Appendix A: How the SCA process was undertaken

1. Assumptions applied throughout the process

1.1. Disaggregation is the legal default of LGR - The assessments were undertaken on the basis that disaggregation is the legal default position where multiple unitaries are being formed, with alternative arrangements such as shared services being exceptions ultimately subject to agreement by future shadow authorities. The process therefore started from a default disaggregation position and identified whether structural barriers existed for each service that mean default disaggregation cannot apply. Where disaggregation was assessed as achievable but likely to carry consequences for cost, efficiency, staffing or service delivery, these were recorded as implementation risks and trade-offs to be quantified and managed through the joint programme, rather than treated as structural barriers. The indicative pathways identified do not preclude future decisions regarding shared services, contracts, assets or other collaborative arrangements that partners might later agree.

1.2. Safe and legal service delivery is the primary consideration - Maintaining safe and legal service delivery remained the overriding consideration throughout the assessment process. Poorly managed transition arrangements could create risks relating to accountability, safeguarding and statutory compliance. In some circumstances, phased implementation, temporary shared arrangements or other transitional measures may be required to support continuity of service. The individual assessments are a starting point to identify where such measures are likely to be needed.

1.3. Services may not be delivered in their current form in future - The assessments were based on current service arrangements, taking account of known transformation activity and legislative change where possible. They did not seek to predict future service design, operating models or implementation decisions. The findings should therefore be interpreted as reflecting the complexity of transitioning existing services rather than assumptions about how services may ultimately be configured.

1.4. Service delivery risk is not the same as disaggregation complexity - The assessments focused on disaggregation complexity rather than the overall risk profile of a service. Although service delivery risks may contribute to complexity, the two concepts are not synonymous. Some services may therefore be capable of disaggregation while still requiring significant implementation planning because of their statutory responsibilities, scale, risk profile or operational complexity.

2. The Service Complexity Assessment process

2.1. The programme was undertaken over an eight-week period by the Strategy and Policy Team, supported by a small team from PwC commissioned as an external partner at a cost of £440,000 to provide the additional capacity needed to complete the process within the required timescales. Three pilot assessments were completed to refine the methodology before the main programme commenced. The process comprised three stages.

2.2. Information collection: The list of services in scope was agreed with Directorate Management Teams, who also identified 128 individual Service Leads to provide the required information. Over 170 standardised Request for Information (RFI) forms were completed, supported by more than 200 hours of meetings and correspondence. Information was collected across seven themes: demand, delivery model, budget, staffing, assets and systems, legislative basis, and the Service Lead's professional commentary on the main risks and opportunities of potentially disaggregating the service. The process generated an evidence base of more than 2,000 pages, or approximately 900,000 words. The quality and completeness of the information provided made an important contribution to the robustness of the assessments.

2.3. Analysis and assessment: Information collected through the RFIs was analysed and synthesised into 167 Scorecards. In a small number of cases where appropriate, RFIs covering closely connected services were combined to produce a single Scorecard. All figures in this report are calculated against those 167 completed assessments. Each Scorecard summarised the information provided under each theme and gave an objective assessment of the level of complexity through written commentary, with a RAG rating assigned as a rough visual indicator. The assessment was enhanced through analysis of quantitative demand data where available, analysis of corporately held information relating to systems, buildings and contracts, and separate discussions with commissioning leads. Extensive moderation within the SCA team was undertaken throughout to ensure complexity was assessed as consistently as possible across services.

2.4. The factors affecting each service varied considerably, so criteria for assessing complexity were applied flexibly. Across the services assessed, complexity was most commonly associated with legislative or geographical requirements; specialist workforce requirements; emergency, crisis or out-of-hours functions; highly uneven specialist demand; specialist assets that are difficult to replicate; multi-agency safeguarding arrangements; pooled or ringfenced funding; and complex contracts and framework agreements.

2.5. A final section of each Scorecard summarised the reasons for high complexity, flagged potential risks, trade-offs and opportunities, identified interdependencies requiring mapping in future planning, and set out the key questions that need to be understood about the service in the short, medium and long term to support implementation. It also recorded whether the service follows the disaggregation by default principle or, alternatively, set out the structural barrier identified and suggested an indicative alternative pathway for discussion.

2.6. Reporting and checking: To support reporting and wider discussion, a one-page summary was produced for each service, condensing the Scorecard into a single format covering service scope, complexity rating, indicative pathway and rationale, key internal and external interdependencies, principal complexity drivers and risks, and key actions and next steps. These are appended at Appendix B. The completed Scorecards and one-page summaries were shared with KCC’s Extended Corporate Management Team, alongside a comparative spreadsheet supporting filtering and comparison across all assessed services. Directors and relevant senior officers were invited to review the outputs and identify any factual inaccuracies or omissions that could have materially affected the findings, and any corrections identified have been incorporated into the final outputs.