
Meeting: Children, Families and Learning Overview and Scrutiny Meeting

Date: 6 October 2009

Subject: Strategic Commissioning Framework for Children in Central Bedfordshire

Report of: Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Children, Families and Learning

Summary: The report provides Committee members with the opportunity to comment on the draft commissioning framework which will guide the work of the Children's Trust.

Contact Officer: Sylvia Gibson, Assistant Director, Policy, Planning and Commissioning

Public/Exempt: Public

Wards Affected: All

Function of: Council

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 1. that members are asked to consider and comment on the draft Strategic Commissioning Framework for Central Bedfordshire as part of the Children's Trust arrangements.**

Background

1. Commissioning is the process for deciding how to use the total resource available for children, young people and parents in order to improve outcomes in the most efficient, effective, equitable and sustained way. Commissioning is seen by the Government as key to delivering quality services, securing better outcomes and meeting budget pressures through Children's Trust arrangements.
2. The Children's Trust Board has the strategic responsibility to lead commissioning across the full range of services for children and young people.
3. The Children and Young People's Plan sets out the priorities agreed by the Children's Trust in Central Bedfordshire. The priorities will be shared by all agencies working with children and young people and will be delivered through joint planning and commissioning.

The Strategic Commissioning Framework

4. The Strategic Commissioning Framework is designed to ensure that all Children's Trust partners have a shared understanding about how they will work together to commission services to meet the priorities for children and young people in Central Bedfordshire. The framework will be adopted by all agencies working with children and young people in Central Bedfordshire under the Children's Trust governance arrangements.
5. The Framework describes:
 - the key underpinning principles;
 - the commissioning standards;
 - the decision making processes;
 - the commissioning cycle; and
 - governance arrangements.
6. The detailed operational procedures will be drawn up by the Commissioning Executive of the Children's Trust which reports directly to the Children's Trust Board.
7. The Commissioning Executive will work to commissioning standards which provide a check list to ensure success. The standards will ensure that all those involved in commissioning have a clear understanding of the process and the mechanisms that underpin the framework.

Conclusion and Next Steps

8. The Children's Trust Board adopted the Strategic Commissioning Framework for Central Bedfordshire at its meeting on 3 September 2009. Central Bedfordshire Council Executive will consider the Commissioning Framework on 10 November 2009.

CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS
<p>Council Priorities: Commissioning will support the Central Bedfordshire Strategic Plan (2009-11) particularly in educating, protecting and providing opportunities for children and young people.</p> <p>Financial: There is no immediate financial impact from the adoption of the Framework. However, whilst partnership working via Children's Trust arrangements has many benefits, as clearly stated in the Strategic Commissioning Framework, there are financial implications for Central Bedfordshire Council.</p>

- Central Bedfordshire's contribution versus the contribution made by other partners will need to be clearly spelt out, together with the budget implications for Central Bedfordshire. The Identification of resources required against set priorities is as stated in Appendix A item 4. Partnership working will deliver efficiencies in the long term, but there are likely to be ongoing financial and non financial costs and costs associated with initial set up. These will need to be clearly stated and budgeted for.
- Financial Governance arrangements and terms of reference will need to be clear to all partners as summarised in the Framework under Appendix A – 'Governance Arrangements of the Children's Trust and the Commissioning Function'. Central Bedfordshire Council, therefore, should be clear about how to measure and monitor the expected outcomes of this Strategic Framework to ensure optimum use of resources and value for money and value added.
- The case for pooled budgets and its benefits is clearly stated in Appendix A item 7. Whether a pooled or an aligned approach is adopted, the Trust framework must ensure that it has direct oversight of financial and budget matters supported by regular and robust monitoring and performance management systems. The process of dealing with overspends or underspends from one financial year to another will need to be clearly specified.

Legal:

The Strategic Commissioning Framework of the Children's Trust will support the Council and its partners in exercising the 'duty to co-operate' under section 10 of the Children Act 2004.

Risk Management:

The risks associated with weak commissioning are numerous and at a high level could lead to financial loss, an adverse reputational impact and could lead to a statutory breach or even loss of life. Implementing the Strategic Commissioning Framework will allocate the responsibility for a number of mitigating factors which should reduce the probability and impact of these risks occurring.

Staffing (including Trades Unions):

None.

Equalities/Human Rights:

The Commissioning principles commit the Trust to providing services in an equitable and inclusive way.

Community Safety:

Safeguarding is built into the commissioning standards.

Sustainability:

None

Appendices:

Appendix A – Strategic Commissioning Framework