</p>	

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<p>England and Wales [online]. Available: http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/_files/31D70299DD797D1C01299E0A31B5A5E5.pdf [3 March, 2009].</p>	<p>wide-spread uncertainty about how relationships would develop and whether they would ensure appropriate positioning between the children’s services and community safety agendas. Closer relationships with children’s services were believed to present some positive opportunities, including: raised profile for youth offending issues; better coordination of service planning; increased access for young offenders to other services. However, there were also some concerns: that the youth crime agenda might be marginalized and the influence and energies of the YOT diluted, and that reorganization might serve to distract attention from service delivery. Similarly the positioning of the YOT outside of children’s services was perceived to present both opportunities and challenges. Opportunities included the maintenance of a presence in the community safety arena, access to crime and disorder funding and a distinct identity. Risks were also identified; amongst them that the YOT might be left ‘out of [the] loop’ of children’s services (p5).</p> <p>Personnel from the development sites felt it was rather early to be drawing out lessons with application elsewhere, though in one of the sites, where the YOT steering group was dissolved and the children’s trust took on its responsibilities the new arrangements were believed to be working well. Factors thought to have contributed to this were: informal activity by the YOT manager to ensure partners were informed and engaged; the composition of the board, which included both high level officers and elected members; good attendance; and judicious use of meeting time. The report does not make any recommendations as to how relationships should develop, but draws attention to areas where uncertainty is likely to remain and to issues that must be faced up to. Amongst these were the need to: balance the children’s and criminal justice agendas and maintain relationships with both sets of partners; achieve this without burdening YOTs with structural and bureaucratic demands; and reconcile the differences in client populations arising from remit and geographical boundaries.</p>		



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<p>16 The Independent Commission for Good Governance in Public Services (2004). <i>The Good Governance Standard for Public Services</i>. London: OPM and CIPFA [online]. Available: http://www.opm.co.uk/resources/papers/policy/Good_Gov_Standard.pdf [3 March, 2009].</p>	<p>The standards recognize the difficulties many of those governing public service organisations and partnerships face in fulfilling their governance responsibilities. They were developed with the express intention of addressing these difficulties through clarifying the purpose of governance and the role of the governor. This document ‘builds on the Nolan principle for the conduct of individuals in public life, by setting out six core principles of good governance for public service organisations’ (p.v, the document uses ‘organisations’ to encompass autonomous bodies and partnerships throughout). The intention is that these standards might be used by organisations to review their own effectiveness and, in addition, might act as a common framework for the assessment of governance activity by those scrutinizing public services. A series of ‘assessment questions’ for internal and external use are provided in the appendices.</p> <p>The six principles are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • focus on the organisation’s purpose and on outcomes for service users • effective performance in well defined roles and functions • promotion and demonstration of organisational values • informed, transparent decision-making • ensuring the capacity of the governing body • engagement with stakeholders and the public (accountability). <p>The document carefully deconstructs these principles, describing the component behaviours that underpin them and providing examples and illustrations of how they might be fulfilled. The document acknowledges that the practical governance of bodies differing in size and function will vary in some respects, and that some parts of the Standard may not be universally relevant. The authors therefore ‘encourage all organisations to show that they are putting it into practice</p>	<p>Public service organisations and partnerships</p>	<p>450,000 people from a variety of organisations and backgrounds</p>

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	<p>in a way that reflects their structure and is proportionate to their size' (p1). What is not noted at this point, but is of significance to our study, is that there are groups – and many children's trust boards would be a prima facie example of this – which are widely conceived of as fulfilling a governance function, but in fact lack the legal status and powers to perform many of the functions (such as allocating resources and appointing and overseeing the contractual arrangements for senior staff) which might conventionally form a part of a governing body's work. With this caveat we believe the Standard to be a useful tool and of definite value to those involved in the governance of children's services and the development of children's trusts activity.</p>		



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