

# Children & Family Services

Commissioning Statement  
2021 – 2024



# 1. Introduction

Leicestershire County Council continues to face significant challenges, including demographic, service demand and financial - as reported in the Council's latest Medium Term Financial Strategy 2021 (MTFS – see: <https://www.leicestershire.gov.uk/sites/default/files/field/pdf/2021/8/2/Medium-Term-Financial-Strategy-2021.pdf>). In addition, the full social and financial impact of the Covid-19 pandemic remains unclear but is likely to impact on future service demand and delivery. To help meet these challenges it is vital that effective commissioning, procurement, performance and contract management continues to be developed and introduced across the Council.

Accordingly, and to ensure a robust and consistent approach is for commissioning activity across the Council, a corporate Commissioning and Procurement Strategy was introduced during 2014/15 and subsequently reviewed for the period 2018-20. At the same time, a Corporate Commissioning Toolkit was introduced, providing a blueprint for commissioning practice across the Council. The Corporate position, reflecting widely recognised definitions, is that “Commissioning” is the process for deciding how we will leverage the total resources available to make the biggest possible impact on outcomes in the most effective, efficient and sustainable way.

Sitting beneath from these Corporate documents, each of the Council's departments have introduced and updated their own departmental commissioning strategies or statements of intent. These set out where departments would focus the available funding and how resources will be used to deliver services to residents of Leicestershire in the most effective way.

**At it's heart, this statement sets our intentions for improving the life chances of children, young people and their families and carers in Leicestershire through commissioning activity This is consistent with the Children and Families Service's departmental vision that:**



Leicestershire is the Best Place for all  
Children, Young People and their Families



This Children and Family Services Commissioning Statement, 2021-23 represents a refresh of our earlier Children and Family Services Commissioning Strategy, 2018-20. It reflects current strategic and operational priorities facing the department and sets out key delivery actions (see Appendix A) which will form the basis of the way in which we will develop, refine and embedded the department's commissioning approach over the next three years. This Commissioning Statement is also informed by and supports the delivery of a range of other Children and Family Services Strategic Plans as well as other Corporate strategies and plans including the Leicestershire County Council Strategic Plan, the Children and Families Partnership Plan, the Corporate Transformation programme, Financial Plans and our Communities Strategy. It is also aligned to the Defining Children and Family Services for the Future programme and the department's aspiration to become a Trauma-Informed organisation.



Within this wider strategic context, integrated and Joint Commissioning Opportunities has been and continues to be a major focus for Commissioning for Children and Family Services over the next 2 years to ensure maximum efficiencies to the public purse and to offer improved integrated service pathways for children and families. This will mean that we will continue to identify ways in which we can collaborate closely with health partners and neighbouring Local Authority colleagues. In some cases, this will mean the development of specific, themed Joint Commissioning Strategies will be developed. An example of this is the recent Joint Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland (LLR) SEND Commissioning Strategy, which is being implemented from 2021.

Our approach to commissioning has also been informed by the Defining Children and Family Services for the Future programme. Within this programme, the department has been supported to review its approach to working with the external market around placements for Looked After Children (LAC) – both in terms of the way we work with external providers to ensure sufficiency where we need to make placements with the external market but all the process leading up to and around the brokerage of placements. As a result the Children and Family Services Commissioning Service is regularly providing key performance information to support the placements process and to help identify further improvements to process or relationships with the market to ensure sufficiency and that we are making the right placements at the right time. These developments are detailed in the Childrens Social Care – Placement Sufficiency Statement and Market Position Statement, 2021-23

(see: [https://www.proceduresonline.com/llr/childcare/leicestershire/user\\_controlled\\_lcms\\_area/uploaded\\_files/CFS%20Placements%20Market%20Position%20%20Sufficiency%20Statement%20October%202021.pdf](https://www.proceduresonline.com/llr/childcare/leicestershire/user_controlled_lcms_area/uploaded_files/CFS%20Placements%20Market%20Position%20%20Sufficiency%20Statement%20October%202021.pdf) ).

## 2. Corporate Commissioning & Procurement Principles

In 2014, a Corporate framework for commissioning was developed, followed by introduction of a Corporate Commissioning toolkit. This framework created a 'blueprint' for the broad commissioning approach across Leicestershire County Council and, other with the toolkit, outlined the key stages and components required for effective commissioning. This included: an evidence-based needs analysis to understand service user requirements, establishing clear outcomes and priorities that we are seeking to achieve, using these outcomes to develop clear commissioning strategies and then putting clear intentions and plans in place.

Having a diverse set of suppliers to be able to deliver these outcomes at the right quality and cost is an essential part of the commissioning and procurement strategy. Commissioning will continue to challenge the nature of how services are delivered and stimulate and develop markets where there are capability gaps or capacity is limited.



Although the Corporate Commissioning Strategy has not been updated beyond 2020, the Corporate Commissioning toolkit continues to set out our key commissioning principles. These principles apply to all commissioning activity across the council and are a reference point for how LCC commission services:

Commissioning Principle	Key Action
Make decisions based on evidence	Increase corporate responsibility for data and Business Intelligence (BI), and its role within developing an evidence-based culture, supported at a corporate level to provide the professional expertise to the whole organisation
Understand and challenge needs and manage demand	Take a joined-up approach to commissioning through establishment of commissioning outcomes groups. This will bring commissioners across the council and the wider public sector together with suppliers to explore joined up creative solutions.
Take an outcomes based approach to commissioning;	Working with our partners, we will define the outcomes to be achieved in our corporate service plans and commissioning strategies and demonstrate our progress in meeting these outcomes.
Challenge and review service delivery (make, shift, buy, share, stop)	Challenge the status quo, investigate and robustly interrogate how we can best manage demand and leverage the capabilities of alternative delivery models.
Use an enhanced commercial approach	Instil a culture of commerciality amongst our staff through training and re-structure our commissioning support to form an internal Centre of Excellence to make the most of our resources.
Collaboration	Implementing a “whole area” approach to public services e.g. Community Based Budgets – joining up with Clinical Commissioning Groups, Police Force, Fire Service, Universities and District or Borough Councils, etc. in our communities to undertake demand analysis and develop category specific plans.
Innovation in Performance management	Develop a robust authority wide framework for supplier and performance management that sets out a standard approach and toolkit for monitoring, reporting and incentivising internal and external supplier performance and achievement of outcomes over the life of a contract.
Enhance Sustainability	Through continued use and development of tools such as our environmental implications tool, we will use our commissioning and procurement activity as an opportunity to maximise the positive outcomes and minimise negative impacts for environmental, economic and social sustainability.

In November 2020, and in response to concerns and issues arising from the Covid-19 pandemic, Leicestershire County Council introduced new Corporate Spending Control guidance. This guidance reflects the rapid and severe impact on our finances caused by the 'Covid Crisis', causing income to drop sharply while unavoidable costs have increased. While government has provided significant support, it is not enough and leaves a financial challenge more difficult than at any time during austerity.

**Within the guidance are a series of spending controls, focussing on:**

- Human Resources
- Procurement Controls
- External Expenditure
- Project Approval, and
- Grant Controls

The spending controls round Procurement and External Expenditure continue to be in place and are relevant to commissioning activity within the Children and Family Services department. Accordingly, we have aligned our internal governance for all commissioning activity and brokerage processes to these controls. These will continue to be reviewed to ensure compliance with the Corporate Spending Control guidance.

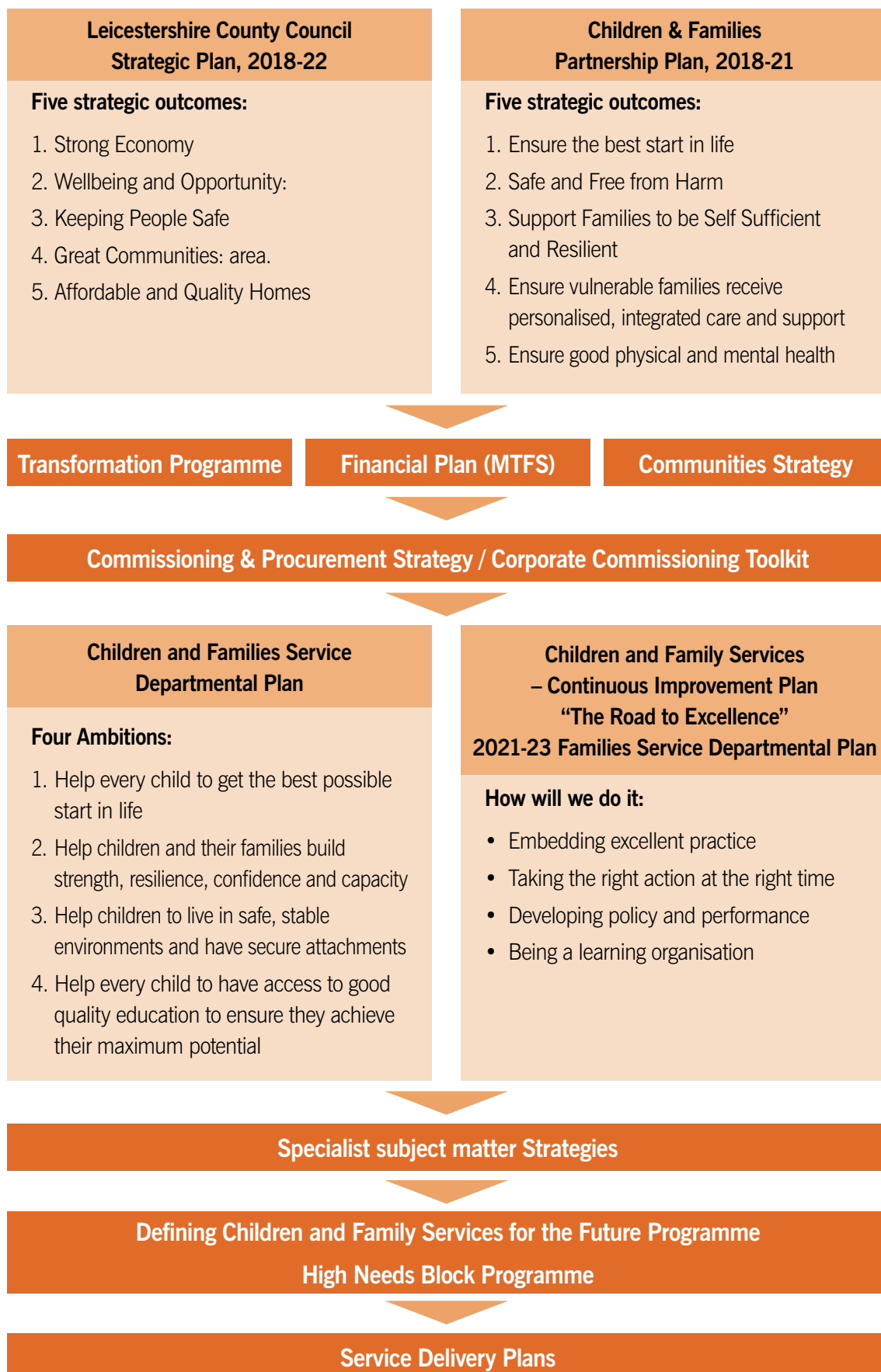


Children and Family services are committed to ensuring all Commissioning activity in the department adheres to the principles set out by Corporate policy and guidance – ensuring compliance with National Public Contract Regulations and local commissioning and spending controls to ensure best quality and value to improve outcomes for children and families in Leicestershire. We will also ensure that all commissioning activity considers fully Equality and Diversity, ensuring that all, of our services consider the needs of hard-to-reach groups and those with a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010.



# 3. Commissioning & Strategic Plans

The CFS Commissioning Strategy sits within a Planning and Performance Framework that includes:



As well as the high level corporate plans and strategies there are a number of specialist plans and strategies that direct priorities and activities, which increasing support joint and integrated commissioning arrangements across Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland and cover a range of health, social care and education partners:

**These include:**

- SEND and Inclusion Strategy 2020 – 2024
- Whole Life Disability Strategy
- SEND Joint Strategic Needs Assessment
- Foster Care Recruitment and Retention Strategy 2017 - 2021
- Permanence and Adoption Strategy 2018 – 2021
- Corporate Parenting Strategy 2019 - 2022
- EET Strategy
- Edge of Care Strategy
- Joint LLR SEND Commissioning Strategy, 2021-24
- Childrens Social Care – Placement Sufficiency Statement and Market Position Statement, 2021-23





## 4. Children and Family Services Commissioning Service

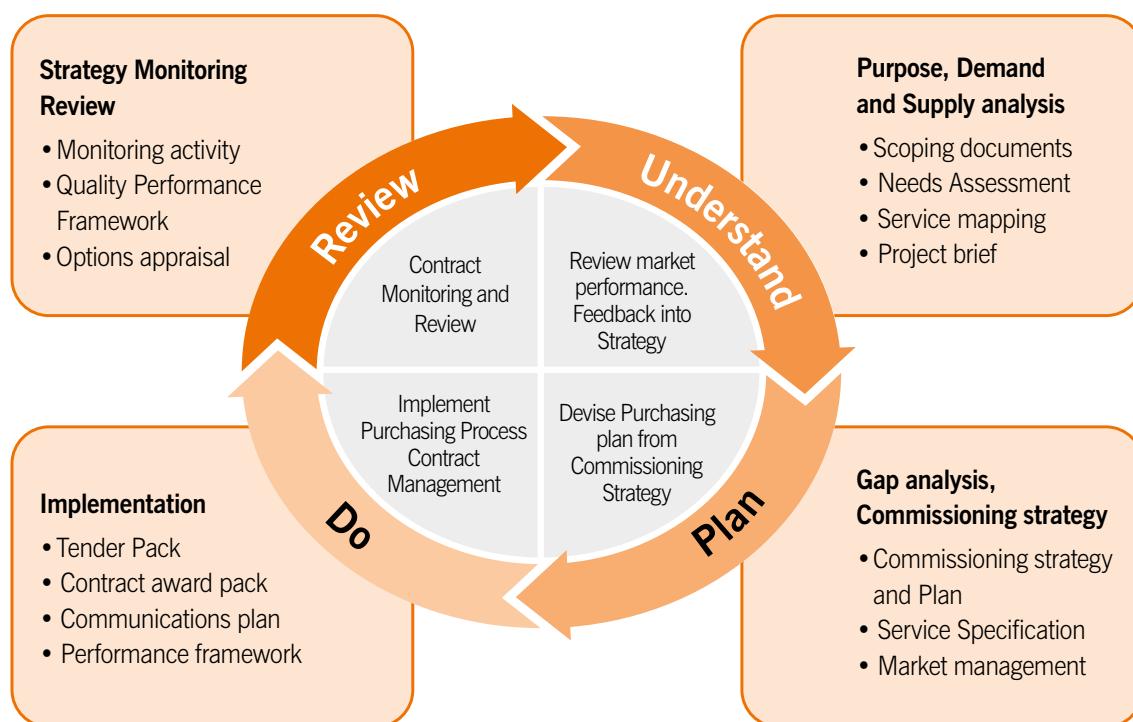
The CFS Commissioning Service will manage and coordinate all commissioning activities in partnership with the relevant Operational Head of Service to ensure compliance and consistency of approach. The Commissioning Service will be supported by the Corporate Commissioning Support Unit (CSU) to ensure that commercial advice and procurement processes are compliant and consistent within Leicestershire County Council Contract Procedure Rules.

Commissioning activity within the department will also take account of national and local guidance regarding recovery from the Covid Crisis. It will also be informed by activity and improvement cycles coming out of the ‘Defining Children’s Services for the Future’ programme and the High Needs Block Programme Board. Both of these -programmes of work are on-going at the time.

### All Commissioning activity will seek to develop and deliver:

- Innovation
- Best Value and Quality
- Improved outcomes for Families and Young People
- Ensure all commissioning activity appropriately considers Equality and Diversity
- Robust Performance Management
- Market Engagement – supporting the external market to meet local need and demand

The diagram below illustrates how we utilise commissioning to deliver outcomes



In July 2020, the Children and Family Services Commissioning Service was restructured to ensure alignment with the commissioning cycle and to improve the efficiency of deliver of these outcomes.

## Gateway 2 Resources (G2R)

In February 2020 the department moved to use of a Dynamic Purchasing System (DPS) for the delivery of fostering and residential placements for Looked After Children (LAC) with the external market. The DPS, known as Gateway 2 Resources (G2R) was developed in collaboration with the market, with the co-design of the delivery model and procurement documentation undertaken alongside residential providers and Independent Fostering Agencies (IFA). Delivery of the DPS is under-pinned by regular collaboration with the market to share information, good practice and discuss market development and/or improvements required by all parties. This innovate approach to commissioning has been developed further with the setting up of a further DPS for the delivery of 16+ Support Accommodation and we are considering other uses for DPS' such as centralising our external training requirements and as a local procurement solution for the commissioning of SEND School placements with Independent Specialist Provisions (ISPs)

## CFS Commissioning Intentions (CI)

- CI1** - To continue to identify integrated and joint commissioning opportunities
  - CI2** - Support the department to become a Trauma-Informed Organisation
  - CI3** - To reduce the number of LAC and the use of long-term residential placements
  - CI4** - To ensure a robust process in place for the commissioning and monitoring of placements with Independents Specialist Provision (ISPs) and Alternative Provision (AP)
  - CI5** - To ensure the voice of the child is captured in commissioning activity
  - CI6** – To ensure that Equality and Diversity is considered in commissioning activity
  - CI7** – To support and develop the external market, particularly its recovery (if required) following the Covid-19 Crisis
  - CI8** – To continue to review commissioning practice within the department to sure innovation and value for money
- Appendix 1:** Commissioning intentions Action Plan 2018 – 2019 outlines the activities that will be undertaken to achieve these priorities



## 5. Market Engagement

Children and Families Services are fully committed to engaging with the Market and developing positive Market relationship.

**Throughout all Commissioning Processes the following may be applied:**

- Market test
- Strategic Provider events to share LCC vision
- Subject matter provider events
- Pre procurement provider events
- Post procurement provider events
- Annual engagement sessions with Framework Providers

The current landscape for Placement provision for Looked after Children is very challenging and this has been a particular focus for work that the department and partners from Newton Europe as part of the Defining Children and Family Services for the Future programme. Some of the findings and outputs from that programme have helped the department to refine its approach to residential and fostering placements for Looked After Children (LAC), with a focus on ensuring that the right placement is made at the right time, reducing the time children and young people are spending in residential care, and ensuring that we increase and maximise our own internal fostering and residential provision.

It is recognised through this Commissioning Statement that the department needs to engage with the market and share the intelligence about the local population.

Additional information relevant to the market can also be found in the Children and Family Services Market Position and Sufficiency Statement, 2021-23:

[https://www.proceduresonline.com/llr/childcare/leicestershire/user\\_controlled\\_lcms\\_area/uploaded\\_files/CFS%20Placements%20Market%20Position%20%20Sufficiency%20Statement%20October%202021.pdf](https://www.proceduresonline.com/llr/childcare/leicestershire/user_controlled_lcms_area/uploaded_files/CFS%20Placements%20Market%20Position%20%20Sufficiency%20Statement%20October%202021.pdf)

# 6. Contract Management & Performance

## Contract & Performance Management

Following all procurement processes third party providers will be issued with a contract and a list of key performance indicators (KPI's). However, the KPI's for those providers who are part of G2R will be issued following collaboration between LCC and the providers.

We will seek to ensure that all contracts with third party providers will have a minimum of an annual contract review meeting. The frequency will be determined based on the contract status (high risk, high value, business critical and volume of use)

The Commissioning Service will manage and coordinate this work on behalf of the Operational Head of Service who will attend review meetings and have overall budget responsibility and strategic oversight.

### **The contract review meeting will be an opportunity to:**

- Discuss outcomes being achieved for Children and Young People
- Develop market relationships
- Share best practise
- Address any performance issues
- Review any outstanding action from the QA visit
- Review fee structures and discuss opportunities for ensuring value for money
- Discuss any contract variations
- Analyse demand and need
- Discuss how the provider ensures that there is Equality and Diversity within their organisation.

All contracts will be issued with a list of KPI's the Provider will report on quarterly. These KPI's will provide the intelligence for future Commissioning Activity and will focus on outcome measures for the service user.

Performance issues will be addressed at any time within the Contract Management framework and where appropriate Providers will be put on a service Improvement Plan which will be closely monitored to ensure poor performance is addressed or appropriate steps are taken to terminate the contract.



## Quality Assurance (QA)

It is our aspiration to ensure that providers of all external placements for Looked after Children and Independent School Provision receive a minimum of 1 Quality Assurance visit per year.

**Outlined broadly, the process and approach for quality assurance is as follows:**

- Non DPS and all New Providers prior to YP being placed when possible or within 7 days of Placement commencement (references from other LA's will be sought pre placement commencement)
- DPS providers will be visited annually and reviewed using a standard quality assurance form
- Provisions that are judged by regulatory bodies such as Ofsted as 'Requires improvement' or inadequate will be visited prior to Placement Commencement where possible and again in 6 months if the provider has not had a follow up assurance visit from Ofsted. When a placement is offered which is requires improvement or inadequate, efforts will be made to not use the placement, however if this is the only option the placing social worker and their manager will be sent the Ofsted report and will make a decision re the placement going ahead. The Senior Quality Assurance officer will also contact other placing authorities to obtain feedback
- Provisions where a concerns or complaints is raised will be contacted and the issues discussed; other stakeholders will be contacted to understand the concerns or complaint fully. Depending on the level of concern, the provision will be visited within 7 days.

Quality Assurance reports will be completed and reviewed within 14 days of the visit and shared with the child's Social Worker and the Provider.

# 7. Commissioning Governance

The process for Commissioning Governance has been aligned to the requirements set out in the Corporate Commissioning Toolkit and are compliant with Corporate Spending Control guidance. It is as follows:

- Monthly reports to DMT highlighting
  - New Commissioning Activity
  - Commissioning Activity for High Value, High Risk and/or Business
  - Critical Contracts
  - Exceptions
  - Financial Implications
  - People Implications
  - Equalities Issues / Implications
  - Safeguarding Issues / Implications
  - Environmental Issues / Implications
  - Information Management Implications
  - ICT Implications
- Quarterly meetings with Assistant Directors to review all commissioning activity
- Monthly meeting with Commercial Specialist in the CSU
- Meetings as required with Senior Managers in the CSU
- Reports to CMT/Council Cabinet as required

In addition, Procurement Initiation Documents (PID) will be completed for all new commissioning activity and signed off by the Commissioning Support Unit (CSU).



# 8. Integrated Commissioning

Local Authorities and partner commissioning bodies must make integrated commissioning arrangements for the education, health and care provision.

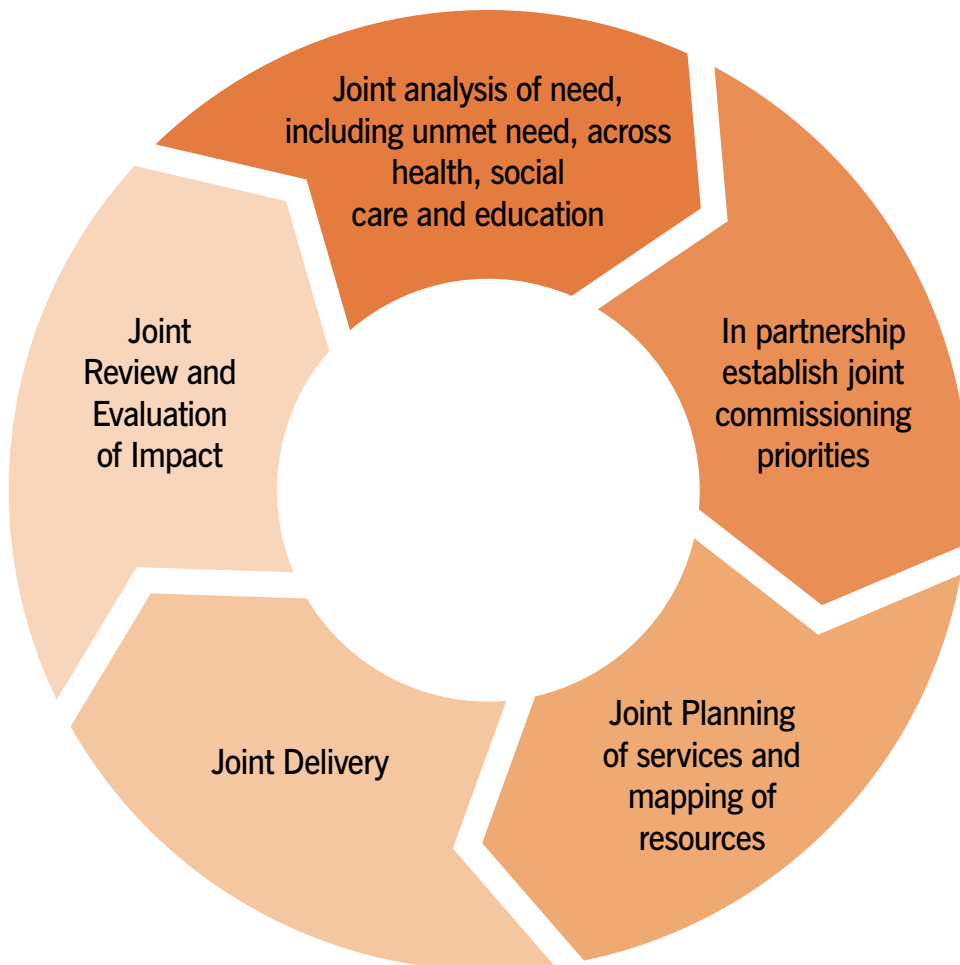
Integrated commissioning is the process of jointly assessing need and planning to ensure that services required meeting health, social care and educational needs can be delivered in a coordinated and well planned manner to maximise effectiveness, outcomes for service users and value for money.

### Integrated commissioning happens at two levels:

- The population level, where joint assessment of the health, social care and educational needs of a population takes place, informing the strategic direction of the Partnership, the planning of provision and prioritising of resources.
- The individual level: Joint assessment of an individual's needs is conducted which then informs the joint planning across agencies and with that individual. This is to ensure delivery of services and input to meet their needs and to support them to achieve the outcomes to which they aspire.

The effectiveness of joint commissioning arrangements has been one of the key areas that Ofsted and CSCI have commented upon when undertaking statutory inspections of local partnership arrangements.

### Integrated commissioning is often seen as a cycle consisting of the following stages:





**Below are two examples of joint planning and integrated commissioning;**

### **Joint LLR SEND Commissioning Strategy**

During 2020 and 2021, the department has worked successfully with other local authorities and health colleagues across Leicestershire, Leicester City and Rutland to develop a Joint LLR SEND Commissioning Strategy.

The strategy contains a high-level vision for joint commissioning that 'we will work together across Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland to improve the outcomes for children and young people with SEND' and a set of priorities for the focus of joint work in the coming 3 years. The delivery of the priorities and actions set out in the strategy are being delivered by a delivery group formed from representatives from the local authority and health organisations within Leicestershire, Leicester City and Rutland, and regular progress reporting is being made to relevant Boards and groups.

### **Childrens Innovation Partnership (CIP)**

In December 2018, Barnardo's was awarded the Children's Innovation Partnership contract. A Children's Innovation Partnership Board (CIP) was established in December 2018 to provide governance and challenge. The key objectives of the CIP are to co-designed services by sharing expertise and knowledge in the delivery of innovative solutions, contributing to transformational change through new and shared service delivery models.

The partnership has resulted in the development of a new Access and Resources Team (ART) – which delivers a peripatetic support service comprising a range of social work, medical and psychological professionals. This team will undertake child and young person assessment of need and identify appropriate resources required to ensure "right placement first time". We are also working within the partnership to produce a new model of residential care - Leicestershire for Leicestershire children. This includes the acquisition of a number of properties to meet the needs of certain groups of children and young people and support services for these residential provisions.



## 9. Measuring Success

Our progress to achieve the priorities and actions set out in this Commissioning statement will be monitored and reviewed in a number of ways:

- Quarterly summary reports to the Children's Social Care and Education and SEND Senior Management Teams (SMTs) in order to provide an update on progress against each priority and identify any risks or barriers to achieving the actions and targets set out in this statement (and activity required to resolve them).
- Annual summary report to the Children and Family Services Departmental Management Team (DMT).



# Appendix 1

## Commissioning Priorities Delivery Plan 2021 - 24

Commissioning Priority (CP)		Key Activity		Strategic Lead	Timescale
<b>CI1</b>	To identify integrated commissioning opportunities	<b>CI1.1</b>	Develop a clear vision, aims and principles for further integrated commissioning strategy (education, health and social care).	DMT	April 2022
		<b>CI1.2</b>	Consider potential priority areas for applying an integrated approach to and work with key stakeholders to develop this within an agreed legal and financial framework	DMT	March 2022
		<b>CI1.3</b>	Continue to deliver against the priorities and actions set out in the LLR Joint SEND Commissioning Strategy	Head of Service, SEND	March 2023
<b>CI2</b>	Support the department to become a Trauma-Informed Organisation	<b>CI2.1</b>	Consider potential support and services that may need to be commissioned from the external market to support the Children and Family Services department to become a trauma-informed organisation	DMT / Heads of Service	January 2022
		<b>CI2.2</b>	Share information with the external market (existing and potential providers) about the Children and Family Services ambition to become a trauma-informed organisation – so that they understand and can support this journey with us and for the benefit of children and young people and their families/carers	Commissioning	Up to April 2024
<b>CI3</b>	To reduce the number of LAC and the use of long-term residential placements	<b>CI3.1</b>	Continue work within the Children's Innovation Partnership (CIP) to develop internal residential provision to meet the needs of certain groups of children and young people and support services for these residential provisions.	Sharon Cooke / Nicci Collins / Commissioning	Ongoing
		<b>CI3.2</b>	Continue to work within the Defining and Children and Family Services for the Future (DCFSF) Programme to embed new process around the brokerage process for placements for LAC and to provide data to inform improvement cycles	Commissioning	Ongoing
		<b>CI3.3</b>	Undertake and embed in BAU actions in the Children's Social Care – Placement Sufficiency Statement and Market Position Statement, 2021-23	Commissioning / Adoption and Fostering Service	April 2024
<b>CI4</b>	To ensure a robust process in place for the commissioning and monitoring of placements with Independent Specialist Provision (ISPs) and Alternative Provision (AP)	<b>CI4.1</b>	Develop a compliant approach to broker Independent Specialist Provision (ISPs) placements to ensure best quality & price.	Tom Common / Ian Mellor	September 2021
		<b>CI4.2</b>	Explore and develop options for a local procurement for commissioning of placements with Independent Specialist Providers (ISPs)	Tom Common / Ian Mellor / CSU	September 2022
		<b>CI4.3</b>	Explore and develop options for the approach to the commissioning, quality assurance and monitoring of Alternative Provision (AP) for children with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP)	Tom Common / Ian Mellor / CSU	September 2022

Commissioning Priority (CP)		Key Activity		Strategic Lead	Timescale
<b>C15</b>	To ensure the voice of the child is captured in all commissioning activity	<b>C15.1</b>	Ensure that there is a clear Participation Plan in place for the Commissioning Service to show how and when engagement with children, young people and families will take place as part of commissioning activity	Commissioning	March 2022
		<b>C15.2</b>	Ensure that the Commissioning Service has a Voice Champion – linking the service in with wider Voice work within the department as part of the Departmental Voice and Influence Strategy	Commissioning	September 2021
		<b>C15.3</b>	Explore and develop options for increasing the involvement of children, young people and families in all aspects of the commissioning strategy – including planning and procurement of services (such as evaluation of tenders); quality assurance; and contract monitoring and review	Commissioning	March 2023
<b>C16</b>	To ensure that Equality and Diversity is considered in commissioning activity	<b>C16.1</b>	Ensure that the Commissioning Service has a Race Champion and a representative on the Departmental Equality Group (DEG) – linking the service in with wider Race and Equality and Diversity work within the department	Commissioning	December 2021
		<b>C16.2</b>	Ensure that Equality and Diversity is a consideration in all parts of the commissioning cycle - including planning and procurement of services (such as evaluation of tenders); quality assurance; and contract monitoring and review	Commissioning	March 2022
<b>C17</b>	To support the external market and its recovery (if required) following the Covid Crisis	<b>C17.1</b>	Continued collaboration with the market (providers/supply chain) to ensure continuity of essential services for the department. Including supporting providers to continue to deliver (or recommence delivery) of services within National and Local Guidelines	Commissioning	January 2022
		<b>C17.2</b>	Understand the impact of COVID-19 restrictions on service delivery and lessons learnt to inform on-going and future service delivery	Commissioning	January 2022
		<b>C17.3</b>	Understand the longer-term impact of COVID-19 and recovery on the sufficiency of the market	Commissioning	September 2022
<b>C18</b>	To continue to review commissioning practice within the department to sure innovation and value for money	<b>C18.1</b>	To explore opportunities and options to move multiple training stand listings within the Department on to a single Training standing list or Dynamic Purchasing Systems (DPS) – ensuring efficiencies for both service users, services and providers. This will need to be aligned to any developments in the way that training is commissioned Corporately (i.e. through Learning & Development)	Commissioning	September 2022
		<b>C18.2</b>	Review brokerage arrangements for LAC children (Residential, fostering and 16+ Supported Accommodation) to ensure effectiveness of process and focus on ensuring value for money through the use of Gateway2Resources (G2R) Dynamic Purchasing System (DPS)	Commissioning	June 2022
		<b>C18.3</b>	Support the review of the department's Short Breaks Offer (including after-school and holiday short breaks and residential overnight short breaks provision) available for Disabled Children and where require support the development of future Commissioning options to support family's needs and prevent family breakdown	Tom Common / Commissioning	TBC

