

Childrens Services Commissioning Liaison Spring Report

Report of Chief Officer Children's Services

Please note that the following recommendations are subject to consideration and determination by the Cabinet (and confirmation under the provisions of the Council's Constitution) before taking effect.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Commissioning Liaison Members have met Officers over the last year to review current and future childrens services commissioning activity. This is in line with the recommendations of the 2016 'Scrutiny in a Commissioning Council' Scrutiny Task Group. Members have been provided a forward plan of commissioning activity for the year ahead twice yearly since Spring 2017.
- 1.2 Additional workshop sessions have been undertaken in September 2017 and February 2018 to scope the role of Commissioning liaison across the Council and to consider the role of Members in oversight of commissioning.
- 1.3 This has led to agreement of the principles on how commissioning activity will be reviewed. For example;
 - 1.3.1 the opportunities for scrutiny will be greater when there is need for service redesign through changing need or issues with the current delivery model/service, than when a service which currently works well is being recommissioned
 - 1.3.2 Scrutiny involvement in commissioning at the earliest stage will allow Members to help shape delivery models, services and outcomes
 - 1.3.3 Scrutiny have a key role in bringing the voice of the service user to commissioning
- 1.4 The Commissioning Liaison group agreed the Protocol at Appendix A. In reviewing this recently it is proposed that a Commissioning Liaison briefing is made to Scrutiny twice a year in the Spring and Autumn. Allowing opportunity in the Spring to signal progress on tenders and expected contract award dates and in the Autumn to outline opportunities for pre-procurement activity ready for the following financial year.

2. Commissioning Plan

- 2.1 The focus over the last period has been on the Community Health and Care Contract and pre-procurement preparations. Commissioning Liaison briefings have been offered to all Scrutiny Members during the Autumn 2017 and Winter 2018. These have considered the changes in commissioning for Public Health Nursing, ROVICs, Portage and Residential Short Breaks as well as the commissioning of childrens centres and concerns regarding the sufficiency of placements.

- 2.2 A report from the HoS Childrens Social Care report to Scrutiny in March 18 detailed our progress on services for care leavers. Detailed work with District Councils has also been undertaken in homelessness with a new protocol in place in response to changes in Homelessness Duties. This will be reported to Scrutiny in September 2018. Both pieces of work have informed the re-commissioning of the Homeless Prevention Contract for 16/17 year olds which provides supported accommodation and floating support. The previous contract was extended; the tender is underway with contract award September 2018. Due to the current contract expiry and tender timeline a late summer Commissioning Liaison Members briefing is recommended.
- 2.3 Looking ahead to 2018 the following commissioning activity is planned:
- 2.3.1 Securing sustainable delivery and choice in short breaks services for disabled children including residential, family and community based.
- 2.3.2 Continued work to improve the sufficiency and quality of placements for children in care and care leavers
- 2.3.4 Preparation's for the Regional Adoption Agency hosting with Devon and the development of a commissioning plan.

3. Disabled Children: Short Breaks

- 3.1 In our paper to Scrutiny January 18 on Services for Disabled Children the future direction of travel was set out. This highlighted that families and children are choosing residential short breaks less and less and looking for choice in more flexible community based packages. We are ensuring that continuity of care is prioritised where appropriate and that there are a range of services that can meet the different needs of children.
- 3.2 Cabinet decision in October 2017 resolved 'the undertaking of an options appraisal for the provision of the Residential Short Breaks from April 2019 onwards' referring to the residential short breaks services within the ICS Contract currently delivered by Virgin Care. The impact assessment and options appraisal attached to this report sets out the considerations. It is recommended that this is a re-commissioning of a single contract to offer residential short breaks from the four homes currently delivered by Virgin Care. The key considerations in the planning for this future contract have been:
- ensuring continuity of care for children currently receiving this service
 - maximising the use of excellent resources of the four homes which has received significant capital investment and are purpose built for the needs of the children
 - demand for residential short breaks has reduced therefore building flexibility of delivery into the contract so that providers can offer a range of services from these local bases to meet the needs of the local population of disabled children.
- 3.4 In addition a review of the delivery of community and family based short breaks is underway with a plan to implement a community based short breaks framework contract during 2018/2019 and re-commission family based short breaks during 2019 for award 2020. This will increase capacity to meet the needs of children in their communities and at home. The strategic aim here (SEND Strategy 2017-20) is to further increase the choice and control families and children have in the support children receive. Engagement of Members alongside the engagement of parents and children in the design of these services during the summer and autumn 2018 will support the championing of disabled children in the commissioning re-design.

4. Sufficiency: Placements for Children in Care

4.1 The paper to Scrutiny in March 18 set out the crisis in sufficiency. The work falls into three strategies:

- Manage the market more effectively
- Construct an alternative to care for teenagers
- Open some in-house capacity with wrap around provision

4.2 The market strategy is to increase choice and availability. The following two tenders will update our existing approved supplier list.

Re-tender of the 16 plus framework contract. This is the provision of accommodation and support for young people aged 16 and above who are children in care and care leavers. These services are unregulated by Ofsted. This has previously been a Peninsula contract for the last five years.

Re-tender of the Residential Childrens Home framework contract. This is the provision of regulated Childrens Homes. This is a continuation of the collaboration between Devon, Plymouth, Torbay and Somerset under Peninsula arrangements.

4.3 As part of the tenders, bidders are put through a selection questionnaire and quality evaluation process. A quality threshold must be achieved to be successful. The tenders will also evaluate prices however as a framework contract the Council are not guaranteeing any level of spend with any one provider.

4.4 In addition, as per the report to Scrutiny, we are taking forward plans to secure residential beds in Devon for exclusive use. This includes a business case for the development of in-house capacity. In addition to the increased capacity of an in-house solution we are also seeking to secure some of the existing residential children's home placements for exclusive use by Devon. We reported the impact on residential beds in Devon being shared with neighbouring authorities.

4.5 It is proposed that through a commissioning liaison meeting Members can review the commissioning approach for the three opportunities above at this pre-procurement stage and be provided with a further paper in September prior to recommendations to Cabinet for contract award in November.

5. Regional Adoption Agency (RAA)

5.1 The paper to Scrutiny in March 18, prior to the Cabinet decision April 18, set out the proposal to establish a Regional Adoption Agency. As part of this a collaborative commissioning plan will be established. The first piece of commissioning activity is to secure a framework contract for multiple low value spend within the Adoption Support Fund (ASF). These are support services for children who are adopted who can receive a range of services to support their emotional wellbeing needs. This is a collaboration between the authorities who will be part of the Regional Adoption Agency (RAA); Somerset, Plymouth and Torbay. Contract award will be in Autumn 18.

5.2 The RAA Commissioning Plan could be overviewed within the Commissioning Liaison Childrens Services Autumn briefing and through Commissioning Liaison meetings opportunities for Member oversight of that plan during June and July. In addition, an RAA paper is scheduled for Scrutiny April 19.

6. Recommendations:

- 6.1 Commissioning Liaison briefings are made to Scrutiny twice a year in the Spring and Autumn.
- 6.2 The schedule of Commissioning Liaison Member briefings as per the report are agreed.
- 6.3 Scrutiny consider the Impact Assessment and Options Appraisal for the Tender of Residential Short Breaks

Electoral Divisions: All

Cabinet Member for Children, Schools and Skills: Councillor James McInnes

Chief Officer for Childrens Services: Jo Olsson

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972: LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

Contact for Enquiries: Fiona Fleming Head of Commissioning

BACKGROUND PAPER DATE FILE REFERENCE

Impact Assessment Residential Short Breaks

Commissioning Liaison Member Protocol

Summer 2017

This is a guidance document prepared by the scrutiny team to support the effective working of the nominated Commissioning Liaison Member/s from each scrutiny committee. The role was established following a recommendation made by the 'Scrutiny in a Commissioning Council' Task Group 2016. The full report and recommendations can be viewed [here](#).

Purpose:

The task group felt that nominating a member from each committee to develop positive relationships with Cabinet Members and Lead Officers to find out about commissioning activity would strengthen the effectiveness of scrutiny. The Commissioning Liaison Member will undertake to:

1. Understand the Council's commissioning processes and priorities;
2. Act as a link between Cabinet and the Scrutiny Committee and bring to the attention of the Scrutiny Chair and Committee:
 - significant commissioning activity
 - performance or service delivery issues relating to services commissioned through external providers
3. Support the Scrutiny Committee to examine the commissioning of services within the wider context of the Council's strategic vision and purpose

This does not affect the legal duties around commissioning and provider relations particularly in relation to health scrutiny.

Approach:

To carry out this role in the most effective way the Commissioning Liaison Members from each committee have agreed to meet as a group on a regular basis to:

1. Receive commissioning training
2. Ensure a consistent approach is taken to the Scrutiny of commissioning
3. Champion the approach to Scrutiny's involvement in commissioning across the Council and Health

The group will also use receive details of forthcoming commissioning activity and individually take this back to each scrutiny committee to report at the work programme with suggestions about how the committee might be involved in commissioning activity.

Review and development

It is proposed that the effectiveness of this role could be reviewed in line with the task group recommendation after six months of operation.

In future there may be the opportunity to undertake specific scrutiny investigations relating to commissioning as directed by each relevant scrutiny committee.