

Childrens Services Commissioning Report

Somerset County Council Children's
Services

November 2017

1. Executive Summary

The Children's Services Commissioning Team has undergone a transformational change of personnel, culture and approach in the last two years. In 2015, the team consisted of 4.6 WTE focusing mainly on procurement activity, project management and supporting disparate pieces of work while operational staff were holding and managing contracts.

There has been an extensive restructure of staffing with the addition in January 2016 of a new Assistant Director of Commissioning and Performance, and in January 2017 a new Strategic Commissioning Manager for Vulnerable Children and Young People. The team currently has 7 WTE, but there are short term plans to increase that further, particularly to support Early Help, mental health and SEND activity. This small initial increase in the team has grown capacity and skills and has led to the team becoming an embedded part of children's services, and a significant presence in the authority and the Peninsula (a partnership of Cornwall, Devon, Plymouth, Torbay and Somerset local authorities). Each commissioner now holds a portfolio of work, specialising in particular areas of children's services, enabling them to follow the whole commissioning cycle for each area of work on a consistent basis.

Relationships with operational staff and managers have been nurtured and improved over the last two years. The development of the Children and Young Peoples Plan led by Commissioning, has engendered trust and reliance on Commissioners who now have a reputation for being useful, purposeful and high quality. Relationships with Procurement and Commercial colleagues have also improved dramatically with a fresh look at responsibilities and roles and a new perspective of innovation, creativity and support in a productive partnership. The Corporate Commissioning Development Team has created specialist training and expertise for commissioners, as well as raising the profile of commissioning within the Council as a whole.

Key achievements:

- The development and embedding of the Children and Young Peoples Plan delivering a shared and common purpose and priorities for the sector
- Children's Placement team now sits within Children's Commissioning team with revised and efficient processes and procedures in place
- Creation of Individual Placement Agreements (IPA's) for all residential and fostering placements for looked after children and education placements for SEND, ensuring we are compliant with statutory and legal obligations
- Development of a detailed position and options appraisal on Residential Provision within Somerset and out of county placements which led to the closure of all local authority residential children's homes to raise quality and reduce costs
- Review and re-contracting or decommissioning of existing contracts within children's services with estimated negotiated savings of over £100k
- Revised and fit for purpose Sufficiency Statement and associated Action Plan
- The re-commissioning of the Pathways to Independence service to reduce youth homelessness, delivering a nationally recognised best practice service for young people in Somerset

- Raising the expertise and profile of the Children's Services Commissioning team both internally and with partner agencies in Somerset and beyond
- Raising the profile of commissioning throughout children's services with a shared understanding of commissioning, a common language and agreed approach that is both creative and compliant.

This report is the first commissioning report for children's services outlining the commissioning approach within Somerset children's services. The work supports the delivery of Somerset's Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP) 2016-19, a multi-agency strategic plan that outlines the county's priorities for children, as part of the improvement journey overseen by the Department for Education (DfE) and our improvement partners, Essex County Council.

The report shows the work completed and in progress for commissioning staff across children's services. The first part of the report focusses on the seven improvement programmes for the Children and Young Peoples Plan, and highlights the contribution from commissioning staff to each one. The second part focusses on the Council's approach to commissioning, outlining the commissioning cycle, demonstrating what has been achieved and what more the team needs to deliver.

2. The Somerset Children and Young People's Plan 2016-2019

The Somerset Children and Young People's Plan provides a clear strategic direction for the Somerset Children's Trust and enables partners to focus their joint efforts on shared priorities and targets in order to make the necessary changes to improve outcomes for children, young people and families locally, to review progress and to measure success. The Somerset Children's Trust, both collectively and by individual partner organisations as appropriate, monitors and evaluates performance against this plan, and the supporting strategies and action plans. The Plan has identified the following seven priority improvement programmes:

1. Supporting children, families and communities to become more resilient
2. Promoting healthy outcomes & giving children the best start in life
3. Improving emotional health and wellbeing
4. Building skills for life
5. Providing help early and effectively
6. Achieving effective multi-agency support for more vulnerable children and young people and developing an excellent children's social work service
7. Embedding a think family approach across the workforce

Annual action plans are in place for each of the programmes. There are nominated governance arrangements responsible for the delivery of each of the seven programmes of work (shown at appendix B). There has been a concentrated effort of commissioning resources into Programme 6 as this has a direct impact for the most vulnerable and complex children and young people. Similar effort will now be made into the other programmes of work.

Improvement Programme 1. **Supporting children, families and communities to be more resilient.**

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Most children grow up in loving families and supportive communities, becoming independent, resilient adults. We want this for more children and young people in Somerset, so they and their families can support themselves by engaging with and contributing to their local communities. We want to promote individual responsibility, moving away from a culture of dependency and entitlement. This involves using evidence to target our work, concentrating resources on the most vulnerable, focussing on building resilience so services can focus on those who need it the most.

What have we done?

- Developed Somerset Choices, a website providing advice and guidance for adults and children, communicating the local offer for SEND and early years
- Strengthened relationships with independent and voluntary providers, sharing our vision to improve the offer for families by developing stronger communities
- Worked with the DfE to develop and publish the West Somerset Opportunity Area action plan to address social mobility in the area
- Increased council volunteers (56) through the 'You Can Do' contract, promoting opportunities such as peer support groups for local people and communities
- Supported the Young Carers task and finish group with elected members from the Children and Families Scrutiny Committee to review provision. An action plan has been developed to address the findings.

What are we doing to improve?

- We are exploring using Community Connectors to improve local voluntary support. A model for 'Children's Community Connect' will be ready by April 2018
- We will explore developing a shared lives scheme for children and young people in partnership with adults and health commissioning by March 2018
- Engaging with the STP Stronger Communities programme to develop resilient and strong communities throughout Somerset with all partners.
- SCC Digital team will co-produce a new and improved website with partners and service users to present the local offer by 31 December 2017.
- Personal budget policies across education, social care and health are being reviewed, aligned and finalised with adult social care and health partners. This will be completed by March 2018, including staff training and engagement of service users on the scope and positive benefits of personal budgets
- A co-produced 0-25 Short Breaks Strategy will be in place by December 2018 following the Children with Additional Needs Joint Commissioning Strategy (December 2017) providing a steer to this work. A draft has been developed with the Parent Carer Forum, the NHS and adult social care commissioners.

What outcomes will this achieve?

- Young people & families are in control and know how to access help and advice.
- Children, families and communities are equipped with the tools, skills and information they need to help themselves.
- Parents have the confidence, knowledge and skills to be effective parents.
- Families and communities are thriving and resilient and support each other.

Improvement Programme 2.

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Promoting healthy outcomes in families and giving children the best start in life.



We want our children to get the best start in life with mothers who are healthy during pregnancy, enabling critical early attachment between parent and child and laying the foundation for better outcomes. We want all children to develop communication and language skills in line with developmental milestones and all children to receive a 2 year old review so any development issues can be identified early and the right intervention and help given. We will have a focus on promoting health for children and young people looked after and for children and young people with disabilities and long term conditions who have an increased risk of ill health. We recognise good housing contributes to the health and wellbeing of children and families.

What have we done?

- Reviewed and published [The Somerset Parent and carer Toolkit](#), providing an online resource for parents and carers to help them to parent well
- We have developed a protocol ensuring the hidden harms of adult behaviours on children are addressed.
- Our domestic abuse service employs Young Peoples Domestic Violence Advisors. We use a stay put model with safe house provision, reducing multi-occupancy hostel use and creating stability and family privacy.
- We have commissioned integrated community sexual health services to include targeted outreach to young people and vulnerable groups.
- We commission an all-age specialist drugs & alcohol service, and a targeted tier 2 service for vulnerable young people, limiting transition risks to adult services
- We invested in PSHE and Healthy Relationship support to schools and colleges.

What are we doing to improve?

- Improving transition to adult services for children with long term conditions and disabilities. A Transition Strategy with partners will be finalised in early 2018.
- A scope for a joint review of therapy services (Speech and Language Therapy, Physiotherapy and Occupational Therapy). will be available in January 2018
- We will procure a new drug and alcohol service and domestic abuse service in 2018, prioritising the needs and impact on children.
- Reviewing the MARAC process ensuring children and families' needs are systematically addressed
- The Zing Somerset contract ends in December 2017. The new model being consulted on will continue to focus on physical activity and healthy eating using community development to empower individuals, families and communities.

What outcomes will this achieve?

- Children, young people and their families are enabled to lead healthy lives.
- Improved health outcomes for children and young people in areas of higher need.
- Children and young people safely manage long term physical and mental health conditions and disability and are supported to manage transition to adult services
- Person centred healthcare is delivered effectively in a timely way, as close to home as possible in young people friendly settings by appropriately qualified staff

Improvement Programme 3. Improving emotional health and wellbeing

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We want children and young people in Somerset to enjoy good emotional wellbeing and mental health, including the ability to learn, to feel, express and manage a range of positive and negative emotions, to form and maintain good relationships with others and to cope with and manage change and uncertainty. All professionals working with children and young people have a responsibility to help them be emotionally and mentally healthy. Mental health is everyone's business.

What have we done?

- Worked with the CCG on the CAMHS transformation plan, reviewed annually, This has implemented a number of new initiatives e.g. Kooth online counselling, community eating disorder service, and the Single Point of Access to CAMHS.
- Invited by NHS partners to jointly evaluate Somerset Partnership NHS Trust's CAMHS. The assurance report will be used to improve performance.
- The Commissioning Group for Children and Young People's Mental Health & Psychological Well-being completed a mapping exercise to understand what support exists in Somerset. This will be used to address gaps in provision
- Despite recruitment issues we have now established an emotional health and wellbeing service for children looked after, within the children's social care team.
- The public health school's survey of health & emotional wellbeing identified low self-esteem and anxiety. In response, we commissioned the 'Emotion Coaching programme' ensuring staff have the skills to address emotional health needs.
- Delivered Perinatal and infant mental health awareness training to the workforce with health partners, ensuring maternal mental health is addressed effectively.

What are we doing to improve?

- Develop strategies and systems by April 2018 for young people who self-harm. This is part of the multi-agency Self harm Steering Group alongside Public Health
- In 2018 we will review support for emotional health & wellbeing needs, including Parent & Family Support Advisers and Primary Mental Health Link Workers
- We are facilitating development of the 'Team Around the School' model across Somerset, ensuring targeted mental health services are co-ordinated well.
- Developing a data dashboard with the Commissioning Group for Children and Young People's Mental Health and Psychological Well-being to monitor CAMHS performance. This will enable joint planning and ensuring gaps are addressed.
- We will review emotional wellbeing pathways for the LGBTI community in December 2017, identifying gaps and ways to work with partners to fill these.

What outcomes will this achieve?

- Young people will be emotionally resilient and equipped to manage their lives.
- Children and young people with emotional and mental health needs are identified early and supported in community settings reducing need for specialist services.
- Universal services, school and early years staff can help children & young people to promote emotional wellbeing and respond to distress caused by life events.
- Children looked after are enabled to become emotionally resilient, through provision of individual advice, guidance and support
- Support is personalised and empowering, with timely access to treatments and interventions that work.

Improvement Programme 4. Building Skills for Life

Our vision is for Somerset to be the most forward looking area in England for education and learning; the best place for children and young people to grow up, learn, develop and achieve. Our strategic vision **Achieving Excellence for All** will drive this aspiration and ambition. Somerset will be a place where families thrive and all children learn and develop well from the earliest years so that they are ready to succeed at school, have excellent foundations for learning and are equipped well for achievement in life, no matter what their background or home location. We have expectations for every child and young person to make good progress in their learning, to achieve well and have the best opportunities for an independent economic and social life as they become young adults.

What have we done?

- We monitor performance of all provision through the Early Years Performance Group and Schools Causing Concern Group, providing support to early years settings and schools, securing rapid sustained improvement where needed.
- We have agreed and published core standards so that parents and carers of children with SEND know what support they can expect in mainstream schools
- We have developed the 'Team Around the School' model and are facilitating embedding this across Somerset.
- We are working across agencies in the Pathway to Employment Group enabling young people to develop skills and resilience to be successful.
- We are active participants on the Corporate Parents Strategy Sub Group for enabling care leavers into education and employment pathways
- We have developed an effective Virtual School, with a presence in all panels so that education is highlighted as a priority for all children looked after

What are we doing to improve?

- We will review the Achieving Excellence for All strategy and action plan and use that to inform our commissioning intentions in to the future
- We will review our Service Level Agreements with SSE on behalf of the Schools Forum particularly in relation to the use of the High Needs budget
- We will develop commissioning arrangements with Teaching Schools and others ensuring we access a range of funding and support to deliver improvement plans
- We will continue to develop the work of the Pathways to Employment group, including apprenticeships, NEETS tracking and youth provision.

What outcomes will this achieve?

- Every child will achieve well above expectations and not be held back by their social and personal backgrounds, special educational needs or disabilities
- All children get the best start in the early years; all pupils can go to a good school and have high aspirations for their future
- Young people are empowered to be employable and economically responsible to provide for their own future
- Every young person benefits from pathways to further learning and employment for their own achievement and for the success of Somerset's economy

Programme 5. Providing help early and effectively

Our multi-agency Early Help Charter defines early help as everyone's responsibility; we want children, families, communities and agencies to work together so that families are assisted to help themselves and are supported as soon as a need arises, thereby improving the overall wellbeing and quality of life of all Somerset's children, young people and their families.

What have we done?

- The first year of this plan established the context for effective work, including Somerset Choices, and Professional Choices which provides early help guidance and tools for practitioners to work effectively
- We have implemented the Somerset Family Outcomes Framework which identifies families in need of support. We have implemented a new Early Help case management system within the getset service and for p2i.
- We have worked with the Local Safeguarding Board to develop and implement the Neglect Strategy and the regional tool for neglect, approved in 2017.
- Short breaks (including holiday activities, club opportunities, discount cards and activity passes) are co-produced with children, young people and their families who review, evaluate and help improve the services offered. Recently we have developed the 'Buddy Volunteering Programme' which trains college students and sixth formers to support disabled young people in the local community

What are we doing to improve?

- We are developing a new model for an early help multi-agency Family Support service, including Public Health Nursing (Health visitors and school nurses) and Somerset's Getset service (children's centre services and family support workers for 0-19 year olds). We are currently consulting on what families value from these services, and proposals for future use of children's centre buildings. There will be increased joint working and full integration of these services by April 2019.
- We have researched other authorities' commissioning approaches to early help, including from our improvement partners, Essex County Council on their redesigned Pre-birth to 19 service.
- We are developing a Young People's Strategy to address the crises and complexity of issues faced by our young people and too often results in them requiring support from children's social care

What outcomes will this achieve?

- Families receive good quality multi-agency help to support parents or carers in changing behaviour so risks to children are reduced
- Fewer children and families will need high cost, statutory interventions
- Staff have the skills and knowledge to identify issues early in families and to address those issues quickly and effectively

Improvement Programme 6.

Achieving effective, multi-agency support for more vulnerable children and young people and develop and excellent children's social work service

We want to make sure children who have had a difficult start in life have the best opportunities we can offer, to be safe and live with their families wherever possible.

We will listen to children and work with our partners to provide creative and effective services that meet the needs of children and their families – providing the right services to the right children in the right place. When children are at their most vulnerable, such as missing from home or at risk of sexual exploitation – we will work with the children, their families and partner agencies to safeguard them. When children need to come into care we will provide a family environment for them to live in so that they learn positive relationships and are supported into adulthood.

What have we done?

- A new service for children and young people experiencing CSE has been commissioned in partnership with neighbouring authorities and Avon & Somerset Police. This will improve the capacity and skills of our workforce to support children holistically, reducing the number of professionals and 'hand-overs', with a more effective and positive experience supporting wellbeing and development.
- We have established the Phoenix service for children who have experienced sexual abuse, providing information, advice and some direct therapeutic support, as well as training and support for staff to enable them to improve practice.
- Following an internal audit, we have undertaken significant work to analyse and improve our processes for making placements for children looked after.
- Our Sufficiency Statement for Children Looked After and Care Leavers 2016-2019 was recently published, setting out our approach to providing a sufficient number of appropriate placements. The statement has an accompanying action plan which is updated and monitored quarterly by the Corporate Parenting Board.
- Our Pathways to Independence Service (P2i) provides a systematic approach to sustainable independence for young people. It provides prevention, mediation, emergency accommodation, 200 supported accommodation placements and support programmes enabling independence and accommodation move-on. The service was designed and procured with young people and will be monitored by them in the future.
- We are retendering our Fostering Framework for 2018-2022 in partnership with the Peninsula authorities, to commence in April 2018.
- We have grant funded a DfE innovation programme 'Safe Families for Children' for 18 months to work with vulnerable children and families on the edge of care. The service will start in April 2018 and will work with up to 72 families.
- Commissioners meet regularly with fostering providers to discuss barriers, issues and increasing provision, improving commissioning and social care's work.
- In July 2017, we held an event for fostering providers, attended by 20+ representatives. We relayed feedback from individual visits ('you said, we did') and discussed ways to work more closely together to ensure sufficiency.
- Established Family Group Conferencing service which will be evaluated for effectiveness

- We have analysed one-off spend on crisis intervention support and drafted a specification to formalise our arrangements and achieve value for money
- Placements made in unregulated provision (services not inspected by Ofsted or CQC) are subject to an initial visit and evaluation by a Senior Placements Officer, to ensure the provision is of a good standard, is safe, and provides good value.

What are we doing to improve?

- We are working with residential and fostering providers to implement more creative, innovative solutions for children looked after. Our next event on 24th Nov 2017 will engage providers to improve the quality and sufficiency of placements.
- An annual refresh of the Sufficiency Statement is underway, published March '18.
- Exploring options of joint working with the South Central Framework on residential provision, including potential to block contract as local partnerships.
- We are a member of Adopt South West, the Regional Adoption Agency which consists of joint working and information sharing with Devon, Plymouth and Torbay. These arrangements are intended to be formalised in 2020.
- We will develop personalisation as part of a market development strategy during 2018. We will engage organisations with the principles of personalisation, and prepare businesses to work for individuals, marketing their services accordingly.
- We are developing transition pathways for children with disabilities and long term conditions to move into adult services and/or independence.
- We are currently embedding a revised placements process, ensuring this has effective governance, as well as being efficient and swift when required.
- We will increase capacity in the Placements Team to ensure IPAs (Individual Placement Agreements) are completed in a timely way and to a high standard.
- We will finalise the SEND needs assessment and joint commissioning strategy and action plan by December 2017.
- P2i outcomes based contract will have its first annual review completed by young people, using a methodology designed by young people.

What outcomes will this achieve?

- Children and young people are protected from harm and well cared for at home wherever possible, reducing the number of children coming into care.
- Children who cannot remain at home safely are offered permanent family based alternative care as quickly as possible, in a safe place where they can grow, thrive and reach their potential
- A reduced reliance on residential settings and the ability to place children no more than 20 miles from home where ever this is appropriate to their needs
- Somerset has sufficient and suitable placements available for children looked after and care leavers, with all placements are managed within agreed frameworks and contracts, including expectations of cost and value for money.
- Children and young people have mechanisms for personalised care and individual budgets.
- Young people experience successful transitions into adulthood.
- A stable, skilled, confident, motivated workforce who are empowered to work creatively with others on a joined-up offer which achieves positive outcomes

Improvement Programme 7.

Embedding a think family approach across the workforce.

Research shows addressing the needs of a family in a holistic way is more likely to lead to sustained improvements for children. The influence of family members, adult behaviour, friendships and community, cannot be overestimated on a child's development. We want to establish a Think Family approach across the children's and adults workforce so we all understand the parental vulnerabilities that may present hidden harm and help address the issues within the family, not just the child or the adult.

What have we done?

- The Troubled Families Programme takes a Think Family approach, and champions this with colleagues throughout adult and children's services
- Implemented revised transitions protocols for children moving onto adult services so they are well prepared and supported, and agencies understand the change in service delivery required, including the need for joint commissioning
- Supported appropriate information sharing across partners by providing guidance and a multi-agency collaboration tool: the Professional Choices online portal.
- We have promoted Somerset Choices within the workforce so they use it with families to find local support

What are we doing to improve

- We are developing a Think Family Strategy to embed this approach within the workforce in 2018
- Implementing a new service delivery model to enable successful transitions based on integrated, multi-agency and multi-disciplinary ways of working
- We are reviewing the support available to parents who have repeat removals of children from their care, and assessing the need for more specialist intervention, reporting on this by December 2017.
- Use the shared intelligence of partners to target resources effectively by sharing data and knowledge safely and securely
- Continue to promote Professional Choices, particularly the Who's Who Guide, so practitioners know who else can help them in supporting their families.
- Commission, subject to agreement, the DCLG approved whole family working training for the workforce

What outcomes will this achieve?

- Vulnerable young people and families are more emotionally resilient and capable of resolving problems
- Vulnerable young people and families are directly involved in helping themselves and encouraged to help others through volunteering or peer mentoring.
- Young carers of parents with mental health and drug and alcohol problems have access to advice and support and know how to call for help when needed
- Professionals and staff who work with adults, children and young people understand the 'think family' concept, recognise the effects of adult behaviours on children and young people and know how to respond appropriately.



3. Somerset County Council’s Approach to Commissioning

Within Somerset County Council we define commissioning as *“How we identify needs and creatively work with everyone involved to make things happen to meet those needs in the most appropriate and cost effective way”*. In order to commission well it is essential that staff are focussed on the three pillars of commissioning in all activity and at all points of the commissioning cycle. These are:

- Outcome focus - The impact, result or effect of an intervention on an individual or community. We are agnostic about how we achieve outcomes e.g. in-house, contracted, grant funded, partnership, community delivery
- System Leadership - We focus on securing the best outcomes for our local communities by making best use of all available resources and all our levers. We don’t just look in isolation at individual services or the Council’s part in a system/customer pathway
- Co-production - A way of working whereby decision makers, customers, families, carers and service providers collaborate to create solutions which work for them all.

Underpinning these principles is the need to work together with others to achieve the outcomes that matter to a particular place or population. Doing this means that we don’t do things to people (we do things with people), we don’t always do things for people (we need to rebalance our relationship with the public) and we don’t assume we’re best to do it (we are focussed on outcomes not services).

The nine commissioning principles need to be followed at each stage of the commissioning cycle and should guide all commissioning activity within the Council and with our partnership activity.

OUTCOME FOCUS	SYSTEM LEADERSHIP	CO-PRODUCTION
<p>A. We are flexible about how we achieve outcomes, focusing on quality and impact</p> <p>B. We aim to reduce inequalities and enable others</p> <p>C. All activity is needs and evidence based and we build new evidence through evaluation</p>	<p>A. Our role is to ensure value for money (incl. social value) across whole systems</p> <p>B. We seek to prioritise prevention and early intervention</p> <p>C. We build relationships, culture and partnerships to work across systems and pathways</p>	<p>A. We actively involve people, partners and providers by building on their strengths</p> <p>B. We balance working in partnership with the need to act commercially</p> <p>C. Our approach will be open, transparent and collaborative throughout the commissioning cycle</p>

Figure 1: SCC’s Commissioning Principles

Our commissioning is defined by the four stages of the commissioning cycle shown below. At each stage many different activities are undertaken (for example the 'do' stage might involve a procurement, out-sourcing, in-sourcing, shaping a market, restructuring).



Figure 2: SCC's Commissioning Cycle

There are many different commissioning cycles in different organisations. This cycle is important to us because it is:

- **Sequential and cyclical:** All stages are equally as important and our commissioning principles apply throughout. We need to test and learn from what we've done and continuously improve.
- **Customer centred:** Good commissioning means we need to understand legislation, our financial envelope, political priorities, our partners priorities, the state of the market, demographics, healthcare and people's needs. Most importantly though, we need to keep the person's (or customer's) needs and the outcomes they want to achieve at the centre of every stage of the process.

What do we have in place?

- Children's services have strategies for the following areas:
 - [Children and Young Peoples Plan 2016-2019](#)
 - [Early Help Strategy 2016-2019](#)
 - [SEND Strategy 2016-2019](#)
 - [Strategy for Achieving Excellence for All \(Education\) 2016-2019](#)
 - [Engagement and Participation Strategy 2016-2019](#)
 - [Somerset County Council Sufficiency Statement for Children Looked After and Care Leavers 2016-2019](#)

- Somerset County Council currently have a single [Market Position Statement](#), which identifies the council's commissioning intentions and partnership needs
- Commissioners use a variety of means to assess demand, need and supply, to inform commissioning direction and strategic intent. This includes:
 - [Joint Strategic Needs Assessment](#) (JSNA) when developing strategies or new services. This was particularly relevant when developing the Children and Young People's Plan
 - The Troubled Families team have created a data warehouse, overlaying statutory and voluntary sector data sources onto a map of Somerset. This shows correlations and 'hotspots' across the county, eg showing geographical relationships between families in poverty and children with disabilities.
 - Data dashboards have been developed for a number of areas in children's services including children's social care, early help, SEND and mental health, which provide useful analysis and rich information.
 - Performance data is collected from the Children Looked After Placements Team, enabling analysis of placement trends, gaps and challenges
 - Data and need is collated from customer complaints and feedback including engagement work with young people, the Young Commissioners project, the participation team and the Independent Reviewing Officer information.
- Commissioners work closely with the Procurement Department to ensure all procurement options are explored, ensuring the right solution for each service.
- Fostering and residential placements are sourced through the Peninsula frameworks, using the system agreed with the Peninsula Children's Services Commissioning Board (Cornwall, Devon, Torbay, Plymouth & Somerset local authorities). Any services purchased from organisations not on the framework receive a 'spot contract', providing the same terms as the framework providers. Once the placement is made, an Individual Placement Agreement (IPA) is produced to secure costs and outcomes expected for that child.
- The Peninsula frameworks are run by Devon County Council on our behalf. There are 19 providers on the Peninsula residential framework, 18 on the SEND independent schools framework, and 16 providers on the fostering framework. If a framework provider cannot supply the service required, we purchase outside the framework. Currently only 13 providers have spot contracts with us.
- Once secured, contracts are listed on [Pro-Contract](#) (A public list of tendered contracts) and on the Children's Services Commissioning Contracts Register
- The Council has developed a Contract Monitoring Toolkit through the Contract Manager's group, which will be standard practice within the Children's Commissioning Team by December 2017.
- We have developed and implemented the Somerset Academy, which develops leadership and collaboration skills across a range of agencies in Somerset.
- We are funding a post-graduate commissioning qualification, following a long period of weak training opportunities for commissioners.

What will we do?

- Placement Sufficiency in Somerset is an increasing issue, even though there are more residential beds available in the county than we need, and limited, but

- available, capacity in the independent fostering market. Commissioners are understanding this complex market, building positive relationships with providers and sharing the detail of our needs to ensure the right provision is available and that Somerset is the preferred commissioner.
- The Commissioning Development Team are creating an interactive Market Position Statement with providers, using dynamic communication to highlight capacity and innovative ideas. Supporting this, we will develop a Children's Market Position Statement by March 2018, enabling providers to get the detail they need to work closely with us.
- We will produce Commissioning Strategies to support a range of market segments, including fostering, residential, edge of care, emotional wellbeing and children with disabilities. These documents will link to the overall Market Position Statement, addressing demand and supply.
- Maintaining good communication with providers is essential to the health of the market, so the Children's Commissioning team have produced a 'Communications plan' (Appendix A), explaining how we ensure regular contact and engagement with provider organisations, partner agencies and internal colleagues. This will particularly apply to fostering and residential providers, where communication is key to finding placements for our most vulnerable children and young people.
- Childrens Commissioning will continue to work with other LAs across regional partnerships when this is beneficial to Somerset. The established South West Peninsular work for Residential, Fostering and SEND placements will continue to be reviewed and evaluated for efficiency and best value.
- Joint Commissioning with the CCG is still developing; currently a Joint Commissioning Strategy for children with additional needs is being finalised by December 2017 which will outline the principles and mechanisms for enabling joint commissioning including personal health budgets and EHCP processes.
- Contracts for individual children (Individual placement agreements or IPAs) are currently not always completed well, or in a timely manner. Strengthening the capacity and capability of the Placements Team is a key priority, which will enable closer working relationships with social workers, education staff and providers to resolve issues quickly and effectively.
- The council's Participation Team ensures children and young people have influence and impact on a range of issues. We have exciting plans to strengthen young people's influence on commissioning and commissioned services, developing mechanisms for co-production across the commissioning team.
- Commissioners will set up outcomes based contracts, and monitor these with both quantitative and qualitative information, focussing on using feedback from service users and using creative ways to measure performance accurately.
- Contracts will be proportionately managed by risk, including financial value and impact on the service user. The highest risk services will be held by a Senior Commissioner, and will involve frequent contact and review. The lowest risk will be held by a Commissioning Officer, and will be reviewed annually.
- We are developing a small Quality Team, focussed on proactively reviewing and driving improvement of residential, fostering and unregulated accommodation services. In time, this team will include all internal and external provision
- We will recruit additional staff to the children's commissioning team, driving through changes required to achieve our aspiration of "good".

4. Co-production

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Commissioners will work alongside service user groups, making their work available for the group to engage with, as well as inviting groups to work with us for a concentrated period of time on particular projects such as procurements, contract reviews, recruitment and strategy creation. Where a service user group does not exist or is not able to engage, commissioners will support the development of a group which is able to support co-production.

Existing groups include:

- The Parent Carer Forum (Parents and carers of children with disabilities)
- The Unstoppables (young people with disabilities)
- SICC (young people in care)
- SLICC (Young people leaving care)
- Youth Parliament
- 2BU (Young people identifying as LGBTI)

We do not currently have access to a group representing children with mental health difficulties – though this may be possible through Somerset Partnership’s CAMHS group. We also do not have access directly to children with SEND, though we are indirectly able to gain their views through the Parent Carer Forum, and through young people in the Unstoppables group who have recently left the school system.

5. Quality Assurance

Quality Assurance is a high priority for Children’s Services. The service adheres to quality outcomes frameworks to ensure the highest quality of services, accountability and achievement of the best outcomes for children and families.

Quality Assurance ensures that all staff working in Children’s Services:

- Keep children safe
- Improve outcomes
- Think about the impact of all their actions on children and families

This enables us to answer the following questions:

- Are we doing the right things?
- Are we making a difference?

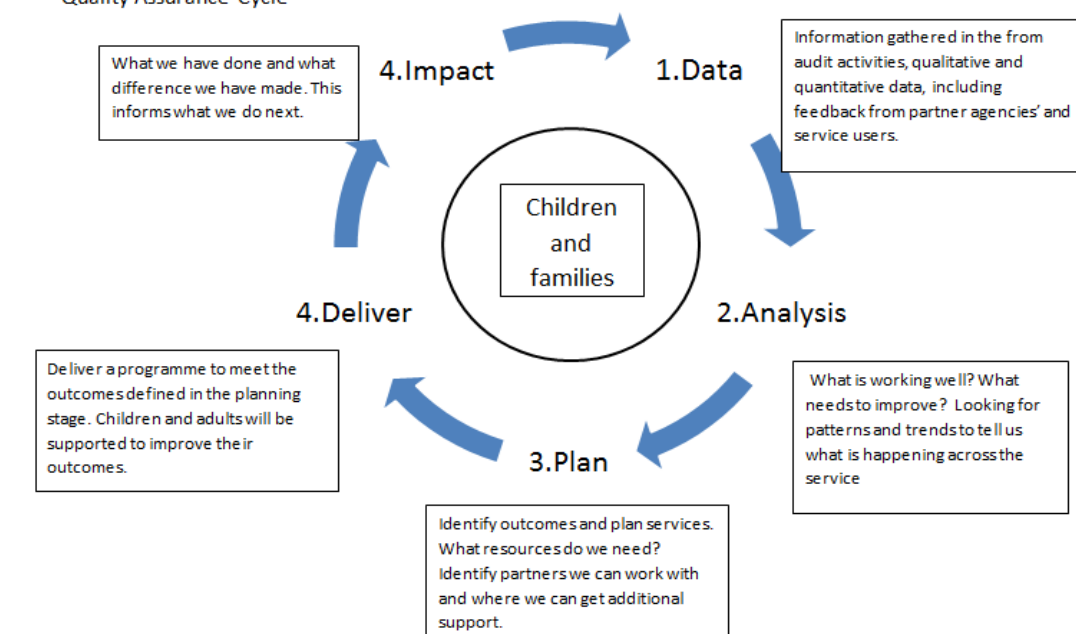
The purpose of quality assurance is to improve outcomes for children by improving staff practice and therefore quality of the service provided. We achieve this through:

- Measuring and monitoring performance against required standards and agreed targets
- Identifying areas of strength as well as shortfalls in practice
- A whole system approach linking individual supervision training and planning to the findings of quality assurance activity
- Helping staff understand their quality assurance roles and responsibilities, and that everyone has a role to play in improving quality
- Providing a feedback cycle which drives a learning culture where problems are addressed openly and honestly

Somerset Children's Services Quality Assurance Cycle

Quality Assurance Cycle

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- Children's Services commissioners are committed to achieving excellence through a quality assurance cycle, ensuring continuous improvement. Information gained from a variety of sources to inform current performance, is used to shape future service delivery, which improves outcomes for children and families.
- The Children's Commissioning team currently hold responsibility for reviewing all social care contracts across children's services. These services are reviewed quarterly or more frequently, depending on the perceived need and risk.
- The team use service specifications in contracts to ensure each party understands their role and remit. These specifications will have KPIs and outcomes where possible, which will be reviewed and managed regularly. Where appropriate, we will often ask for case studies and reports from providers on their progress, in order to capture the wider, more subjective benefits of the service. Where performance falls short of the specification, this is raised with the provider and solutions are discussed, with the expectation that performance is improved quickly and efficiently.
- We are developing a dataset to show the impact of the Children's Commissioning Team on quality, cost and performance of services, as well as the subsequent impact of this work on service users and the Directorate.
- We aim for improved outcomes through tighter contract monitoring and negotiating with services to meet needs identified through data.

Appendices

- A** **Communications Plan**
- B** **Children & Young People's Plan Governance Structure**

Appendix A: Communications Plan

Communications Plan						
Campaign Communication Lead:						
Campaign Service lead: Philippa Granthier						
Last updated: By:						
Deadline	Action	Purpose	Additional detail	Outcomes	Audiences	Responsible Officer/s
September						
Daily	Daily Operation Communications	Finding placements	Look at CRM solution		Providers	Placements Team
Monthly	Contract Monitoring Review	Improved arrangements		Cost savings and raising standards	Commissioning Team	Senior Commissioning Manager
Monthly	Social Care Manager's Meeting (OMM)	Sharing concerns and solutions, supporting joint working		Improving efficiency and communication	Social Care Teams	Louise Palmer/Richard Pears
Monthly	CCG/SCC Commissioners meeting	Sharing concerns and solutions, supporting joint working		Improving efficiency and communication	CCG Commissioners	Philippa Granthier/Louise Palmer
Quarterly	South West Commissioners Forum	Best practice sharing, central/IPC messages, peer support	Themed each quarter	Opportunities for joint working re efficiencies Improved understanding of central policy Sharing best practice to improve services	South West Commissioners	Louise Palmer/Jo Sangster
October						
Daily	Daily Operation Communications	Finding placements	Look at CRM solution		Providers	Placements Team
Monthly	Contract Monitoring Review	Improved arrangements		Cost savings and raising standards	Commissioning Team	Senior Commissioning Manager
Monthly	Social Care Manager's Meeting (OMM)	Sharing concerns and solutions, supporting joint working		Improving efficiency and communication	Social Care Teams	Louise Palmer/Richard Pears

Monthly	CCG/SCC Commissioners meeting	Sharing concerns and solutions, supporting joint working		Improving efficiency and communication WWW.SOMERSET.GOV.UK	CCG Commissioners	Philippa Granthier/Louise Palmer
Quarterly	South West Fostering Network Meeting	Sharing concerns and information	Commissioners by invitation	Improved Communication and Information Sharing / Improved Provider Engagement	South West Fostering Providers	Louise Palmer/Carrie-Anne Hiscock
Oct - Dec 2017	Family Support Service and Children's Centre Consultation	Re-design of family support services and integration of Public Health	Online consultation / Promotion / Engagement Events	To inform decisions around future services	Service users and stakeholders	Philippa Granthier, Alision Bell, Mark Ford, Andrew Hedges
01/09/17	Essex Visit - Commissioning/CCG - Pre-birth to 19	Sharing Best Practice		Sharing Best Practice to Improve Service	Partnership Commissioners	Philippa Granthier
November						
Daily	Daily Operation Communications	Finding placements	Look at CRM solution		Providers	Placements Team
Monthly	Contract Monitoring Review	Improved arrangements		Cost savings and raising standards	Commissioning Team	Senior Commissioning Manager
Monthly	Social Care Manager's Meeting (OMM)	Sharing concerns and solutions, supporting joint working		Improving efficiency and communication	Social Care Teams	Louise Palmer/Richard Pears
Monthly	CCG/SCC Commissioners meeting	Sharing concerns and solutions, supporting joint working		Improving efficiency and communication	CCG Commissioners	Philippa Granthier/Louise Palmer
Ongoing	Information Sharing - digital channels	Strategic / Central Messages / Information Sharing / Peer Support	LinkedIn Yammer Twitter	Improved Communication and Information Sharing / Improved Provider Engagement		
Oct - Dec 2017	Family Support Service and Children's Centre Consultation	Re-design of family support services and integration of Public Health	Online consultation / Promotion / Engagement Events	To inform decisions around future services	Service users and stakeholders	Philippa Granthier, Alision Bell, Mark Ford, Andrew Hedges
01/11/17	Engagement with Youth Sector	To inform the Young Persons Strategy	Visits to Youth Activities	To inform development of Young Persons Strategy	Commissioners of Young Persons	Emma Good

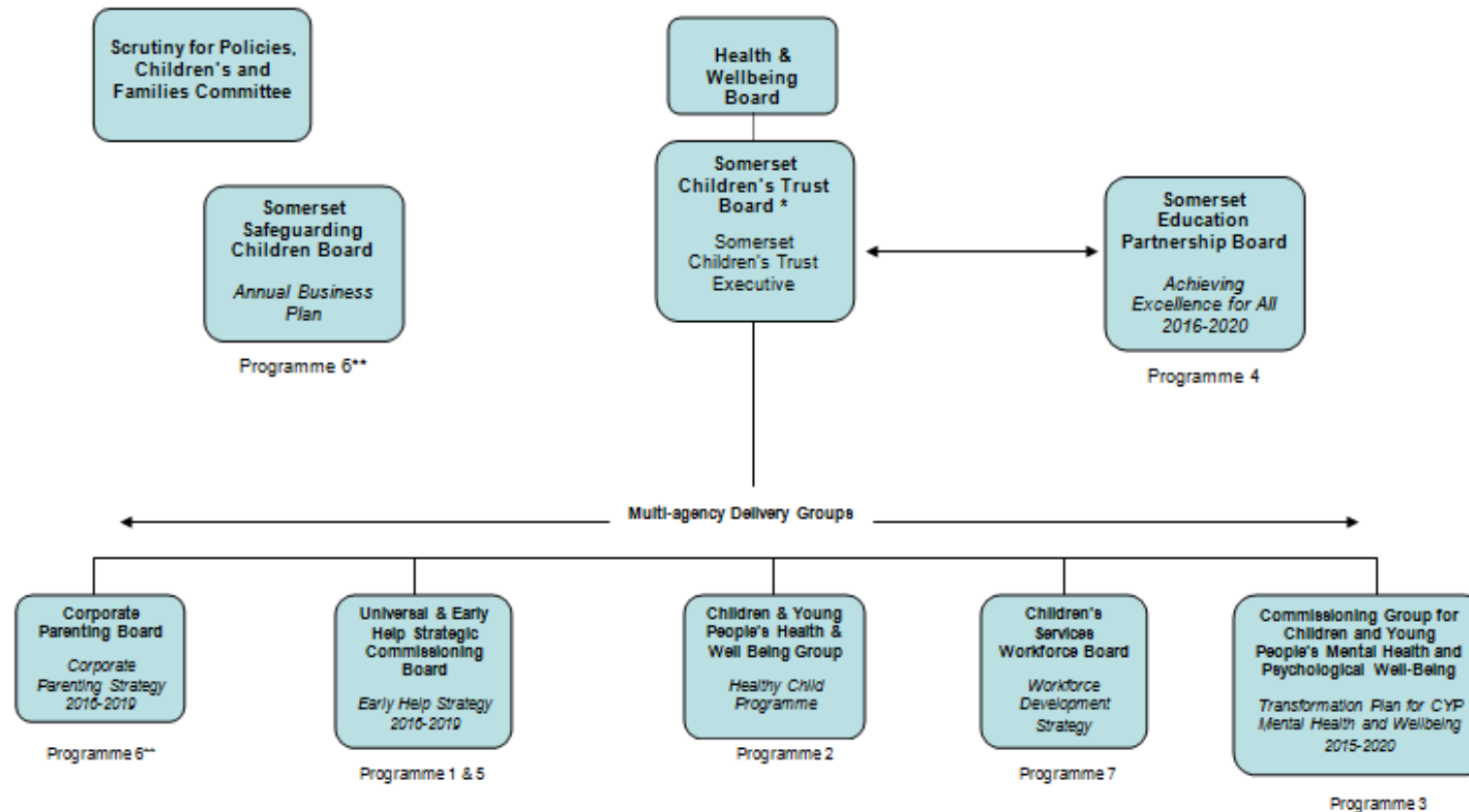
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24.11.2017	Whole Provider Event	Market Development and Engagement	Venue / Comms/ Promotion / Agenda	Additional Quality Placements / Better Outcomes for Children Looked After / More Trusted Relationships	Provider (Business Development Managers)	Senior Commissioner
December						
Daily	Daily Operation Communications	Finding placements	Look at CRM solution		Providers	Placements Team
Monthly	Contract Monitoring Review	Improved arrangements		Cost savings and raising standards	Commissioning Team	Senior Commissioning Manager
Monthly	Social Care Manager's Meeting (OMM)	Sharing concerns and solutions, supporting joint working		Improving efficiency and communication	Social Care Teams	Louise Palmer/Richard Pears
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Ongoing	Information Sharing - digital channels	Strategic / Central Messages / Information Sharing / Peer Support	LinkedIn Yammer Twitter	Improved Communication and Information Sharing / Improved Provider Engagement		
Ongoing	Engagement with Forums	Widening Participation and Engagement	VCSE Forum,			
Oct - Dec 2017	Family Support Service and Children's Centre Consultation	Re-design of family support services and integration of Public Health	Online consultation / Promotion / Engagement Events	To inform decisions around future services	Service users and stakeholders	Philippa Granthier, Alision Bell, Mark Ford, Andrew Hedges
01/12/17	Engagement with Youth Sector	To inform the Young Persons Strategy	Visits to Youth Activities	To inform development of Young Persons Strategy	Commissioners of Young Persons Services	Emma Good

Appendix B: Children & Young People's Plan Governance Structure

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Governance Arrangements for the Somerset Children and Young People's Plan 2016-2019



* Plus partners' own Statutory Requirements e.g. Somerset County Council, NHS Commissioners & providers, Avon and Somerset Police, Voluntary & Community Sector

** Safeguarding and social care activity is monitored by a number of different Boards and internally by Somerset County Council Children's Services own performance management arrangements.