

From: Thom Wilson, Head of Strategic Commissioning - Children

To: Select Committee – Commissioning and Procurement -
30th January 2014

Subject: **Children's Commissioning**

Classification: Unrestricted

1. Background:

The new Commissioning Structure in Families and Social Care was established in October 2012 with three teams: Children's commissioning, Adult Community Support and Adult Accommodation Solutions.

This report covers the commissioning function for Children's Services. This covers commissioning and strategic support to Strategic Children's Services and includes fostering and residential services, services for disabled children, early help and prevention, Children's Centres and Access to Resources. From April this year there will be a new Prevention Division providing early help, early intervention and prevention services. The children's strategic commissioning unit will provide commissioning support to this Division.

There has been a significant amount of progress within children's commissioning over the past 2-3 years. In this time the commissioning unit has established robust arrangements to understand the services being provided and clear protocols for procuring and monitoring services. There has also been a considerable investment in raising the level of commissioning skills through accredited training delivered by IPC.

Since September 2013 the role of Head of Service has also included responsibilities for Children's Transformation, with a specific lead on social care transformation and the "0-11" transformation programme. These are being managed alongside commissioning.

2. Current position:

Services & Spend

- Approximately £175m is spent on Specialist Children's Services
- Of this £40-45m is spent with external providers. Therefore unlike in adult services only 25% of the spend is with the external market
- We currently spend £9m on Independent Foster Care Agencies (IFAs) and £10m on residential placements. However the majority of foster placements (approximately 80%) are with the In-House fostering service
- A framework for IFAs has been in place since June. In this time 119 children have been found foster placements with 33 separate organisations
- Other commissioned services and grants account for £20m, covering care leavers, children with disabilities, early intervention and children's centres

Key Challenges

Having improved commissioning processes and practice in recent years, the critical challenge facing children's services is to improve the **impact on outcomes** and **value for money** of the services that we commission.

There is an acute need to manage spend within children's services, whilst at the same time ensuring we are keeping all children safe, and preventing problems that will preclude children from developing and achieving their potential.

In delivering this we need to:

- Focus our efforts on the key priorities of the council to ensure that the services we commission impact on our most important outcomes;
- Continue to improve as commissioners – becoming more sophisticated in our understanding of social value and the market place;
- Focus on integration both within KCC and with our partners. We need to understand and develop “customer pathways” and align our services so that they contribute;
- Engage more with service providers and service users, as partners to improve our understanding and effectiveness;
- Embed transformation within commissioning, understanding opportunities for system changes, rather than focusing on services and their impacts in isolation
- Support the voluntary sector away from grant funding to more transparent and outcome focused contractual arrangements.

3. Key Commissioning and Procurement Activity:

The following are key commissioning and transformational activities that have recently taken place and are embedded, are underway, or are planned:

Independent Foster Agency Framework – an exercise was undertaken to establish a framework arrangement that enables us to source high quality, cost effective foster placements for vulnerable children. We are continuing to work to gain the benefits of this.

Children's Centre Market Review – following the recent review of centres we are about to undertake a market review to establish whether the council is the best provider of centres in the long-term, or whether an independent sector provider would be better placed.

Early Help Reviews – in line with the establishment of the Prevention Division we are undertaking reviews of all services designed to support children and families without the need for a statutory intervention. We are currently planning a provider engagement event to discuss the role that they can play in this.

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Families and Social Care
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