

Strategic Commissioning Framework Children and Young People in Central Bedfordshire

Vision and Values

Central Bedfordshire Children's Trust is committed to ensuring that all our children and young people have the best possible start in life. We will work together to provide high quality, accessible services that meet a universal offer for all and targeted support that meets local need and mitigates the impact of disadvantage.

Introduction

Section 10 of the Children Act 2004 sets out duties requiring local authorities and their relevant partners to co-operate to improve the well being of children and young people against each of the five Every Child Matters outcomes. The Central Bedfordshire Children's Trust has been established to lead the work and drive forward inter-agency co-operation. The work of the Board and the structure that supports it must lead to the delivery of 'measurable improvements' and 'consistent, high quality arrangements to provide identification and early intervention for children and young people who need additional help'. This inter-agency co-operation extends into joint commissioning arrangements to secure the most appropriate, needs led, evidence based, value for money services for our local communities in Central Bedfordshire.

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 sustainable way. It keeps the primary focus on the needs of service users and their carers, unclouded by the considerations of providers.

Commissioning sets out a framework for deciding how best to deploy resources strategically and tactically in order to achieve objectives, making best use of the strengths of the statutory, voluntary and private sectors. It encourages constructive dialogue between different stakeholders through a transparent process and helps to identify appropriate partner authorities or agencies with shared objectives.

Commissioning also makes the bridge between financial and service planning and aids the business planning of service providers by clarifying the medium-term purchasing intentions of the commissioning authority.

Most significantly, commissioning requires the Trust to share intelligence and analysis to improve the range, quality and cost-effectiveness of services within available resources, based on an understanding of whole systems of support.

Commissioning is at the very heart of providing effective services for both children and adults. It is the process by which the Trust decides how to spend its money to get the best possible services for local people. Service users and carers, councillors, managers and staff at all levels in all agencies working with children, young people and their families need to contribute to this process to ensure that the services being provided are the best they can possibly be.

Commissioning is about enhancing the quality of life of service users and their carers by:

- having the vision and commitment to improve services
- connecting with the needs and aspirations of users and carers
- making the best use of all available resources
- understanding demand and supply
- linking financial planning and service planning
- making relationships and working in partnership
- anticipating future needs and expectations to plan for the future rather than just reacting to present demand.

The Strategic Commissioning Framework will ensure that all Children's Trust partners have a shared understanding about how we will work together to commission the services that are needed to fulfil our vision and 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 Board governance arrangements

The shared approach will ensure that we achieve the best outcomes for children and young people by using our combined resources to meet evidenced needs and planning for future developments, including the ability to be flexible and to move resources quickly and effectively to meet emerging needs.

The Children and Young People's Plan identifies the priorities for Central Bedfordshire, and commissioning arrangements will build on the strengths of local partners to deliver against these priorities. Strategic Commissioning is a key means by which the Children's Trust Board will make a reality of the duty to co-operate and drive cultural change.

The Children Trust Board partners will work closely together to ensure effective local leadership, governance, accountability and joint working, delivering improved outcomes to all children, young people and families based on shared action plans derived from the agreed priorities in the Children and Young People's Plan.

The funding and commissioning cycles of the Children's Trust Board partners will be aligned to provide coherence in delivering the CYPP. Areas of overlapping responsibility will be carefully planned. There will therefore be one overarching Commissioning Plan held by the Children's Trust which incorporates the commissioning from all partner agencies for children and young people, their families and carers.

For vulnerable children in particular, partners will co-ordinate services focusing on support for the family as a whole. Children's commissioning will therefore make appropriate arrangements with Adult services to ensure a seamless service for families.

This framework is the strategic guidance for partners and is not an operational manual on Commissioning. Shared operational processes and procedures will be developed once the Framework has been adopted

Purpose

The purpose of this Strategic Commissioning Framework is to create clarity and consistency for partners in the Central Bedfordshire Children's Trust in securing the best outcomes for children, young people and their families who live, work and play in Central Bedfordshire.

Legislation and Statutory Guidance

The following key documents set out the role of the Children's Trust and the view of Central Government in commissioning world class services for children, young people, their families and carers on which this Commissioning Framework is based:

- Every Child Matters
- National Service Framework for Children, Young People and Maternity Services
- Safeguarding Standards – Eastern Region
- Statutory Guidance on the Role of the Lead Member for Children's Services and the Director of Children's Services
- Strong Partnerships and Commissioning Governance within Children's Trusts
- Children's Trusts: Statutory Guidance on inter-agency co-operation to improve the well being of children, young people and their families
- Aiming High for Disabled Children
- Securing Better Health for Children and Young People through World Class Commissioning:

A bibliography of these and associated guidance can found in Appendix 1

The Central Bedfordshire Children's Trust Commissioning Principles:

The principles that underpin the commissioning arrangements within the Children's Trust are designed to engage all partners in the commissioning process.

Commissioning decisions through the Children's Trust will:

- be focused on the five Every Child Matters outcomes to be healthy, stay safe, enjoy and achieve, make a positive contribution and achieve economic wellbeing by aligning with the Children and Young People's Plan;
- particularly focus on the safeguarding of children to protect all children, specifically those in vulnerable groups;
- meet the national Children's Trust Statutory Guidance;
- work to the regional Safeguarding Standards for commissioning services from the Community and Voluntary Sector and any other relevant standards which may be developed that will enhance the service offered;
- align to the Commissioning model;
- be objective through the development of a Commissioning Executive which will provide an independent review and validation of all services for children, their families and carers;
- ensure that services are appropriate, needs led and value for money;
- empower children and their families and enable them to influence decisions about services;
- be responsive to the needs of individuals and localities within Central Bedfordshire and specifically on areas of most need;
- focus all agencies working with children and their families and carers on improving outcomes;
- improve market capacity which will have a direct positive impact on the local and regional economy;

- involve all partners and strengthen working relationships between all agencies through the use of flexible pooled resources;
- ensure delivery of services to achieve the local area agreement objectives and other performance measures contained within the Children and Young People Plan;
- identify opportunities to pool budgets to allow for the refocusing of commissioning based on any emerging needs of the local communities.

In order to meet these principles, the Central Bedfordshire Children’s Trust Board partners will participate in joint planning, performance management, and pooled or aligned budget arrangements. The Children and Young People’s Plan will underpin these arrangements

Commissioning Model

Partners will work to a shared commissioning model to secure the right services in the right place at the right time. This is crucial to their commitment, ensures consistency and affords the opportunity to shift resources to earlier intervention where possible.

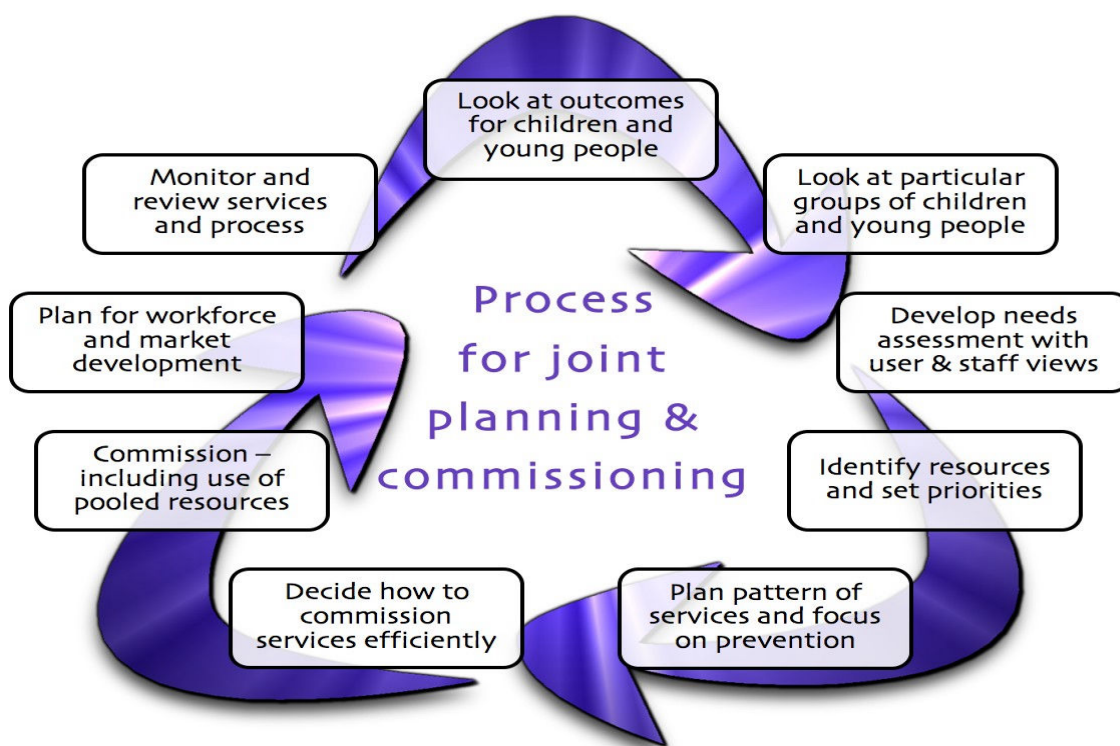


Figure 1: DCSF Commissioning Cycle

The commissioning model is a cyclical process, each element being fed by the one before and feeding into the next stage.

The nine step commissioning model has at its heart improved outcomes for all children and young people and narrowing the gap in outcomes between the general population and particular groups and individuals.

The Nine Step Commissioning Model

1. Look at outcomes for children and young people

In applying the model the initial focus needs to be on the five Every Child Matters outcomes of be healthy, stay safe, enjoy and achieve, make a positive contribution and achieve economic wellbeing by aligning with the Children and Young People's Plan.

Each of the five Outcome Delivery Groups will be tasked with ensuring that these outcomes are achieved for all children in Central Bedfordshire irrespective of their home local authority area or the type of school they attend, including children who are electively home educated. This includes overseas pupils registered at any school in the local authority area. These responsibilities also extend to looked after children placed by another local authority in Central Bedfordshire.

2. Look at particular groups of children and young people

The Joint Strategic Needs Assessment should provide the evidence for looking at the needs of particular groups of children and young people. This will be aligned with consultation with these particular groups to establish appropriate ways of meeting those needs through the commissioning of services locally and sub-regionally where appropriate.

Some individuals and specialist groups may need to link into very specialist services that can best be offered a resource that is shared across a number of Children's Trusts. Where these services are needed, we will work closely with sub-regional and regional partners to develop the market and offer children, young people and families services that are near to home, where appropriate.

Safeguarding children and young people will be at the core of all our commissioning decisions and arrangements and therefore this will be one of the standards by which the Board may decide to commission or de-commission services.

Inspection findings and recommendations will inform the Trust of services that will need to be further developed, including services for particular groups of children and young people.

Commissioning decisions will deliver accessible, equitable, inclusive and non-discriminatory services.

3. Develop the needs assessment with user and staff views

The Children's Trust Board identifies resources and sets priorities against a robust needs analysis. The needs analysis includes data from:

- Children and Young People Plan
- Joint Strategic Needs Assessment
- Local Area Agreement Indicators
- Inspection findings and recommendations
- Sustainable Communities Strategy
- Statutory and local policies and targets of partners
- User and staff views.

The needs analysis will be set against the map of resources across Central Bedfordshire Trust partners. From this we will identify where services may overlap and where there

may be gaps in provision. By realigning resources against needs and strategic priorities we will deliver the right level of service into the right areas.

4. Identify resources and set priorities

Resources include;

- Local public, private and commercial sectors and Third Sector providers;
- The full range of resources – workforce, buildings, activities, revenue and capital funding streams, parents and communities;
- Opportunities to bid for new funding initiatives against strategic priorities.

Where services do not exist, we will undertake market analysis and seek to develop local market opportunities. Where specialist services are needed we will develop strong partnership arrangements with sub-regional and regional partners.

The Children's Trust will set its strategic direction through the agreement of the Children and Young People's Plan based on clear needs analysis of the current, and anticipated future needs of families, localities and themes and taking into account the diversity of the local populations. This will be refreshed annually to reflect current or emerging needs for the following year.

5. Plan the pattern of services and focus on prevention

Central Bedfordshire Children's Trust is developing locally based, integrated services which will:

- focus on delivering a core service offer to children, young people and families in the context of their communities;
- reduce duplication by integrating services and streamlining processes;
- improve and strengthen work with vulnerable individuals and groups;
- develop an evidence base of what works and what is efficient and effective.

The Children's Trust recognises the need to ensure that preventative, early intervention services are in place to support families at an early stage and minimise the risk of situations escalating. The focus on prevention will include integrated planning, design and delivery through multi agency teams which will include public, third sector and private agencies.

6. Decide how to commission services effectively

Decisions will take into account the need to ensure sustainability and to build capacity where appropriate, including considering service re-design to support delivery. This may include commissioning services where previously they were delivered in-house by one or more agencies, or de-commissioning services which are not providing the desired outcomes.

The aim of the decisions is to provide world class commissioning and world class services. This means that services delivered for children, young people and their families

and carers locally will be aligned with those experienced in the highest-performing countries in the world.

The commissioning process will empower children, young people, families and communities by reflecting their views on the service and developing ways in which service users can take a full part in developing commissioning arrangements. Decisions made within the Commissioning Executive will from time to time be hard to make but should be driven by the needs of children, their families and carers as the primary focus.

We will work with the relevant Procurement teams and develop the commissioning function in line with department for Communities and Local Government guidance for Procurement of Care and Support Services.

7. Commission – including the use of pooled resources

Pooled or aligned budgets should underpin commissioning to ensure that the resources are available to redesign services and encourage innovative approaches.

Decisions will be based on “wrap around” services that are centred on the needs of the child or young person and their family and will need to break through service barriers and use budgets flexibly.

Pooled budgets can offer a number of benefits, including,

- underpinning partnership arrangements with a clear legal agreement;
- encouraging thinking that is independent of any traditions, vested interests and ways of working that might have existed in the past, and identifying any overlaps in services;
- encouraging innovative and user-focused service design to reduce the transaction costs, overheads, bureaucracy and delay involved in accessing a number of separate funding streams and which is particularly helpful for children and young people with multiple needs.

8. Plan for workforce and market development

The Children’s Trust will develop a strong understanding of the strengths, weaknesses and gaps in the skills and competencies of all the local children’s workforce. Working together in multi agency teams we will make best use of the skills within the teams. Through market analysis we will identify the gaps and seek to identify and develop the market.

9. Monitor and review services and process

The Commissioning Executive will ensure that services, both in house and externally provided, offer value for money and good quality provision.

Regular and robust monitoring arrangements will be in place to ensure that specific commissioning decisions lead to the achievement of clearly identified outcomes within specific timescales.

The Commissioning Framework will be supported by a common approach to drawing up service specifications, partnership agreements and service level agreements. We will have a common approach to procurement and contracting based on a shared

commitment from all partners to ensure safe, high quality services to all children and young people in Central Bedfordshire.

We recognise that, over time, local and national priorities and the capacity of the market to respond to these priorities may change. As part of the ongoing performance monitoring, there will be a need to identify the potential for managing the market.

The commissioning cycle applies to in house teams, other public sector organisations, the third or private sectors, or a combination of these. Mechanisms will be developed for Commissioners to hold the in-house provider function to account for delivery.

The Commissioning Executive will establish sub groups as required to ensure a strong focus on needs analysis, performance improvement, quality assurance, and pooled and aligned resources. These groups will give clear guidance on what the needs of the local population are and where the Executive may wish to focus their strategic direction for the coming year. The terms of reference for these groups will be developed by the Commissioning Executive.

Commissioning Standards – Ensuring Quality

The commissioning standards provide a check list to ensure success. Each standard will be set against success criteria and form part of the monitoring arrangements. The standards ensure that all those involved in commissioning have a clear understanding of the process and the mechanisms that underpin the framework and provide the basis for healthy dialogue and challenge between commissioners and providers.

1. Partners agree to a shared vision, strategic objectives, priorities and values.
2. The Children's Trust Board has clear accountability and governance arrangements.
3. Safeguarding children and young people is at the core of our commissioning decisions and arrangements.
4. A strategic needs assessment is undertaken and a regular review cycle established.
5. Children, young people, parents and carers have meaningful involvement in the planning and delivery of services.
6. The commissioning framework is accessible and actively promoted to all partners, stakeholders and service users.
7. Prioritisation and decision making processes are transparent.
8. Commissioning processes to identify "preferred providers" are based on clear and transparent decisions.
9. Contracting mechanisms and risk sharing arrangements are implemented.
10. Strong contractual procedures are in place, with full monitoring arrangements.
11. All partners are able to engage with an effective performance framework.

12. Clear quality and clinical governance processes are in place.
13. Clarity exists on the roles and remits of commissioners and providers.
14. Provider development and market development are undertaken to increase the choice and diversity of available services.

Evidence that these standards are being met will be reviewed regularly by the Commissioning Executive with the support of the Outcome Delivery Groups and the Commissioning Executive's sub groups.

Governance Arrangements of the Children's Trust and the Commissioning Function

The Children's Trust Board requires governance arrangements which give clear direction, delegation, resourcing and accountability to the commissioning arrangements. The Children's Trust Board agrees the terms of reference for the sub-groups and the roles and responsibilities of partners within the Trust.

The Children's Trust Board has the strategic responsibility to lead commissioning across the full range of services for children and therefore the terms of reference will be made explicit about the roles and responsibilities of different partners and how decisions are made. This is particularly important in relation to pooled budgets and how formal decisions will be taken where expenditure is above the level of delegated authority for those sitting on the Board.

It is the expectation of the Children's Trust Board that people who represent each of the partner organisations is of a sufficient seniority to make the relevant commissioning decisions in order to prevent unnecessary delays. Agencies should therefore ensure that those representatives have the delegated authority to make those decisions.

All members of the Children's Trust are asked to use their experience of children, their families and carers to act in their best interests rather than in the interests of their particular organisation.

The Children's Trust Board

The Children's Trust Board is the Executive of the Trust. The plans, strategies and priorities of the Trust are developed by the Every Child Matters Delivery Groups. These are recommended to the Trust Board which then ensures that the Trust maintains a coherent strategic direction that reflects the priorities of the Trust and the needs of children and young people in the area.

The Trust Board operates as a Thematic Partnership of the Central Bedfordshire Local Strategic Partnership (LSP). It will make recommendations to the LSP Board on key priorities relating to Children and Young People and the level of improvement required, and will report progress in achieving this. The Trust Board will contribute to the development and refresh of the Sustainable Community Strategy and support the development and refresh of the Local Area Agreement. These arrangements are set out in Appendix 2.

A key function of the Commissioning Executive is to implement the strategy for strategic commissioning as part of the Children and Young People's Plan, based on the shared priorities of the partnership and designed to address the needs of children and young people in Central Bedfordshire. The Terms of Reference for the Commissioning Executive are set out in Appendix 3.

The Role of Local Authority Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Under the statutory guidance 2009,

"...overview and scrutiny committee may review or scrutinise decisions made or actions taken in connection with the discharge of functions which are the responsibility of the Executive, including the delivery of children's services and all aspects of the work of the children's partnerships. In doing so, the committee can require the Lead Member to attend or answer questions on matters relating to children or young people in the area, covering the full range of services for children, not just those commissioned or provided by the local authority itself. This provides a means of ensuring strong local scrutiny for the delivery of local public services, including local authority children's services and health.¹

Central Bedfordshire Council's Children Families and Learning Overview and Scrutiny Committee will from time to time look at aspects of the Children and Young People's Plan and may scrutinise performance, budget and commissioning arrangements as part of that function, calling all partners to account for their role in the delivery of local services.

Conclusion

The Strategic Commissioning Framework provides an overarching strategy for the development of commissioning arrangements in Central Bedfordshire. The detailed arrangements to ensure a common approach will be developed through the Commissioning Executive. This group will comprise commissioners from the relevant partners. This group will ensure that there is a Commissioning Plan which is underpinned by the principles, standards and intentions in the Framework and which reports to the Central Bedfordshire Children's Trust Board

¹ Statutory Guidance: The Roles and Responsibilities of Lead Member for Children's Services and the Director of Children's Services, DCSF 2009