

Children and Families Committee

Date of Meeting:	23 May 2022
Report Title:	Children's Commissioning
Report of:	Deborah Woodcock, Executive Director of Children's Services
Report Reference No:	CF/04/22-23
Ward(s) Affected:	All

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1.** This report provides an overview of the principles, approach and reach of Children's Commissioning activity, as requested by the Children and Families Committee. This report should be read alongside the commissioning and contracts booklet in the pack.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1.** Achieving best outcomes for children and families across Cheshire East is of paramount importance. To deliver on our priorities for children and families within a best value framework requires the input of effective and agile commissioning.
- 2.2** Children's commissioning is a relatively small team that sits within the remit of the Director of Commissioning and Integration and benefits from connections with commissioning across Adult Social Care, especially in terms of transition, Public Health, and the community assets across our localities. Delivering commissioning for People Services (children and adults) in one team allows capacity and experience to be shared and a consistent relationship with enabling services, such as legal and procurement to be applied. Commissioning activity operates within all the relevant legal regulations and the council's contract procedure rules.
- 2.3** The commissioning approach and principles outlined in this report aim to ensure a best fit is applied across the various service delivery models (i.e.

purchasing - competitive tender processes, in-house and other alternative service delivery models) to achieve good outcomes and cost effectiveness.

2.4 To ensure compliance with the Public Contract Regulations (PCR), the Constitution and the Commissioning Framework, a procurement pipeline of work is maintained which the Finance Sub-Committee review as part of their responsibilities. The commissioning activity described in the contract booklet attached to this report forms part of the procurement pipeline of work. Any item on the procurement pipeline that the Finance Sub-Committee approve as a significant decision is subsequently reported to the relevant service committee for approval.

2.5 Children's commissioning is an integral part of delivering the priorities within the Children and Young People's Plan and supports the council to achieve the strategic aims and objectives as detailed in the council's Corporate Plan 2021-25, with a specific focus on:

A council which empowers and cares about people:

- Work together with residents and partners to support people and communities to be strong and resilient
- Reduce health inequalities across the borough
- Protect and support our communities and safeguard children, adults at risk and families from abuse, neglect, and exploitation
- Support all children to have the best start in life
- Increase opportunities for all children and young adults with additional needs.

3. Recommendations

3.1. The committee is recommended to note the report.

4. Reasons for Recommendations

4.1. This report provides an overview of the principles, approach and reach of Children's Commissioning, as requested by the Children and Families Committee.

5. Other Options Considered

5.1 This report provides an overview for Committee of Children's Commissioning and therefore consideration of other options is not appropriate.

6. Background

6.1. This report provides an overview of the principles, approach and reach of Children's Commissioning, as requested by the Children and Families Committee.

6.2. What is Commissioning?

6.2.1 Commissioning tends to mean different things to different people and organisations, but essentially commissioning is the process by which services are planned, purchased, and monitored. We 'commission' to make things happen that achieve positive outcomes for local people based on need, evidence and statutory requirements. Commissioning activity has a clear focus on ensuring the council is efficient and effective in its use of resources.

6.2.2 Commissioning can be delivered at various levels, from individuals (micro commissioning), communities, populations, places, and at scale regionally or nationally.

6.2.3 The diagram below provides a summary of the commissioning cycle as applied in Cheshire East.

CHESHIRE EAST COMMISSIONING CYCLE



6.3 What does good commissioning look like?

6.3.1 The diagram below provides an overview of the ingredients to good commissioning:



6.3.2. In order to apply the commissioning cycle effectively the following key roles are undertaken within the commissioning team:

Key Roles of Commissioning	
Service Design / Transformation	Service Development
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Needs / strengths analysis • Co-production and engagement • Market engagement e.g. soft market testing, bidder days • Define outcomes and priorities • Review commissioning / model options e.g. competitive procurement / in-house • Business case • Strategic commissioning plan • Service specification • Financial models 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service review • Service development and improvement plans • Co-production and engagement • Communications • Income generation, funding bids • Social value

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social value • Tender evaluation / moderation • Contract award 	
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Key Roles of Contract Management		
Manage risks to market	Monitor Provider Performance	Contracts and service development
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provider failure and stability of placements • Business continuity • Fee reviews and benchmarking • Support for recruitment and workforce development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contract review meetings • Key performance indicators • Contract compliance • Service reviews • Audits • Social value 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service mobilisation • Develop contract terms and conditions • Performance management framework • Contract modifications • Provider forums and briefings • Decommissioning

Key roles of Quality Assurance and Placement Finding / SEND Consultations	
Maintain oversight of quality	Source placements
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programmed and responsive quality inspections of children’s social care and SEND providers • Ofsted / CQC assurance • Regional collaboration and Information Sharing Protocols • Partnership approach to care concerns, safeguarding etc – CCG, Ofsted, Safeguarding, Children’s Services operational teams 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Short and long term homes for cared for children and care leavers and SEND school places • Person centred planning and listening to the views of the child (Ignition and SEND Ignition) • SEND Code of Practice and parental preference • Integration and partnership working with Health, Children’s Services operational teams • Provider negotiations to ensure value for money

6.4 What is Strategic Commissioning

6.4.1 Strategic commissioning is evolving and recognises that it does not have a set ideology on how best to deliver services, and instead will adopt the “best fit” on whatever model is right to achieve identified outcomes. The council’s view is that strategic commissioning should review ‘all’ relevant delivery model options for example:

- In-house service delivery within Cheshire East Council
- Purchasing - Competitive Tender Processes (Tactical Commissioning)
- Public Service Mutual (PSM)
- Local Authority Trading Company (LATC) / Alternative Service Delivery Vehicle (ASDV)

- Joint Ventures (JV).

6.4.2. The range of contracts commissioned and managed through the Commissioning Team is described within a contract booklet (see Appendix 1 and Appendix 2 for the contracts that are to be added at the next 6 monthly update of the booklet). This doesn't include commissioning at the individual level in respect of cared for children and care leavers and SEND school places. These placements are secured through commissioned services, local and regional frameworks (for example Cheshire East Council led the establishment of a new regional purchasing system for SEND school places), and spot purchase from external agencies. The markets for both cared for children and SEND school placements are very difficult to navigate and requires astute market shaping and engagement, and outstanding relationship management.

6.4.3. The placement finding functions within the Children's Commissioning Team are embedded in the frontline and provide a responsive and effective service when sourcing placements for cared for children and those children with SEND.

6.4.4. The sample of quotes and statements below provide a flavour of the value for money and positive outcomes achieved through the range of current commissioning activity. Some of the key achievements/ outcomes achieved include:

- Cheshire East's short breaks offer has been flagged as good practice by NHS England.
- One of our commissioned Crewe nurseries adds value and fantastic outcomes for children 0–4 through the deployment of a qualified teacher, which has not been achieved at other nursery settings.
- Our person-centred planning and face to face discussions (Ignition and SEND Ignition) with cared for young people, care leavers and young people with SEND, ensure we listen and act upon young people's wishes about preparation for adulthood - this is recognised nationally as best practice.
- SEND Ignition has prompted awareness of Supported Internships. 4-5 years ago only 4 young people accessed a Supported Internship - we are now up to 50 and our new providers have progressed 77% into paid work.
- Our supported accommodation and independent living for cared for children and care leavers was recommissioned and delivers accommodation and support at £300 less per unit per week when compared to the North West average, and secured added value through £120k investment into complete remodelling and refurbishment of young people's accommodation.
- Our commission of mentoring and psychological wellbeing for care leavers is delivered by a lead voluntary sector care leaver organisation that brings significant passion and added value to our young people.

100% of young people who completed their initial and two-year wellbeing goal in the area of support networks said their support networks had improved.

- Most of our commissioned providers (outside of commissioning for individuals) are voluntary community sector or charitable organisations.

“...input from OT is invaluable, as sensory issues are a significant component of autism. You have helped clarify mechanisms to deal with sensory issues, therefore preventing an accumulation of anxiety. A himself, has quoted the advice that you have given to the teachers. He has felt this empowering and reports that he feels that you understand what he is feeling and know why this makes him worry.”

“Without you we would still be in crisis, and although we are currently in a bad position I know with your help we'll get right again”

“Fantastic service for my son who had struggled with sensory difficulties for years. B [the OT] empathised with the difficulties my son experienced and completed a comprehensive assessment. This assessment informed my son's EHCP and allowed him to access the help he needs at school”

The Parent Carer Forum's response following our short breaks presentation to parent carers: “Thanks from all of us at the forum for making it happen. We have already had lots of requests to view the video, so a success all round.”

Feedback from a young person accessing our supported accommodation commission: “Thanks for everything you have done for me from the first day I moved in I really appreciate it. You have done an amazing job to keep me on track”

Feedback from the parent of a cared for child at one of our commissioned children's homes: “The staff at C are amazing and are doing a superb job”.

“The short breaks I have accessed for my daughter have given myself time to spend with her brother, my daughter the chance to interact with new people and children and experience new things in a supported and fun environment. I have found them incredibly beneficial during school holidays. I value the services very highly.”

7. Consultation and Engagement

7.1 Key stakeholders will be consulted and engaged with as appropriate according to individual commissioning activity.

8. Implications

8.1. Legal

8.1.1. Any commissioning activity is undertaken in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Public Contract Regulations 2015 and the council's Contract Procedure Rules.

8.2. Finance

8.2.1. A guiding principle for effective children's commissioning is the achievement of best value and cost effectiveness when delivering services for children and families. Alongside the actual cost of delivery it is important that services are stable and achieve good outcomes as this also leads to best use of resources in the long term.

8.3. Policy

8.3.1. Children's commissioning activity supports the corporate vision to create an open, fair and green council. The Children and Young People's Plan will guide the way children's commissioning is delivered; supporting children and families to thrive and children receiving the best start in life and growing up in a safe environment.

8.4. Equality

8.4.1 An equality impact assessment is completed for each relevant element of commissioning activity.

8.5. Human Resources

8.5.1. There is no direct impact on Cheshire East Council employees.

8.6. Risk Management

8.6.1. At appropriate points throughout the commissioning cycle risks will be identified, recorded and mitigated through a risk register.

8.7. Rural Communities

8.7.1 Commissioning activity will take account of rural communities as appropriate.

8.8. Children and Young People/Cared for Children

8.8.1. Children's commissioning puts children and young people at the heart of all we do. The voice of children and young people and effective co-production with parents and carers ensures that the best outcomes for children and families are delivered and sustained.

8.8.2. Services for cared for children and care leavers are an important aspect of children’s commissioning and being a good corporate parent is at the forefront of commissioners’ minds.

8.9. Public Health

8.9.1. Children’s commissioning activity aims to support children to have the best start in life which is a significant determinant of health outcomes across the life course. A stable, secure childhood provides the foundation for a fulfilling adulthood and many of the services commissioned help narrow the gap in inequality by supporting families to grow together.

8.10. Climate Change

8.10.1 Children’s commissioning will ensure that every opportunity is taken to reduce the carbon footprint of Cheshire East Council when delivering children’s services.

Access to Information	
Contact Officer:	Dave Leadbetter, Head of Children’s Commissioning dave.leadbetter@cheshireeast.gov.uk 07794 059581
Appendices:	Appendix 1 – Contract Booklet Appendix 2 – Contracts Booklet – Future Updates
Background Papers:	None