



# How is the Every Child Matters agenda affecting schools?

## annual survey of trends in education 2007

*This is one of a series of papers reporting the findings from the Annual Survey of Trends in Education 2007, carried out by the NFER on behalf of the LGA. During the summer term of 2007, 347 primary schools and 854 secondary schools in England took part in the survey covering a range of topics: Every Child Matters (ECM) and collaboration with other services were two of the topics explored.*

### 1 How is the Every Child Matters agenda relevant to schools?

It is now four years since the Government published the *Every Child Matters* Green Paper (HM Treasury, 2003), which set out the proposals for reforming children's services to improve the outcomes for all children and young people. The *Children Act 2004* (England and Wales, Statutes, 2004) made some of the changes statutory and aimed to create clear accountability for children's services, better joint working and a greater focus on safeguarding children. There is a degree of flexibility as to when local authorities (LAs) implement changes but all LAs are required to have Children's Trust arrangements in place by 2008 and LAs, with their partners, are working towards this at different rates and through different approaches.

Although LAs are at the forefront of the changes, schools and their governing bodies also have a key role in delivering the children's agenda, for example, by supporting all children and young people in achieving the five ECM outcomes. Furthermore, the new supplementary guidance on the Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP), issued in

January 2007 to complement the existing guidance (HM Government, 2005), placed a duty on LAs to consult schools in the preparation of the CYPP. This duty was placed:

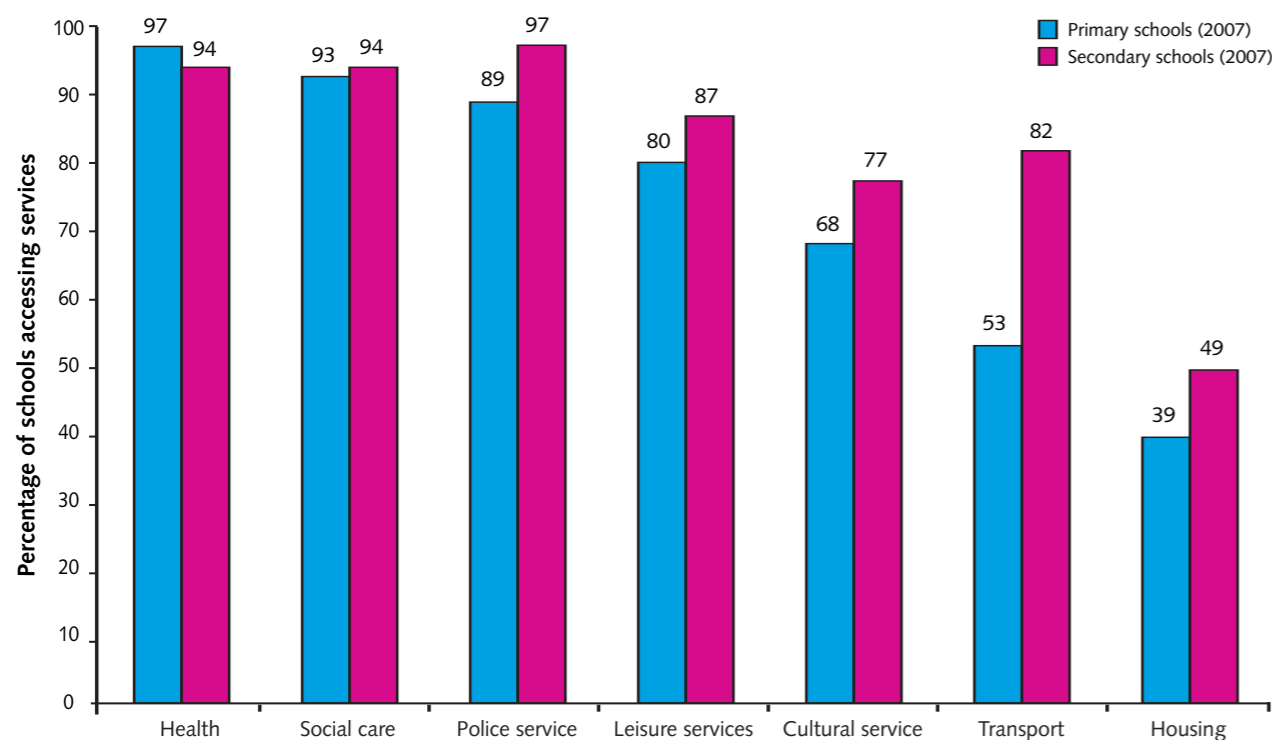
*to ensure schools and forums have sufficient opportunity to comment on the plan, fully understand local priorities and targets for improving outcomes for children and young people and understand how they are expected to contribute to delivery of those priorities and targets (DfES, 2007, p.12).*

Schools are also required to take account of the CYPP in their strategic planning to identify and demonstrate how they can deliver the five ECM outcomes.

In this context, primary and secondary school respondents taking part in the Annual Survey of Trends were asked about how the ECM agenda was affecting their school and about their perceptions of, and views about, collaborating with other services. Collaboration has remained a key feature of current educational interest and policy development, exemplified by ongoing encouragement for schools to enter into collaborative relationships with each other and with outside organisations.

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Figure 1 Percentage of schools that accessed local services relevant to child welfare in 2007<sup>1</sup>



## 2 What are schools doing?

### 2.1 Are schools collaborating with other services?

The 2007 findings showed a similar picture to the 2006 findings on collaboration. The surveys highlighted that schools have more contact with some local services than with others (see Figure 1). Headteachers were asked to indicate if their school accessed any of the seven standard LA services relevant to child welfare. The key points that emerged from the data were:

- three services – health, social care and the police – were accessed by about 90 per cent of primary and secondary schools
- housing was the service accessed by the lowest proportion of schools, with about 40 per cent of primary and about 50 per cent of secondary schools indicating that they had contact with this service

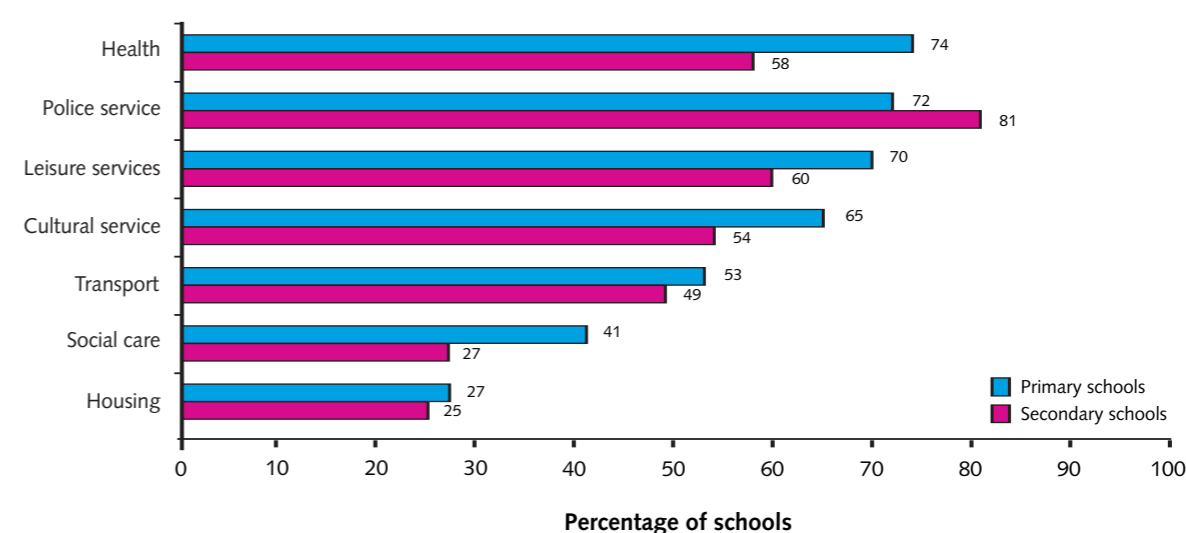
With the exception of health, secondary schools were more likely to access these services than primary schools. The difference was particularly marked in the case of transport, where over 80 per cent of secondary schools but only about half of primary schools worked with this service.

### 2.2 How satisfied are schools with the accessibility of support?

The surveys asked schools to rate the accessibility of support provided by the local services, using a four point scale ranging from *excellent* to *very poor*. The findings varied slightly for primary and secondary schools (see Figure 2). Generally, primary schools were slightly more positive than secondary schools about the accessibility of support. The services with the best ratings (i.e. a high percentage rated the accessibility of support as either *excellent* or *good*) from both primary and secondary schools were:

- health services (74 per cent of primary and 58 per cent of secondary schools that accessed the service rated the accessibility of support as either *excellent* or *good*)

Figure 2 Percentage of schools using the service rating the accessibility of support as excellent or good



- police service (72 per cent of primary and 81 per cent of secondary schools)
- leisure services (70 per cent of primary and 60 per cent of secondary schools).

Housing and social care were the two services receiving the lowest ratings for the accessibility of support. Only a quarter of primary and secondary schools that used the housing service and about 40 per cent of primary schools and a quarter of secondary schools that used social care reported that the accessibility of support was either *excellent* or *good*.

### Differences over time

There has been improved satisfaction with the accessibility of services by both primary and secondary schools for all named services between 2006 and 2007. In primary schools, the most improved results were for the police service (12 per cent increase) and social care services (nine per cent increase).

### 2.3 What did schools say about their experiences of local services?

Most of the experiences described by schools related to the accessibility and performance of social care and the police

service. The following are examples of the two most frequent types of remarks:

- social services are poor and there is a lack of communication, for example, as one **primary** school wrote: ‘The lack of staff in social services results in poor communication and a huge emphasis on schools (headteachers!) to work with families to follow up issues’. A **secondary** headteacher wrote: ‘A real “culture clash” between education and social services.’
- police are very involved in school, for example, as one **primary** school wrote: ‘Recently police links have become excellent through community officers’. A **secondary** school headteacher wrote: ‘There is a growing collaboration between services and the school – the police in particular are working closely with us.’

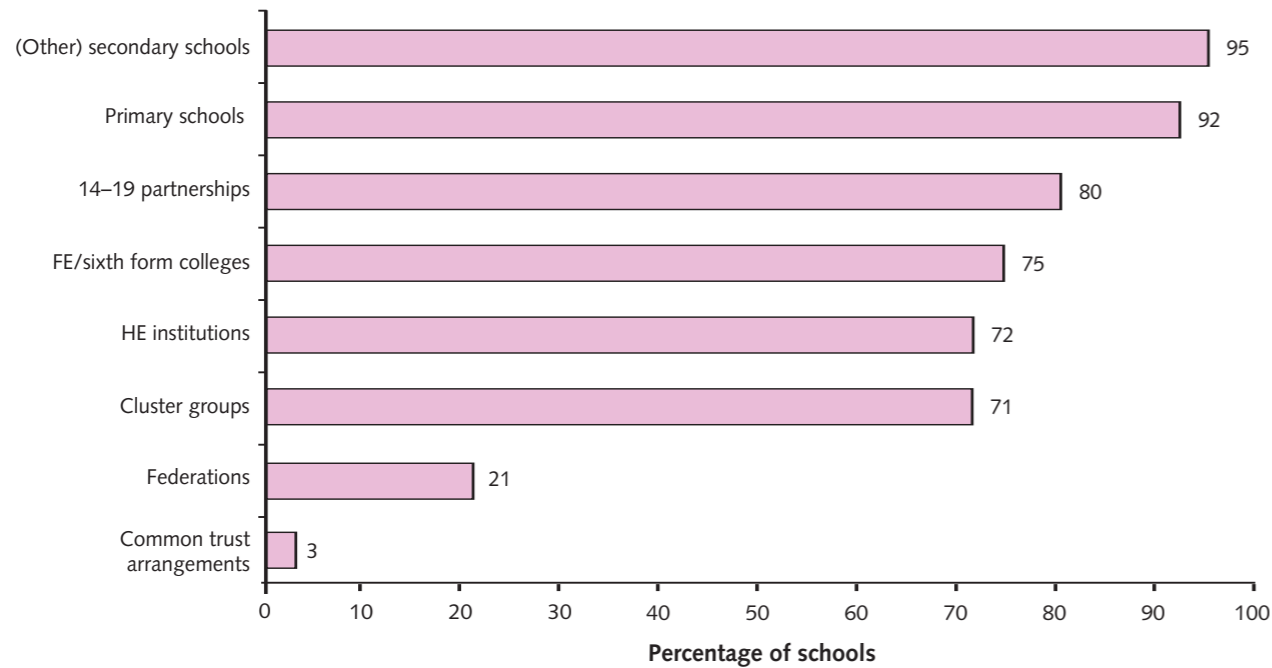
### 2.4 Are schools collaborating with other schools and training providers?

Schools were asked about their links with other schools and training providers. The questions were slightly different in each survey. The main forms of collaboration that primary schools identified, via an open question, were through:

- cluster groups (57 per cent)
- learning networks (42 per cent)

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Figure 3 Secondary schools' links with other schools and education and training providers



- partnerships (13 per cent)
- links with secondary schools (nine per cent).

Secondary schools were asked to outline their links with other schools and training providers by selecting from a pre-determined list. Their main links are displayed in Figure 3.

### Differences between groups

There were a number of differences at secondary school level. Smaller secondary schools (those with 600 or less pupils), for example, were less likely to indicate that they had links with further education (FE) and sixth form colleges, higher education institutions (HEIs) and 14-19 partnerships. Additionally, secondary schools with low proportions of pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM) were less likely to report that they had links with FE and sixth form colleges.

### 2.5 Are schools involved in specific children's services partnerships?

As in 2006, schools were asked about their level of involvement with specific forms of collaboration introduced by the Government to support ECM. Schools were asked about their involvement with the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership (CYPSP), CYPP consultations and general involvement with the Children's Trust as a whole. Overall, there has been a marked growth in partnership involvement and information sharing by schools in the three partnership areas, between 2006 and 2007, especially by secondary schools, but there is still a proportion of schools that reported no involvement (see Figures 4a and 4b).

As might be expected, the proportion of schools reporting an active involvement in the CYPSPs was small (17 per cent of secondary schools and eight per cent of primary schools reported this degree of involvement): it is likely that only one or two schools from each LA would be actively involved in the CYPSPs, responsible for representing all schools. It might be expected, however, for all schools to be involved in these aspects of the ECM agenda

Figure 4a Primary schools' involvement in aspects of the ECM agenda

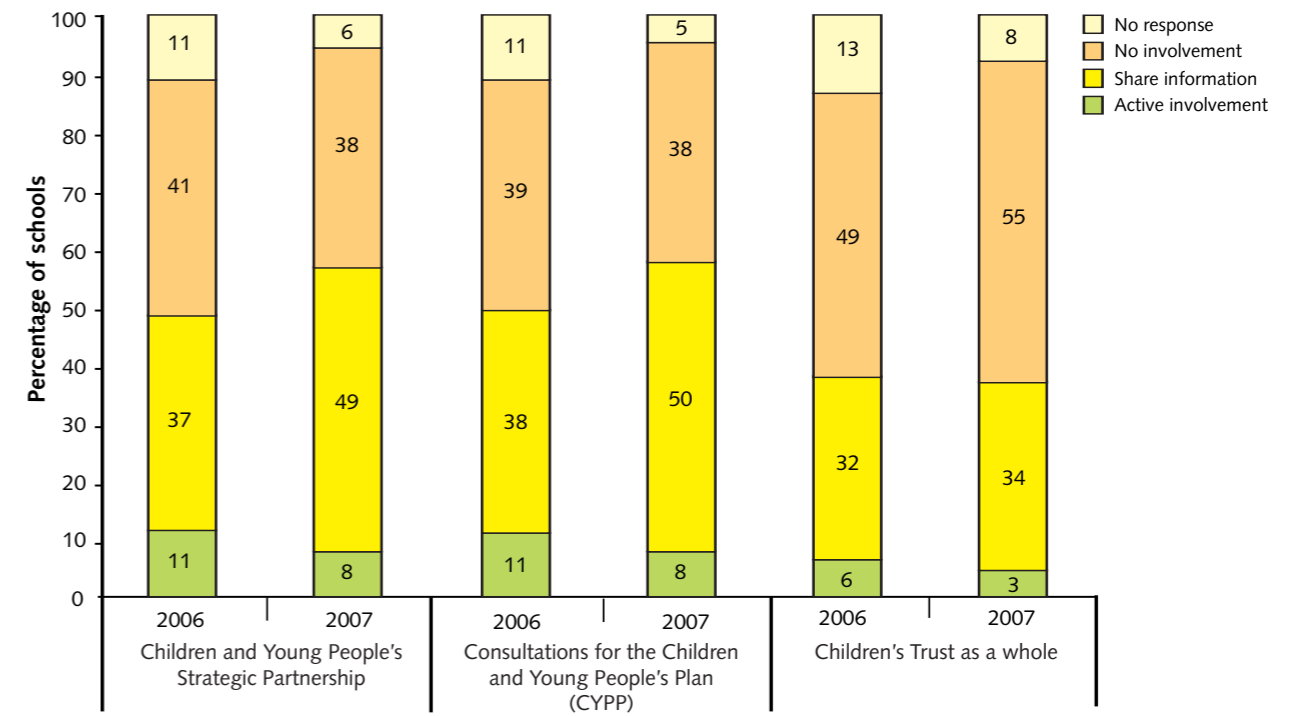
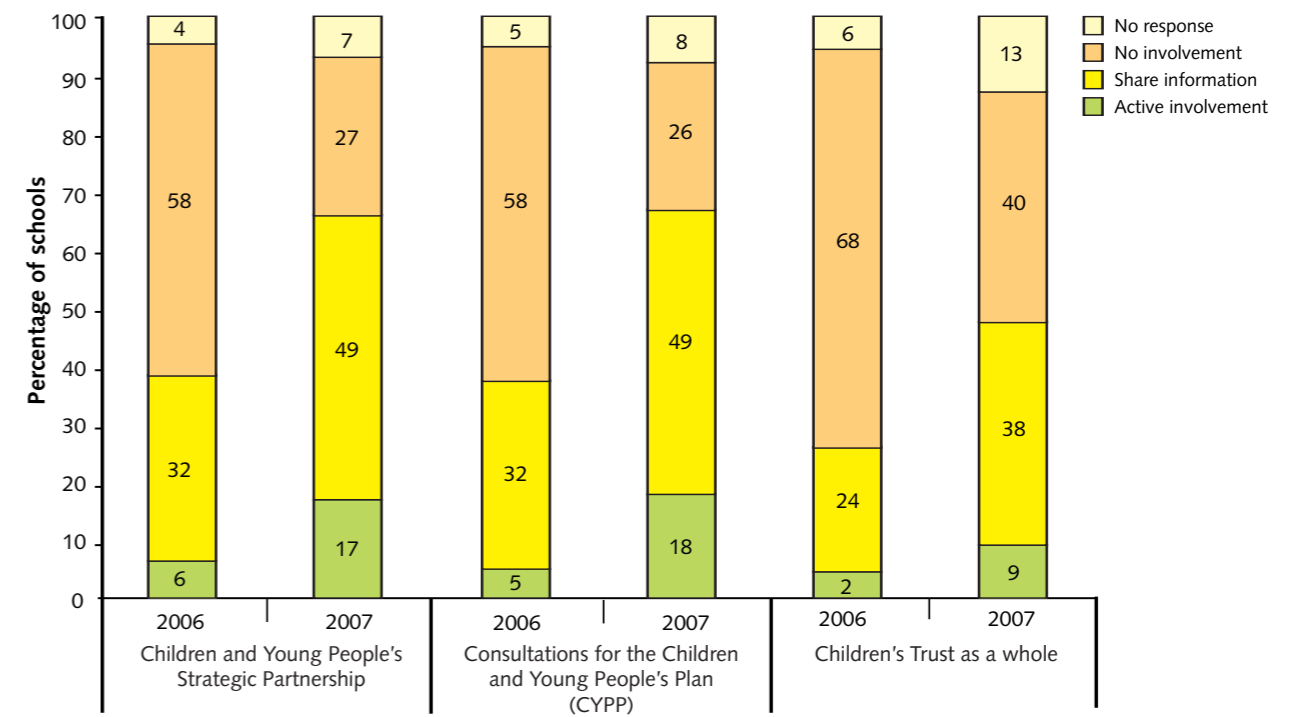


Figure 4b Secondary schools' involvement in aspects of the ECM agenda





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through the sharing of information for the CYPSPs, consultations for the CYPPs and the Children's Trust as a whole, but the survey findings show that this is still not the situation nationally.

### Differences between groups

Some statistically significant differences emerged between schools in different types of authority and between schools of different types. The *active involvement* of secondary schools in the CYPSPs was highest in the London Boroughs. At primary school level, those in the highest attainment band were more likely to report having *no involvement* in consultations for the CYPP.

Schools were also asked to comment on the reasons for their level of involvement, although only about 40 per cent of respondents chose to do so. Where reasons were given, the general picture was of a lack of awareness of the local arrangements. The three main reasons given by primary and secondary headteachers were:

- not heard of them (e.g. one secondary school wrote: 'What are these? We are dealing with [the ECM] agenda on our own.')
- still in development stage in the LA (e.g. a primary school

wrote: 'The LA are still formulating details of a plan')

- information is of limited use (e.g. another primary school noted: 'No real clear picture as to what is happening - lengthy documents are sent - some with specific/specialist type language which are not easily understood').

### 2.6 What effect is the ECM agenda having in schools?

When schools were asked to comment on changes that had taken place within the last year in relation to ECM, the comments typically described positive developments covering standard aspects of school life. The main changes reported in primary and secondary schools were similar to those reported in 2006:

- changes to the school improvement/development plan
- improved school meals/greater awareness of health/healthy eating
- review of staffing and recruitment in the school
- review of the curriculum and current school practice in relation to ECM.

Headteachers were also asked to comment on the changes

they anticipated over the coming year in their school as a result of the ECM agenda. The main changes identified in both the primary and secondary surveys were:

- further development of changes already being made
- increased extended schools work
- closer collaboration between services.

The main challenge in delivering the ECM agenda (identified by 29 per cent of secondary schools and 23 per cent of primary schools) was to develop closer collaboration with other services/agencies. Other challenges included financial issues and having the time to develop and implement the agenda. The identification of these challenges remained unchanged between the 2006 and 2007 surveys.

## 3 What are the implications for local authorities?

### 3.1 Schools' collaboration with other services

The findings highlighted that schools have more contact with some local services than with others. Three services – health, social care and the police – were accessed by the majority of primary and secondary schools surveyed. Housing was the service accessed by the lowest proportion of schools: only half of the secondary schools and two-fifths of the primary schools indicated that they had contact with this service. In the case of the transport service, over three quarters of secondary schools but only half of primary schools worked with this service. This probably reflects the different transport patterns, school sizes and needs of children in the two age groups. This information remained relatively unchanged as compared to the data gathered from the 2006 survey.

The surveys underlined differing levels of satisfaction with the accessibility of support from these services. High levels of satisfaction were recorded for the police and health services but relatively low levels for social care. Encouragingly, however, there were improved satisfaction levels with all of the named services between 2006 and 2007, with social care receiving a nine-point increase from primary schools and a seven-point increase from secondary schools. In last year's report (Chamberlain *et al.*, 2006) it was proposed that with the development of the new joined-

up children's services departments, it was likely that the accessibility of social care support for schools would become more integrated. The findings from this year's survey suggest that the effect of integrated services may just be becoming evident.

- LAs and schools might like to discuss the specific issues concerning the current accessibility of social care support while developing their integrated children's services. LAs and schools might also wish to consider how access to social care support fits with their implementation of the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) and emerging models of partnership working. As school staff are likely to instigate a number of CAFs, it will be important for LAs to ensure the process supports schools in accessing appropriate services to support children and their families.

### 3.2 Schools' collaboration with other schools and training providers

The survey findings indicated that the most common links that primary schools had with other schools were through cluster groups, learning networks, partnerships and specific secondary school links. This list has not changed much compared to that reported in 2006. Secondary schools' main links were with other secondary schools, primary schools and with 14–19 partnerships.

- The survey findings suggest that collaboration and links with other organisations remain strong and widespread. LAs may wish to consider, however, which forms of collaboration might most usefully be further encouraged. It may be, for example, that for secondary schools, 14–19 partnerships and links with HEIs (for access policies) should be given a strategic impetus.

### 3.3 Schools' involvement in children's services partnerships

The findings show there had been a marked growth in partnership involvement and information sharing by schools in specific partnership aspects of the ECM agenda, between 2006 and 2007, especially by secondary schools, but there was still a proportion of schools that reported no involvement.

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The proportion of schools reporting an active involvement in the CYPSPs was small (17 per cent of secondary schools and eight per cent of primary schools), but this is to be expected if only one or two schools from each LA are responsible for representing all schools. The situation regarding schools' involvement through the sharing of information is more concerning as all schools are expected to be involved at this level. Similarly, with the new duty on LAs to consult schools in the preparation of their CYPP and for schools to take account of the plan in their own strategic planning, the aim would be for all schools to report involvement in the consultations for the CYPP. The findings, however, showed that about two-fifths of primary schools and a quarter of secondary schools still have no involvement in the consultations for the CYPP.

- There is clearly a need to inform and engage schools further in the planning and development of integrated children's services, particularly at primary school level. LAs might wish to review existing mechanisms and consider new strategies for supporting the engagement of schools in Children's Trust developments. Where representation on CYPSPs is through one or two schools, LAs and schools might wish to consider ways of supporting representatives in disseminating information and collecting views to feed into the CYPSP discussion and planning for the future.

### 3.4 The effect the ECM agenda has had in schools

The findings from both the primary and secondary surveys suggest that in areas such as curriculum development, that are typically the responsibility of schools, good progress had been made in implementing the ECM agenda. Similarly to the 2006 survey, in 2007, schools described improvements or positive developments covering standard aspects of school life, but the main challenge for schools remained the need to develop closer collaborative working with the services involved in supporting children and young people's well-being.

- LAs and their partners may wish to consider the potential barriers, and appropriate ways to address these barriers, to further collaboration with schools to support the ECM agenda. It may be, for example, that summary CYPP

reports from LAs could support a wider school readership and assist improved sign up to the ECM agenda across services.

## References

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## Notes

1 More than one answer could be put forward so percentages do not sum to 100.

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