

## **Joint Commissioning Framework for Services to Children, Young People and Families**

### **1. Background**

- 1.1 Every local authority area is expected to develop joint planning and commissioning arrangements to support the implementation of the Every Child Matters; Change for Children programme and the delivery of the National Service Framework for Children, Young People and Maternity Services. There is also national guidance outlining the Government's expectations in relation to a joint planning and commissioning framework. This guidance has been used to inform the joint planning and commissioning framework for Nottingham's services to children, young people and families.
- 1.2 The Improvement and Development Agency's Children and Young People's Services Peer Review in Nottingham identified the need for a single, clear commissioning strategy that flows from the single plan and delivers key outcomes for children, young people and their families. The Peer Review Report also recommended that commissioning should be undertaken jointly so that all resources are fully utilised to deliver improved outcomes that are jointly agreed.
- 1.3 Guidance and grade descriptors for Joint Area Review also provide a useful benchmark in relation to expectations for commissioning. Emphasis is placed on the importance of quality and value for money in relation to services and to be judged excellent the council and partners 'will need to demonstrate well established and highly effective commissioning and decommissioning processes based on current and anticipated needs, cost and outcomes'. Contracts are reviewed regularly to ensure required changes can be incorporated and to protect the partnership from risks. To be judged good the council and partners will need to 'have developed effective joint commissioning'.

### **2. Vision for Commissioning Children and Young People's Service**

- 2.1 Nottingham's Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP) outlines a clear vision for commissioning services for children, young people and families.
- 2.2 'The needs of children, young people, their families and carers will be at the centre of service development, delivery and evaluation. Children and young people will be offered the help and support they need, when they need it, throughout their childhood and adolescence and into adulthood. Services will be accessible, tailored to meet individual and community needs and designed to support social inclusion and cohesion'.

### **3. Joint Commissioning**

- 3.1 Commissioning will be the process through which the needs of children and young people are assessed, the resources available to meet those needs are identified, and decisions are taken about how best to deploy the available resources to maximise outcomes.
- 3.2 Nottingham City Council will work with all partners to ensure that effective joint planning and commissioning is at the heart of improving outcomes for children and young people. No single agency can deliver any one of the five Every Child Matters

outcomes by working autonomously. The Children and Young People's Plan is the single multi-agency plan which outlines the key priorities for children and young people in Nottingham and is the key driver for the Commissioning Framework.

- 3.3 The Children Act 2004 places a statutory duty on agencies and bodies delivering children's services to cooperate in arrangements to improve the well-being of children and young people. Section 10 of the Act outlines the duty of local authorities to make arrangements to promote cooperation between agencies in order to improve children's well-being, defined by reference to the five outcomes and a duty on key partners to take part in these arrangements. It also provides a new power to allow pooling of resources in support of these arrangements.

#### **4. Process for Joint Planning and Commissioning – Nine Key Steps**

The Children Act 2004 guidance on the Duty to Cooperate sets out an overview of joint planning and commissioning in nine steps.

- 4.1 Look at the current pattern and recent trends of outcomes for children and young people in their area and compare them against national and relevant local comparators.
- 4.2 Look within the overall picture of outcomes for particular groups of young people.
- 4.3 Use all this data, and draw on the views of children, young people and their families, local communities and frontline staff, to develop an overall, integrated needs assessment.
- 4.4 Agree on the nature and scale of the local challenge, identify the resources available and set priorities for action.
- 4.5 Plan the pattern of service most likely to secure priority outcomes, considering carefully the ways in which resources can be increasingly focussed on prevention and early intervention.
- 4.6 Decide together how best to purchase or provide (commission) those services, including drawing in alternative providers to widen options and increase efficiency.
- 4.7 Develop and extend joint commissioning from pooled budgets and pooled resources.
- 4.8 Plan for the workforce development and other changes in local processes and ways of working necessary to support delivery.
- 4.9 Monitor and review to ensure services are working together to deliver the ambitions set for them.
- 4.10 This process is cyclical and the DfES has indicated in its guidance that it may take five years to be fully implemented in some local areas.

#### **5. Levels of Commissioning – Strategic and Service**

- 5.1 The commissioning framework operates at two levels:-

- Strategic level
- Service Level

Commissioning at strategic and service levels follows the same nine step framework but it is not the same activity. To have an effective commissioning framework both forms need to be in operation.

- 5.2 Strategic Commissioning describes the processes needed by Nottingham City Council and partners to plan and deliver an Integrated Children's Service to all children, young people and their families in Nottingham. It requires a high level analysis of needs patterns and trends to support the identification of priorities for improving outcomes. In this respect strategic commissioning is indistinguishable from strategic planning and the Children and Young People's Plan is the central driver.
- 5.3 Service commissioning describes the processes Nottingham City Council and partners will use to specify secure and monitor individual services for children, young people and their families. These services may be universal, targeted or specialist.
- 5.4 Strategic Commissioning has begun in Nottingham with the establishment of the Children and Young People's Plan which will be refreshed in December 2006. The refresh will provide the opportunity to review the relationship between the CYPP and the development of Service Commissioning. This will involve reviewing current provision against identified need using the nine step process to reshape and redesign services to improve outcomes.

## **6. Service Commissioning Priorities**

- 6.1 The following services have been identified as priorities for commissioning in 2006/07:-

Services for Looked After Children  
 Locality Based Services for vulnerable children and families  
 Services for Children with Additional Needs (including  
 SEN/Disabilities/Behaviour)

A forward plan outlining future commissioning priorities will be agreed with partners through the refresh of the Children and Young People's Plan.

- 6.2 A Strategic Joint Commissioning Unit will be established with the support of partners to commission services identified as priorities. The Joint Commissioning Unit will support a review of services relating to each of the five 'Every Child Matters' outcomes in a rolling programme from 2007 to 2012.

## **7. Governance**

- 7.1 The Strategic Partnership Board for Children, Young People and Families will serve as the Commissioning Board for services to children and young people. Membership includes all partners with a duty to cooperate under the requirements of the Children Act 2004.

- 7.2 In developing the commissioning strategy consideration will be given to service commissioning at a local or locality level based on the three area model Opportunities for devolving resources to support local commissioning through Extended Schools, Children's Centres, Multi-Agency Panels, Locality-Based Services and Budget Holding Lead Professionals will be actively explored.

## **8. Pooled Budgets**

Government guidance in relation to joint commissioning indicates that there is an expectation that children, young people and maternity services will be increasingly commissioned from pooled resources including finances, capital and staff. The Strategic Partnership Board for Children, Young People and Families is committed to exploring the development of an effective pooled budget arrangement. Opportunities available for pooling through the Children and Young People's Block of the Local Area Agreement; Section 31 of the Health Act 1999 and Section 10 of the Children Act 2004 will be actively considered.

## **9. Voluntary and Community Sector**

The strategic engagement of the voluntary and community sector is ensured through the structures of the Strategic Partnership for Children, Young People and Families. There is a commitment to engagement at every level of the Strategic Partnership including the Board, Executive Group, Sub Partnerships and Working Groups. Representatives from the voluntary and community sector supported by colleagues from the statutory sector are currently reviewing issues relating to representation and capacity building. Commitment to supporting capacity building within the VCS has already been demonstrated through the provision of funds to support engagement in the development of the Children and Young People's Plan. The Strategic Partnership for Children, Young People and Families is now committed to supporting VCS organisations in the service redesign and commissioning process.

## **10. Engagement of Children and Young People**

- 10.1 The active participation of all stakeholders, including children and young people, parents and carers will be promoted through the commissioning process. There is an expectation that children and young people should actively participate at an increasing number of decision points. Different levels of engagement are appropriate at the different stages of joint planning and commissioning e.g. needs assessment, contributing to the Children and Young People's Plan, service design, tendering and monitoring services.
- 10.2 A participation strategy is currently being developed to support the coordination of children and young people's engagement. There is much existing good practice in Nottingham on which to build and the Strategic Partnership for Children, Young People and Families has adopted the 'Hear by Right' model as the basis for its approach to the active involvement of children and young people.

## **11. Results Based Accountability – 'Turning the Curve'**

- 11.1 A national toolkit 'Turning the Curve' has been developed based on Mark Friedman's work on Results Based Accountability. The 'Turning the Curve' approach has been developed in a number of local areas and its application has

supported the move from talk to action in children's services and the identification of practical solutions.

11.2 The strength of the toolkit is that it supports an approach at service and community level that enables practitioners, managers and local people to make a direct contribution to better outcomes and a shared responsibility for improvement. It also offers a partnership way of working that helps to move from agreed outcomes and measures to joint commissioning and inter-agency service planning and development.

11.3 The basic ideas behind Results Based Accountability are:-

- Start with ends, work backwards to means. What do we want? How will we recognise it? What will it take to get there?
- Use plain language, not exclusionary jargon.
- Keep accountability for populations separate from accountability for programmes and agencies.
- Use data (indicators and performance measures) to gauge success or failure against a baseline:
  - results or outcomes are end conditions of well-being for populations in a geographic area: children, adults, families and communities. They are the responsibility of partnerships;
  - customer or client results are end conditions of well-being for customers of a programme, agency or service system. They are the responsibility of the managers of the programme or agency.
- Use data to drive a disciplined business-like decision-making process to get better.
- Involve a broad set of partners
- Get from talk to action as quickly as possible.

11.4 It is proposed that the 'Turning the Curve' approach should be adopted to support the commissioning process in Nottingham over the next twelve months and reviewed at the end of that period.

## **12. Value for Money**

12.1 All partners are committed to value for money in children and young people's services. Nottingham City Council's spending on children's services is high, above the 95<sup>th</sup> percentile. This high spend is set against attainment in the 5 Every Child Matters outcomes which are mainly in the bottom quartile.

12.2 There is a commitment to using benchmarking and similar exercises to improve value for money in children's services over the short medium and longer term and to learn from best practice elsewhere. The joint commissioning strategic framework will give strategic focus to securing improved value for money with unintended high spending identified and addressed effectively.