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To: Vulnerable Children and Partnerships Children, Families & Education Policy & Scrutiny Overview Committee

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Subject: Joint Commissioning in Children's Services – Outcomes & Priorities

Classification: Unrestricted

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**Summary:** This paper identifies the national and local context for commissioning; examples of jointly commissioned services in Kent which have improved outcomes for children and young people; and the commissioning priorities for the Commissioning Unit.

*'Commissioning is the process for deciding how to use the total resource available for children, young people, parents and carers in order to improve outcomes in the most efficient, effective, equitable and sustainable way'* (Commissioning Support Programme).

Joint commissioning in Kent is a tool to ensure that children's services are spending public money efficiently and effectively to improve outcomes for children, young people and their families. Joint commissioning is not just about individual service contracts or agreements with a particular provider; it is concerned with the strategic development of services to meet the needs of all children, young people and their families. The joint commissioning process allows partners who have responsibility for planning, securing, monitoring and evaluating services to work together to make joint decisions about the needs of their population and how they should be met.

## Introduction

1. (1) The Coalition Government's vision to change the relationship between the state and society and the cuts anticipated through the Comprehensive Spending Review, will result in fundamental changes to the way Kent County Council and its partners do business. The role of joint planning and commissioning will become more significant than ever before, with the need to ensure local services are efficiently planned, delivered and performance managed and that they offer real value for money.

(2) Emerging policy statements from the Coalition Government underline the need for efficient and innovative approaches to local commissioning:

- The DfE announcement on the reform of Children's Trusts in July 2010 expresses continued support for "effective local partnerships" where these are found to be the most appropriate means of achieving improved outcomes for local children and young people. The statement includes an ambition to see these partnerships "address local issues with innovative solutions."
- The recent White Paper on the NHS, ('Equity and Excellence: Liberating the NHS') outlines a clear role for local authorities in helping to join up the planning and commissioning of local services including the NHS, children's services and safeguarding. The paper also outlines a commitment to "simplify and extend the use of powers that enable joint working between the NHS and local authorities".
- The Government's response to the Health Select Committee Report on Social Care (July 2010) outlines an ambition to see increased use of personalised budgets within social care, giving families much greater control over decision-making about the support they receive.
- The Government's ambitions to increase educational choice through the introduction of new academies and free schools will significantly change the relationship between the LA and schools. Although schools opting to become academies will have freedom to commission their own services, this will need to be balanced against the economies of scale that can be gained from commissioning services over a broader number of schools. The Government has indicated that all learning environments will have greater freedoms and flexibilities which is likely to impact significantly on commissioning.

### **The Local Context:**

2. (1) KCC has stated its intention to respond to the new political and economic context as an "opportunity to fundamentally reshape ourselves to deliver a new council with a new focus and new ways of working that will cost much less than it does now." (*The First Bold Step*, KCC September 2010). A key aspect is to reduce duplication across the business and establish a unified and streamlined approach.

(2) Key priorities within this document and the Medium Term Plan include:

- Putting the citizen in control (including a need to simplify customer access to services and design services that put the customer first).
- Tackling disadvantage
- Growing the economy

(3) Delivering these priorities will require efficient and accurate targeting of resources through rigorous processes of commissioning, de-commissioning, and performance management, both within KCC and with service providers. It will also require a new degree of partnership between KCC, district councils and local

partners to find new ways of responding to local issues with reduced resources and to provide the enhanced local accountability and transparency that is an ambition of both national and local policy. Place-based budgeting will be a key concept within this since it will enable devolving certain commissioning responsibilities for decision-making to local level.

(4) Although there will no longer be a statutory duty for partners to develop a Children & Young People's Plan, it is recognised that there are benefits and efficiencies through shared planning, commissioning and delivery of children and young people's services. A countywide needs assessment has identified the following priorities:

- Emotional and Mental Health
- Healthy start in life
- Safeguarding
- Primary aged children's learning
- Adolescent engagement
- Housing /accommodation
- Family Poverty

(5) Commissioning (which will include de-commissioning, re-negotiation and remodelling of contracts) will be based upon the agreed priorities and will occur at various levels across the Kent Children's Trust:

- Strategic commissioning of countywide services
- Specific joint commissioning plans developed beneath key CYPP priorities e.g. Teenage Pregnancy
- Commissioning plans developed by Local Children's Trust Boards as an expression of how the overarching priorities will be implemented at district level (in line with place based budgeting)

### **Existing Joint Commissioning Processes to Improve Outcomes**

3. (1) There is a significant amount of evidence in Kent of joint planning and commissioning improving outcomes for children and young people and increasing efficiency. The Centre for Excellence and Outcomes has validated or identified as promising practice the case studies in the Appendices attached. <sup>1</sup>

#### **(2) Speech and Language Therapy (SALT) in Dartford**

A need was identified to improve access to SALT in Dartford due to the long waiting times (approximately six months for an assessment and a further nine months for the commencement of therapy) and a lack of home-based support for families. A not-for-profit organisation, Symbol, was commissioned to provide a team of speech and language therapists to work from the local Children's Centres. The improved outcomes include:

- decrease in inappropriate referrals reported by the PCT Speech and Language Service

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<sup>1</sup> (see [www.c4eo.org.uk/themes/general/localpracticeexamples](http://www.c4eo.org.uk/themes/general/localpracticeexamples))

- contribution of SALT interventions to improved foundation stage profiles. The figures below compare the data for 2008-9 with 2007-8:
  - Brent – 27% improvement
  - Darenth – 37% improvement
  - Knockhall – 4.8% improvement
  - Maypole – 24% improvement
  - Oakfield – 30% improvement
  - Swanscombe – 21% improvement
  - Temple Hill – nearly 100% improvement
- significant reduction in waiting time for SALT
- an external evaluation by Semper Visio Ltd reported substantial cost efficiencies in this model.

### (3) Multi-Agency Early Intervention to improve Speech, Language and Communication in Ashford

A needs analysis identified that between 10-12 children per annum living in the Ashford district had severe speech, language and communication needs that would benefit from an intensive specialist approach to enable them to access the Foundation Stage Curriculum. Following the engagement of parents, schools and professionals, a model of early intervention to offer targeted, multi-agency support to young children with severe speech, language and communication needs (Ashford Better Communications Service) was jointly planned and commissioned. The improved outcomes include:

- reported increase in the children's speech, language and communication skills (70% demonstrated a marked increase in understanding of language and 80% in their use of language)
- 92% of the children supported were able to attend their local primary school and make good progress
- increased confidence in participating children to make new friends
- an improved joint approach to assessment and interventions
- only 1 child out of 12 required a statement of SEN
- very high parental satisfaction rate

### (4) The Children & Families Enterprise (CAFÉ) Project

A need was identified to provide a holistic support service for offenders serving community sentences in Kent in order to help reduce re-offending, prevent intergenerational crime and improve outcomes for the children of offenders. The rationale for developing CAFÉ was the Reducing Re-Offending Pathway which highlights the positive role of maintaining a stable family life when seeking to reduce offending. KCC and Kent Probation commissioned the St Giles Trust to develop a service to engage offenders, who have traditionally been reluctant to engage with services, and provide intensive support using a Think Family Approach. The improved outcomes achieved include:

- 2009/10 – there were 137 referrals (involving 181 children) and a 96% rate of engagement
- improved the ability of families to maintain or obtain stable accommodation

- Accommodation found – 19%
- Accommodation saves – 54%
- 40% of families referred accessed employment, education or training
- 90% of clients remained free of offending behaviour
- external evaluation by the University of Kent stated that the service should be mainstreamed as it clearly reduces the risk and cost of future demands on public services
- positive feedback from clients
- cost benefits of reduction in direct costs to probation, the prison service, unemployment benefits and housing costs (due to cost of eviction or homelessness)

## Next Steps

4. (1) The Commissioning and Partnership Group within CFE Unit has identified the following key priorities for the next six months:

Ensure that commissioning standards are used at a local and county level for children's services:

- develop and implement clear governance for commissioning through a joint commissioning framework with standards and processes
- develop operational guidance to support excellence in commissioning
- build expertise of commissioning across children's services through training and support to ensure compliance with commissioning standards
- support the development of Bold Steps through developing new ways to plan services to maximise impact through place-based budgeting, budget pooling etc.
- link closely with County Procurement

(2) Review contracts and resources across KCC commissioned services for children and young people initially focusing on:

- identify and implement early cash savings for quick wins (3-6 months)
- medium and long term sustainable efficiency savings planned (e.g. Connexions, large contracts, removing duplication at local level) including decommissioning high cost and low impact services

(3) Improve commissioning and procurement mechanisms across children's services to make longer term efficiencies, reduce duplication and improve outcomes e.g. reducing costs through stopping spot-purchasing of foster care placements in the independent sector (research has shown that other LAs have made 10-20% savings)

## Recommendations

5. Members of the Vulnerable Children and Partnerships Children, Families and Education Policy Overview and Scrutiny Committee are asked to

- (i) note the examples of jointly commissioned services in Kent
- (ii) agree the next steps for the commissioning unit for the next six months

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