
Commissioning framework

for children and young people's services in Southwark





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1. Introduction

In Southwark, every child matters. Our aim for every child, whatever their background or their circumstances, is to have the support they need to be healthy, stay safe, enjoy and achieve, make a positive contribution and achieve economic wellbeing.

Southwark's children's trust, Young Southwark, came into operation in 2006 and it consists of representatives from key agencies with responsibilities for children and young people, including Southwark Council, Southwark Primary Care Trust, Southwark Police, the Learning and Skills Council, local education and health providers, voluntary and community bodies.

Joint planning and commissioning is at the heart of our children's trust. Our Children and Young People's Plan for the borough sets out the trust's priorities and areas of improvement under the every child matters outcomes. To ensure that services are aligned with these priorities, it is key that there is a partnership wide commissioning framework in place.

1.1 Purpose of the framework

This commissioning framework is a tool to support the delivery of the Children and Young People's Plan and deliver the borough wide priorities as set out by our community strategy Southwark 2016, the council's corporate plan, and underpinned by our local area agreement.

To ensure children and young people achieve their potential we must buy the right services for the right people at the right time. This has been difficult because in the past, services have been planned and delivered separately, which created gaps and duplication.

The framework sets out our local approach to commissioning and the principles and standards that should be adhered to by all partner agencies in their commissioning activities.

It is a guide to support commissioning across our partners, and sets standards for the development of individual service commissioning strategies. It is designed to ensure that opportunities to joint commission are maximised.

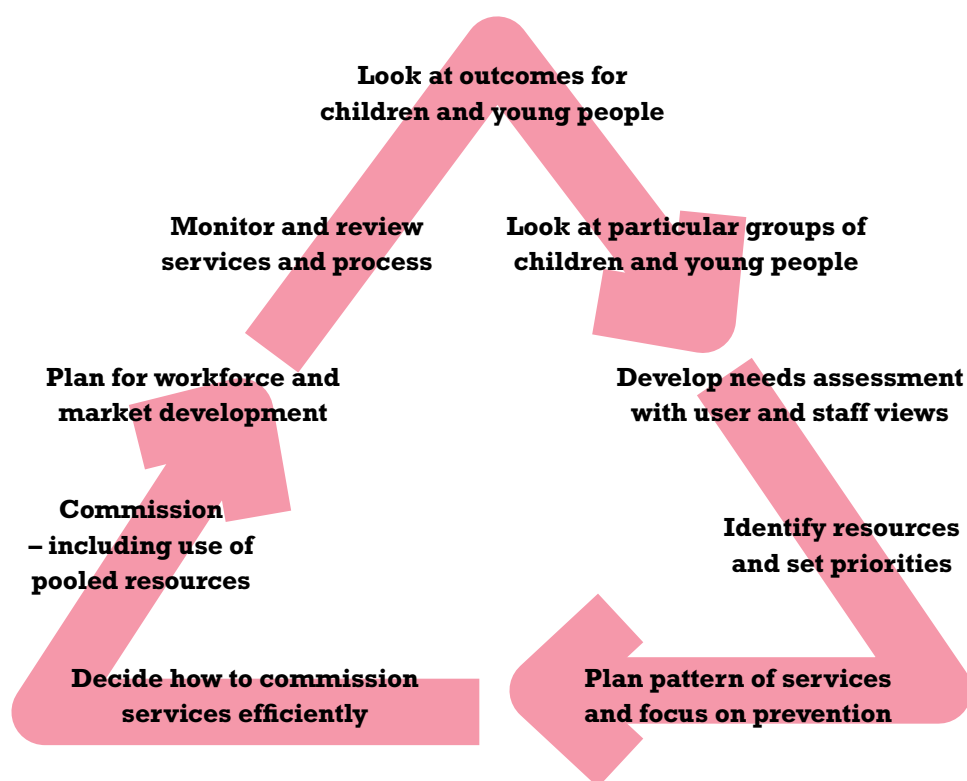
1.2 What is commissioning?

The children's trust defines commissioning as the redesigning, securing and contracting of services to meet the needs of our children and young people:

"Commissioning is the process of specifying, securing and monitoring services to meet people's needs at a strategic level. This applies to all services, whether they are provided by the local authority, the NHS or other public agencies or by the private or voluntary sectors". Making Ends Meet (2003) Audit Commission (www.audit-commission.gov.uk).

Purchasing can be described as the 'securing or buying of services', and contracting as 'putting the purchasing of services in a legally binding agreement'.

The direction from central government is that commissioning should be used as a driver for integrating services. The process for commissioning services set out in the government's Joint Planning and Commissioning Framework for Children, Young People and Maternity Services is the basis by which Southwark commissions all children's services. This cycle is shown on the next page:



Source: HM Government, Joint Planning and Commissioning Framework for Children, Young People and Maternity Services, March 2006

Joint commissioning occurs wherever the meeting of identified needs requires contributions from two or more children's trust partners. In some instances, joint funding (or pooling) will occur, to reduce overheads and generate economies of scale, bringing greater efficiency.

2. Objectives

Our key commissioning objectives for the children's trust are:

- to ensure that services are appropriately monitored and are delivering on our priorities in the Children and Young People's Plan, and the related targets contained in the local area agreement
- to ensure that commissioning occurs at the right level and is related to local aspirations as well as responding to local need
- to joint commission wherever it adds value, including pooling resources in areas which would improve the coordination and delivery of services
- to focus resources into early intervention, while targeting the most specialist services at those in greater need
- to ensure the safeguarding of children is upheld under section 11 of the Children Act
- to promote market development by encouraging innovation and increasing provider diversity
- to achieve value for money without compromising on quality
- to improve procurement practices.

3. Southwark's approach to commissioning

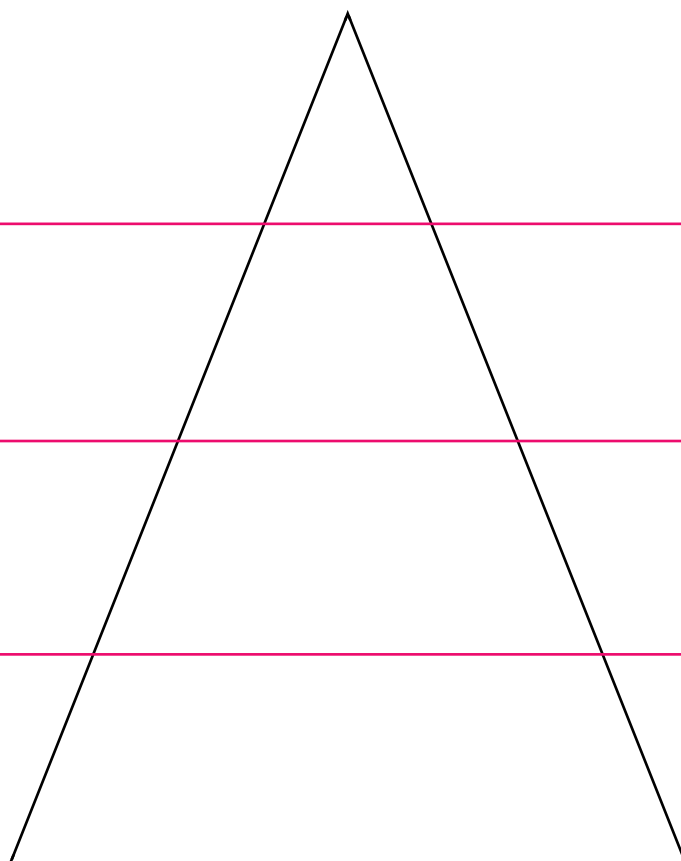
Services are commissioned according to the following levels of need:

Level 4: Acute services – children and families in crisis needing urgent intervention

Level 3: Statutory services – children and families needing intensive assistance

Level 2: Preventative services – vulnerable children and families needing extra support

Level 1: Universal services – all children and families



We aim to improve joint commissioning across all levels where it makes sense. At levels 1 and 2 it is most likely to be developed and delivered through locality based provision and commissioning in line with borough priorities

aligned to local level needs. For higher level needs and specialist provision, joint commissioning is most likely to take place at a borough wide and/or cross borough basis. This is set out on the next page.



Borough wide

Children's services,
Young Southwark and other
statutory partnerships

Locality based

Integrated service
teams at locality level
including family support
and youth inclusion

Individual

Lead practitioners (e.g.
for instance headteachers
or GPs), and young people/
families commissioning
their own services

3.1 Borough wide commissioning

The commissioning unit in Southwark Council's children's services department supports planning and strategic commissioning on a borough wide basis and ensures that services are developed with explicit performance and data management. The unit acts as the guardian of the commissioning standards set out in this framework. Services are reviewed and quality assured by the unit on a quarterly basis.

The role of the commissioning unit is to commission specific services on behalf of the children's trust and to support commissioners to:

- consult with families, young people and staff to identify priority needs and design services to meet those needs in accordance with best practice
- advise senior management on the best way to deliver those services and the resources, structures or procurement routes required and support them in the commissioning process

- use robust procurement processes to select the best possible external providers and to establish and manage contracts to ensure a high standard of service and maintain strong partnerships with providers

- to monitor service quality and outcomes for children, young people and families to inform best practice, improve service design and delivery and inform future commissioning.

The unit actively promotes the use of partnership and developmental commissioning and supports locally based consortia, where these deliver the children's trusts' objectives and clearly add value. It will support commissioning at every level, including helping develop and build commissioning across locality teams.

The unit works collaboratively to secure data and evidence to inform commissioning from inside and outside the directorate, including needs analysis, auditing and benchmarking of services. It also works alongside the public health and performance teams to evaluate the effectiveness of services.

It will, where appropriate, ensure that commissioning options include proposals on budget allocations and the alignment of funding streams to support strategies.

It will examine service delivery models across the children's trust and support innovative approaches to service redesign and ensure that real needs are addressed. It will ensure that efficient approaches are adopted which put children and young people and their families first.

3.2 Locality commissioning

The initial focus for locality commissioning is to redesign level 2 preventative services to support schools within defined localities.

Locality teams have been formed, and will work in partnership with headteachers and GPs to commission evidence based services. The teams will be based in four quadrants:

- Bermondsey and Rotherhithe
- Borough and Bankside and Walworth
- Peckham and Nunhead and Peckham Rye
- Camberwell and Dulwich

The key outcome is to achieve a reduction in referrals to level 3 services and facilitate the locality teams to work with more families to prevent complex needs developing. Health, education and social care will redesign their preventative services to facilitate this. This redesign will be supported by needs assessment on a locality basis and it is envisaged that where gaps and service needs are identified, that locality commissioning will facilitate service development.

3.3 Individual commissioning

Individual commissioning takes place on two levels and involves the spot purchasing of services.

Lead practitioners, for example GPs and headteachers will commission services directly for children and young people. Also children, young people and families will commission services for themselves through methods such as direct payments or the Youth Opportunity Fund programme.

4. Governance

Young Southwark, partnership is the strategic commissioning body for children's services. It sets the commissioning priorities for the borough and provides a forum for senior managers across children's services to commit to joint working and address local issues together in a joined up way.

The local authority and PCT has a children's services management team with managers from health, education and social care reporting to the director of children's services.

The children's services management team will provide the specific leadership and verify performance. This may involve delegating the project leadership to managers within the wider partnership who have the expertise to deliver the agenda.

This will also involve the children's services modernisation board ensuring that good project governance is complied with, and the Southwark Safeguarding Children Board to ensure that commissioning is in line with the statutory requirements contained under Section 11 of the Children Act 2004.

It is expected that the redesign of services or the decision to purchase a unified service on behalf of the partnership will be given effect through using appropriate project management techniques. The commissioning unit will support this process, including:



- ensuring that operationally good project governance is complied with
- advising Young Southwark, the senior management team, the Southwark Primary Care Trust chief executive, the director of children's services and Southwark Safeguarding Board on commissioning issues and associated risks.

5. Commissioning standards

The children's trust will use the following principles when commissioning services.

- **User focused** – processes and services are designed and delivered in a way that meets the needs of individual children and their family and encourages greater independence. They are responsive, easily accessible and of high quality. Services are delivered in a way that supports children and families to take responsibility for their own achievements and wellbeing
- **Involve service users** – services are commissioned and monitored on the basis of user experience and aspirations
- **Celebrate diversity** – services recognise the diversity of children and ensure strategies and services are designed to meet the needs of children across our communities. There must also be a commitment from any provider to a working environment that promotes diversity
- **Inclusive** – mainstream services are delivered in ways that meet the needs of all children, including vulnerable children. Where necessary, these services will be enhanced so children who require specialist support are able to access them within a more inclusive context
- **Evidence based** – services and interventions that are commissioned or provided are based on evidence about effectiveness and impact. Services will be decommissioned if effectiveness and impact cannot be demonstrated
- **Strategically directed** – resources are directed, and services planned in line with the children's trust's priorities
- **Open and transparent** – all decisions and actions relating to commissioning are open and transparent
- **Value for money** – maximum benefit in relation to outcomes for children is achieved, within the resources available
- **Choice** – as far as possible, ensure that children and their families are offered a choice about who delivers their services and how and when the services are provided
- **Outcome focused** – there is a focus on the delivery of improved outcomes for children and their families
- **Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children** – all commissioned services have adequate safeguarding procedures in place

6. Understanding local need

6.1 Needs assessment

Commissioning should always take account of the aspirations for young people alongside current needs.

Southwark holds both management and public health information to aid commissioners in establishing local need.

Southwark's needs assessment for children and young people provides details of Southwark's overall population profile and indicators. It provides data on local trends and local performance in relation to national indicators. It also captures the needs identified by practitioners, young people and families.

This information is also broken down into localities, which will assist commissioning at the local level. All commissioners can access this data, which will be updated on a yearly basis.

There are also primary care trust (PCT) assessments, which provide more detailed information on health needs of children and young people.

6.2 Consultation

Consultation with children and young people, frontline and management staff and the community and voluntary sector is key to assessing local need, identifying gaps in service provision, setting priorities, selecting providers, specifying services and managing performance for the best possible outcomes.

Wherever possible, lead professionals and young people's representatives should be included in specification writing groups and tender evaluation panels, and surveyed in the monitoring process.

Consultation is undertaken in accordance with the Southwark Compact, an agreement between statutory agencies and voluntary, community and faith organisations in Southwark.

7. Integrated commissioning: our priorities

The development of integrated commissioning is a key focus for the children's trust. Our overarching commissioning priorities, which are contained in our Children and Young People's Plan, are:

- commissioning around the Every Child Matters outcomes
- strengthening specialist children's services
- building universal and preventative services

Young Southwark will demonstrate how it will deliver these priorities.



8. Service redesign process

We use the following approach to redesign services:

Preparation

Identify boundaries and liaise with children's services commissioning unit for advice

Review

Carry out a needs assessment. The commissioning unit will hold details of the borough wide needs analysis, broken down by locality. The unit will not be responsible for carrying out detailed needs analysis within certain areas, but will be able to act as a guide for commissioners

Redesigning the child's journey

Draft process maps, including referral pathways. Ensure user consultation is involved in this process

Formal consultation

- Consultation with related managers, staff, other sectors, and service users.
- Revise service specification from feedback

Decision period

Ensure final specification is agreed by the appropriate project board/senior management team

Procurement

(please refer to Southwark Council's procurement guidelines)

Review current contracts and either:

- Re-commission
- Decommission. It is necessary, in circumstances where services are not meeting the needs of the population, to decommission services
- Tender. Guidelines for tendering process are available from the commissioning unit
- Undertake strategic partnering (only for large contracts)

9. Commissioning from the voluntary and community sector

All voluntary and community sector (VCS) commissioning will be in line with the council wide voluntary sector framework. This document sets out the policy and principles governing the arrangements for partnership with, support to, and resourcing of Southwark's VCS.

The commissioning priorities, alongside the needs assessment data, will be used to commission children's services from the VCS.

Children's services supports the Southwark Community Care Forum (SCCF) as the umbrella organisation for the borough. As of April 2008 this organisation will be known as Community Action Southwark (CAS).

Southwark recognises that the VCS provide a special contribution to the community, and

improves choice for individuals through:

- specialist knowledge, experience and skills, which stem from direct experience of user perspective
- particular ways of involving users in service design and delivery
- independence from statutory models of service and wider access to communities
- flexible and innovative ways of working which are independent to institutional pressures
- services often led in a culturally sensitive way, which are non - stigmatising
- support from volunteers often provides a long-term commitment to the welfare of a particular client group
- building social capital locally.
- Up to date health and safety policies and procedures in place, and meet all the requirements contained within the Southwark Safeguarding Board 'Safe Organisation Checklist'
- Robust child protection policies in place and provide evidence that all staff or volunteers who have contact with children and young people have enhanced Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks
- Show that they have an appropriate management information system that reflects plans for activities, casework and individual performance recordings, monitoring and evaluation of services provided, referrals to and from agencies in line with the common assessment framework and the requirements of the annual performance assessment
- Demonstrate they involve young people in decision-making on the delivery of its services

Southwark children's services will advertise all grants and contracts through SCCF.

9.1 Criteria for commissioning

VCS organisations will be commissioned based broadly on the following criteria.

- Demonstrable ability to deliver services which match Southwark's priorities as identified in needs assessment and Every Child Matters outcomes
- Ability to achieve best value for Southwark, delivering a high standard and quality of service at an affordable price
- The majority (at least 80%) of beneficiaries of applications should be Southwark young people aged from birth to 19years (or 11 to 25 years for young people with special needs)

9.2 Types of commissioning

The types of joint commissioning that will be undertaken with the voluntary sector are as follows.

Partnership commissioning (negotiated contracts)

The children's trust will work with voluntary sector organisations to develop services. The aim is to ensure quality, accountability and reliability from the service provider. It also allows for commitment to the local community. It is the most effective mechanism for ensuring high levels of user involvement in specifying and monitoring services. Negotiated contracts should also follow the council's contract standing orders to ensure fairness and transparency.

Developmental commissioning

The children's trust aims to assist smaller organisations to improve their capacity to deliver a service. We recognise the importance of providing skilled commissioning support to smaller voluntary and independent organisations that may be striving to establish their organisational structure and sources of funding. These organisations will need to work in partnership with the trust towards common goals and objectives on agreed priorities that have emerged from our information gathering and needs assessments.

The commissioning unit aims to establish a regular forum, in collaboration with SCCF with these providers to share skills and improve data quality and collection, provide advice resources of funding and share information on learning and development for voluntary sector employees.

The commissioning unit will expect organisations to demonstrate their understanding of Young Southwark's priorities and their practical plans to make a difference to young people's outcomes and futures.

Adhoc commissioning

It is important that commissioning occurs within a structured framework to ensure fairness and consistency. However there needs to be an element of flexibility in the system to be able to respond to emerging needs. For example there may be times where central government require a certain service to be provided, or there is an emerging local need that must be addressed before the next commissioning cycle. Where this occurs it will be an exception rather than a norm.

10. Purchasing and contracting

Commissioning is the process of specifying, securing and monitoring services. To 'secure' the services needed to deliver the outcomes for children in Southwark, different procurement models are used. Which model is used depends on the value and size of the services being procured and also what is going to offer best value and value for money.

At all times, procurement must be done in line with Southwark Council's contract standing orders. These will guide the commissioners to use the correct model such as tendering, or quotes, spot versus block purchasing, or approved/preferred provider lists.

The council's contract standing orders set out the regulatory framework for the entire tender management process. These form part of the council's constitution and must be adhered to by people working for and on behalf of the council.

Commissioners should also refer to the council's procurement guidelines for comprehensive user-friendly guidance on the full spectrum of procurement matters. The guidelines set out best practice and should be followed in all circumstances unless justifiable reasons to do so are otherwise agreed.

Southwark's procurement guidelines and contract standing orders have been developed in accordance with UK and EU procurement law, and are based on the following core principles:

- A free market – competition without discrimination
- Best value
- Fair and transparent decision-making

All of the commissioning unit's contracts are recorded on the council's contracts register, which is published on the council's website in accordance with the council's duties to make contract information and tender opportunities available to the public.

To ensure more stability and capacity to develop services, commissioning will move towards longer term contracting arrangements. Three year contracts where appropriate will be preferred over one year service level agreements. Contracts are legally binding.

11. Monitoring and reviewing

Joint monitoring and reviewing of services provides the last essential link in the commissioning cycle. Successful monitoring and evaluation will help develop an evidence base to assess whether or not the services are delivering effective interventions and achieving success in the identified priority areas. Evaluation of the information will also lead to changes in service provision accordingly.

There are three steps in effective monitoring.

1. Establish a baseline for monitoring the service prior to implementation, derived from the desired outcomes.

There should be clarity on the aim of the service, and why it is needed (needs assessment). This should be included in a business case.

This information will include a mix of qualitative and quantitative information. This must include gaining feedback and consulting with users of the service and their parents/carers where appropriate.

Areas of any performance measures the council must achieve (JAR, APA etc) must also be identified to ensure accurate information is collected to feed into these.

2. Collect and evaluate monitoring at regularly set intervals.

It is recommended that monitoring should occur throughout a contracts life to ensure that the service is delivering the intended outcomes.

3. Keep the collection format consistent where possible to allow ease of comparisons over time.

Where organisations are multi-funded it is essential that information requested is consistent to ensure that duplication is avoided.

Evaluation of the monitoring information will allow us to assess the impact of the services and projects specific to the identified outcomes for the service users. It will also identify how and why services succeeded in, or failed to, achieve their objectives.



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