Sefton CYPS

Strategic Commissioning Manual

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# Introduction

Commissioning continues to be seen as an important process for securing better outcomes and meeting increasing budget pressures.

Commissioning is all about the most effective and efficient way of using all the available resources to improve outcomes for children, young people and their families. At a time when many local authorities are looking for efficiency savings, the principles of effective commissioning described in this manual become even more important. We are seeing greater variation in local authority areas due to a reduction in externally imposed measures and a greater emphasis on localism. This makes it even more important that local leaders, including directors of children’s services, chief executives, elected members, GPs, head teachers and others, come up with an overarching strategy that is an agreed framework for how best to spend available resources in the public interest and wherever possible.

All of those who provide children’s services across the system are gradually appreciating the commissioning process as a way of improving children’s lives. The challenge is to mainstream commissioning in all services, professionalise our workforce, and ensure that services are radically redesigned around children and young people. This means rapidly increasing capacity and capability, to enable this we need to have a shared understanding of how commissioning can improve standards of delivery. This manual describes the acknowledged standards of good commissioning, it is designed to help leaders, commissioners, providers and the communities involved in children’s services to develop a shared understanding of what commissioning is and the essential components that make it work.

Commissioning is the process for deciding how to use the total resource available for children, young people and families in order to improve outcomes in the most efficient, effective, fair and sustainable way. Commissioners are not just those with ‘commissioning’ in their job title but include everyone working in Children’s services who contribute to the commissioning process from strategy through to delivery.

# The commissioning process

There are many different descriptions of the commissioning process, often reflecting specific local circumstances. At the most fundamental level, commissioning is about ensuring that services are designed around improving outcomes for children and young people. Effective joint planning and commissioning can necessitate new partnerships, the redistribution of power towards the user, strategic understanding of how all outcomes in the local area are met, and a more commercially minded approach to procurement – all focused on the child, young person and family. It is important that all who provide children’s services, across the system, have a shared vision for local commissioning. The traditional commissioning cycle still encapsulates commissioning activity in its broadest sense.



**Analyse/Understand**

We must recognise the outcomes we want to achieve, identify local needs, resources and priorities and agree what the desired end product should be. This involves gathering the views of service users (children, young people and their families) so that services can be configured most appropriately to address their needs within available resources. Providers are a key source of information and insight in this phase. Their views of the needs of children, young people and families must be included, as well as their insight into what types of services and service configuration may be most appropriate in response. This should take into account – and inform – other needs assessment processes, especially the joint strategic needs assessment between the local authority and local health bodies.

**Plan**

We will map out and consider different ways of addressing the needs identified through the needs assessment above. How can they be addressed effectively, efficiently, fairly and in a sustainable way? Optimal use can then be made of available resources. Providers should be involved at this stage to add their expertise to the discussion. Commissioning strategies should reflect the full use of resources including:

 • Finance

 •The workforce

• Facilities (location/buildings).

• families and communities.

**Do**

We will advise investment decisions based on the appropriate action identified in the ‘plan’ stage to secure delivery of the desired service or services.

**Review**

Monitor service delivery against expected outcomes and report performance against the plan. Part of the review role should include considering whether the strategic plans are addressing identified needs and monitoring whether all partner agencies are acting in accordance with the commitments they made. The review should feed into the next phase of commissioning as it is a key source of information for the ‘understand’ and ‘plan’ phases. Commissioners will actively seek to involve service users at each commissioning stage so that they become co-designers and co-producers of the positive outcomes which commissioning strives to achieve.

#  Commissioning principles

We follow our commissioning principles which set out, at a high level, our approach to commissioning across all levels of the local area:

* Basing all decisions on evidence of a favourable impact on outcomes and value for money
* Keeping children and young people at the heart of all commissioning activity
* Adherence to changing policy and government guidance
* Providing early intervention services at the earliest appropriate moment
* Agreeing to close the gap between those falling behind and the rest
* Sustaining stable relationships between key practitioners and vulnerable families
* Using open and transparent processes that build confident partnerships
* Using commissioning not just to retain existing services or commission new ones but, where necessary, to decommission services which are inefficient, ineffective, inequitable or unsustainable
* Making all processes lean and aiming for continuous improvement
* Using contestability and packaging of work for small providers
* Providing challenge for all practitioners
* Taking account of value for money in all decisions
* Use of shared processes
* Providing information to enable performance management.
* Ensuring social value

Together the process, principles and standards contribute to the local commissioning framework – the rules of local commissioning. by sharing and checking understanding by all who provide services for children, we can expect higher levels of commitment and collaboration. Ensuring that partners follow through on these commitments, however, requires strong leadership, skills in managing change, and effective performance management.

# Strategies and plans

This Commissioning Manual is aligned with both Sefton 2030 and My Sefton, CYP Plan 2020-2025. The Strategy also links to the Joint Commissioning Strategy and SEND Strategy.

The manual reflects our One Council Principles:

* We put people at the heart of what we do.
* We listen, value and respect each other’s views.
* We develop a culture of challenge, ownership, innovation and improvement.
* We are ambassadors for Sefton.
* We are responsive and efficient.
* We are clear about what we can and cannot do.

This manual has its foundations in the belief that every child has the right to a family life. Wherever possible and safe we will support children to live with their parents or family. When this is not possible we take responsibility to ensure that they live with supportive and nurturing families. In the event that living in a family home is not an option we will make every effort to ensure they live in a children’s home which replicates family life as closely as possible. Once in care every effort will be made to either plan for the safe return of children to their families or have a permanent alternative family as soon as possible.

Our strategic commissioning plans will also be informed by

 • any crime and disorder reduction plans

• housing strategies

• school business or improvement plans

• workforce and market development strategies

• the Local Children’s Safeguarding Board Business Plan

 • procurement strategies

 • business plans for voluntary and private businesses providing children’s services

• joint strategic needs assessments.

A strategic plan steers the commissioning plans and strategies for particular groups of children and young people. These plans will specify in greater detail the commissioning priorities for those groups and how they will be delivered.

# Relationships between levels of commissioning

The different levels of commissioning include:

* national
* regional
* sub-regional
* local area or strategic
* service or practice
* individual.

There is usually a rationale for why one particular level is better than another for a particular population or category of needs and type of support in place to promote effective commissioning. For instance, commissioning for better health outcomes is done at a regional level, while pupil place planning is done at local authority level, working with other authorities according to cross-boundary pupil flows. In other situations, the decision will be based on local circumstances.

We will adhere to our commissioning principles regardless of the level of commissioning.

# Governance

We rely on good governance: clear direction, resourcing, accountability and delegation. Below is detailed our reporting mechanisms and structure.

# Governance Process

**CYP SMT**

 **Executive Commissioning**

 **Joint Commissioning**

 **AD Commissioning**

 **Service Manager**

 **Practice SMT**

 **CommissioningManager 3**

 **CommissioningManager 1**

 **CommissioningManager 2**

 **Placements
Manager**

 **Business Support 2**

 **Pl Officer**

 **Pl Officer**

 **Pl Officer**

 **Bus
Sup 1**

 **Commissioning Officer**

 **Commissioning Officer**

 **Commissioning Officer**

**Contracts
0-19
QA**

**SEND
CWD
QA**

**Residential
IFA
Inhouse
QA**

**Key**

Pl = Placements Officer

# Sharing resources

There is a range of ways that we can share resources to support the efficient delivery of improved outcomes for children and young people. Financial alignment can range from pooled budgets delegated to a partnership for a specified purpose to alignment of budgets so that funds remain in the control of individual organisations but are used in a coherent and cooperative way to support a shared aim or objective.

Pooled budgets can offer several benefits, including:

* underpinning partnership arrangements with a clear legal agreement
* encouraging organisations to focus on shared outcomes and identify more efficient ways of working
* encouraging innovative and user-focused service design
* reducing the transaction costs, overheads, bureaucracy and delay involved in accessing a number of separate funding streams – particularly helpful for children and young people with multiple needs.
* Preventing duplication

However, pooling budgets can be very difficult to develop in practice because of differences between structures, priorities, systems and performance management approaches. Partners that have successfully implemented pooled budgets tend to have:

* shared values and a commitment to service users
* a willingness to think outside conventional organisational boundaries and focus on outcomes
* strong and complex local networks and good relationships between key players
* a cohesive children and young people’s partnership board that brings together all the stakeholder groups.

# Commissioning mechanisms

When it comes either to commissioning or, in some cases, de-commissioning services, there are many different mechanisms and tools we employ. These range from competition, service redesign and individual commissioning to influencing and working with local communities. Different mechanisms have different results and lead to more or less efficiency, effectiveness, equitability and (economic, environmental or social) sustainability. Commissioners are familiar with a wide range of commissioning methods and can choose the right one for a particular service, market, population or group of needs. For instance, spot purchasing is generally inefficient, but may be appropriate for small or one-off purchases in a competitive market. The active participation of children, young people and their families in commissioning helps to ensure that services reflect their needs. Engagement can include population surveys, individual participation, choice, involvement in decision making, and personalised budgets. Examples of these are evaluating services, appointing senior staff, and helping to decide which residential placement is best. Relationships with providers are also important. While the principles which inform relationships need to be consistent, open and fairly applied to all providers, how the process is managed in practice may vary depending on needs, amount of leverage, the market and the cost and risk of services. Different relationships will encourage different behaviour and it is important that commissioners understand how to influence and promote behaviour that will lead to the desired outcomes.

# Optimising resources

The children’s services system has a number of inputs or resources, such as money, other forms of capital, information technology, workforces, markets and providers, parents and communities. It is advisable for commissioners to understand the resources they can control or influence across children’s services and optimise their use to secure value for money. Focusing on outcomes and efficiency throughout the commissioning cycle can be a challenge, especially when there are competing demands to manage, such as budget pressures, political imperatives, and the sometimes conflicting priorities of different organisations. Frameworks/Strategic Partnerships that focus thought and processes on evidence of the impact on outcomes can really help in this regard. To promote efficiency, it is regarded as essential for commissioners to optimise the resources in the system, through, for example:

* optimising the use of the money that commissioners control, and more importantly, influencing the money across the system that is not directly controlled, such as benefits and schools grants
* supporting parents to improve outcomes for their own children through co-production
* making best use of community provision and volunteers
* making effective links with housing providers and adult health and social care
* ensuring that facilities are in the right place, the right condition and that their use is maximised
* pooling resources
* developing and managing a specific market
* designing the right balance between workforce skills, capacity and people’s location.

Ideally, the commissioning process should drive efficiencies and generate value for money. In our experience, commissioners who are able systematically to map and, where possible, quantify resources are better placed to commission efficiently (Market Position Statements).

Supported by appropriate governance structures and led by evidence of effective service delivery models, we ensure that the children’s services system is efficient, effective, equitable and sustainable and, where this is not the case, facilitate change. Along with providers and communities we will work together to ensure that providers can respond to commissioners by reviewing existing services against new commissioning strategies. This type of cooperation will help providers demonstrate their impact against the outcome priorities shared by children’s services and their partners.

# Targeting

We will distribute and target resources at particular aspects of need in order to improve outcomes for children and young people. By understanding the two per cent of families that have greatest need, services can be directed and integrated to support them. Data to understand our families is essential. We will be clear about when to target resources at particular users to be most efficient and effective. We will also ensure that budgets from different sectors are aligned and are mutually reinforcing. This may include decommissioning some existing services to release resources for new services. Pathway analysis is a helpful approach for understanding users’ experiences of life or services and highlighting where the most efficient and effective points are for identifying gaps and moving resources.

# Data and intelligence

It is important that we understand the needs and aspirations of whole populations and how these are influenced by the varying needs of individuals. An important element of our work is to collect performance management evidence on how efficiently and effectively each service is improving outcomes. We will draw on national and local research to guide commissioning decisions. The joint strategic needs assessment provides a mechanism for gathering and analysing relevant data at a high level. Sources of data for integration include national statistics such as demographics, performance management of teams and contracts, needs assessment, procurement data (such as market analysis or provider costs), users’ views, staff feedback, and individual assessments (for example, the Common Assessment Framework). We will test the quality of a service by obtaining direct, independent feedback from customers by, for instance, asking young people – including those who choose not to use the service – about their views of services and how they contribute to better outcomes. We will embed the voice of the child performance management.

# Performance management

Where performance management indicates that services are inefficient, ineffective or unsustainable, we will either support and challenge that service to improve, or decommission it and find other provision to meet the identified needs. We will gather good-quality performance information and analysis to help us to judge the efficiency and effectiveness of services, and to justify changes to internal and external services and contracts in order to achieve an excellent standard of service delivery. Over time, we will develop systems that monitor outputs, finances and, crucially, quality of service (including customer feedback) in order to reach a view about whether outcomes are improving. Performance management techniques will influence the way providers behave and commissioners will want to ensure that providers focus clearly on outcomes.

# All decisions are based on improving outcomes

All decisions will be based on improving outcomes for children, young people and their families, with a clear rationale based on robust analysis and evidence. This focus on outcomes runs through all aspects of the commissioning process: mapping needs and demand, ensuring user participation, using outcomes-based contracts and monitoring service effectiveness. All of this will be underpinned by continuous improvement. We will use evidence of what works to improve and re-configure services. We will be credible and robust professionals, able to effect change and achieve better outcomes by working with and through all of those who provide children’s services across the system.

# Managing change

Commissioning is not just a technical process but is at the heart of the system Commissioning decisions will sometimes indicate the need for system redesign and culture change which will, in turn, necessitate effective change management leadership and techniques to ensure that the new design is embedded and becomes ‘business as usual’. We will manage the change we create and cope with fluctuations in the external commissioning environment, such as financial crises, new policy developments or demographic changes. We understand change management methods and will ensure that any changes that occur as a result of commissioning decisions are appropriately managed across all delivery partners and sustained to ensure that outcomes for children and young people are continuously improved.

# Tendering Process

Competitive Tendering is a process used to ensure competition takes place in contract evaluations and awards by the Public Sector. By requesting bids from several different suppliers or contractors for the supply of goods or services, we are increasing our opportunities to ensure value for money, improve quality and consider social value.



# Frameworks

A Framework agreement is a type of contract which is commonly used for multiple approved supplier agreements in order to establish long term relationships for the provision of goods or services to the buyer or their associates. Using Framework agreements is an efficient way to work as there is no need for the full tender exercise each time there is a requirement for new or renewed goods or services.

Similar to a tender for a contract, the framework tender is usually a mix of price, quality and social value. The buyer is responsible for evaluating the framework bids and subsequently approving a number of bidders to be awarded a place on the framework.  When the buyer has a requirement or perhaps a specific project, they will usually run a mini competition, or call off a selected supplier, which reduces the timescales and complexity of awarding contracts.

The level of risk in using a framework may be reduced as the process of tendering is the responsibility of the framework owner. The tendering process can be fraught with challenges and risk if the correct procedures are not followed to the letter of the law.

# Strategic Partnerships

A strategic partnership is a business partnership which involves the sharing of resources between two or more organisations, suppliers or contractors in order to help all involved to achieve success in their joint objectives. Strategic partners are usually non-competing businesses which often share the risks and rewards of the decisions of the organisations involved in the process.

# Co-Production and Voice of the Child

The following principles of equality, diversity, accessibility and reciprocity are critical values for putting co-production into action.



**Equality – everyone has assets**

Co-production starts from the idea that no one group or person is more important than any other group or person. So everyone is equal and everyone has assets to bring to the process. Assets refer to skills, abilities, time and other qualities that people have. This is different from approaches that focus on people’s problems and what they cannot do.

Much of the writing on co-production focuses on the need to recognise the assets of people who use services and others in the community. However, the assets that workers, practitioners, managers and other professionals bring to the process also need to be recognised.

**Diversity**

It follows from the previous principle that diversity and inclusion are important values in co-production. This can be challenging but it is important that co-production projects are pro-active about diversity.

It has been found in work on the involvement and participation of people who use services that some groups are under-represented or excluded from such work, and this is likely to apply equally to co-production.

People who use services can be excluded because of equalities issues or because of the nature of their impairment. The main groups likely to experience exclusion are:

* people from black and minority ethnic communities
* people from lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender communities
* people who communicate differently
* people with dementia
* older people who need a high level of support
* people who are not affiliated to any organised group or ‘community’.

Where a person lives can also be a barrier to participation: people living in residential homes, homeless people, Gypsy and Traveller communities and people in prison experience exclusion on this basis.

**Access**

Access needs to be recognised as a fundamental principle of co-production as the process needs to be accessible if everyone is going to take part on an equal basis. Accessibility is about ensuring that everyone has the same opportunity to take part in an activity fully, in the way that suits them best.

As well as physical access, making sure that information is accessible and that it is provided in appropriate formats is a key part of making sure that everyone can take part in co-production. This is important as co-production can bring together diverse groups of people, from managers and practitioners to people who use services, carers and families. It may also involve staff coming from different disciplines and backgrounds. Some of the language used can be problematic because it can involve jargon that is inaccessible. And it is particularly important that all stakeholders understand the term co-production itself in the same way. Getting the language right so that everyone understands each other is therefore essential.

**Reciprocity**

Reciprocity is a key concept in co-production. It has been defined as ensuring that people receive something back for putting something in and building on people’s desire to feel needed and valued. The idea has been linked to ‘mutuality’ and all parties involved having responsibilities and expectations.

Older people can feel supported by services that use reciprocity and mutuality in their approach. Methods can be formal – based on reward schemes such as time banks – or informal – being about developing positive relationships. Flexibility is important to the success of working in this way. Clear communication and raising people’s awareness are also important factors.

The word ‘reciprocity’ may be considered as a piece of jargon when discussing co-production. It may not seem particularly accessible but there is not another word that fully captures what it means. Also, if used carefully, with a full explanation and discussion with everyone involved in the co-production process, the term can form a positive part of the process and help to highlight the sense that co-production is new and different from previous approaches.

# Dynamic Purchasing Systems (DPS)

The application of DPS are very similar to Frameworks in how they operate, except they must be a completely end to end electronically processed. A supplier can join a DPS at any time as a DPS can be constructed as an open-ended contract. For the purpose of evaluation the cost, quality and the social value split is not fixed and a client can tailor the specification to their own requirements.  In addition, clients can determine pricing models, personalise the KPI’s and the form of contract.  All contracts procured under a DPS must be undertaken through further competition – you cannot Direct Award, unlike Frameworks that are ranked.  A DPS is significantly more flexible for many clients.

The application process to secure a place on a DPS is also a lot simpler for suppliers.  The application is a single stage, with suppliers applying using an online Supplier Questionnaire (SQ) only. This is unlike a Framework agreement, where the suppliers complete a SQ which is then followed by an Invitation to Tender.  Once approved, suppliers can then be admitted onto the DPS. The approved suppliers (known as “service providers” at this point) are then entitled to be invited to all further competition opportunities for the DPS for goods or services for which they are identified as potential service providers.  When a supplier fails the SQ, they are allowed to reapply at any time, unlike applications to join Framework agreements. This makes the DPS method of procurement more flexible for suppliers and the introduction of potential new suppliers than the process used in setting up framework agreements.

# Outcome Based Commissioning

Outcome based commissioning (ObC) focuses not on activities and processes but on results. The point of an outcomes-based approach is to shift thinking from how a service operates (what it does) to the good that it accomplishes (what it achieves).

# Spot Purchasing

There will be occasions when the needs of an individual child cannot be met through partnership agreements or through a framework. In these circumstances it is necessary to “spot purchase”.

A spot-purchase contract is an arrangement under which a Local Authority procures care or support services for a specific individual. The contract is directly between the authority and the service provider. When circumstances require this procedure to be used, it is essential to provide justification why the usual procedures are not applicable. Once the justification to use spot purchasing has been drafted it is essential this justification is checked and authorised in writing by a Head of Service or Director.

# Procurement Regulations

Historically, the EU has adopted legislation to ensure that the EU Public Procurement market is open and competitive to encourage suppliers to be treated equally and fairly. The EU rules range from advertising of contracts, procedures for assessing company credentials to awarding the contracts and remedies (penalties) when these rules are breached. Since the withdrawal of the UK from the EU, measures have been taken for the UK to continue with EU Procurement Regulations while the UK progresses with new legislation through Parliament. The new legislation has progressed, with several amendments now required, which will mean the new Public Procurement Regulations are unlikely to be ratified before January 2023. Once this has happened the Sefton Procurement intranet pages will be fully updated with advice and support as required from the Procurement Team.

Local Authority buyers need to also be aware of The Local Government (Transparency Requirements) (England) Regulations 2015 as these regulations require additional contracting information to be published beyond the legislative requirements of the Public Contracts Regulations 2015. For further information on any Procurement matters please contact the Procurement Team whose contact details are available on the Sefton intranet pages.

# Monitoring and Evaluation, Quality Assurance

When working with children, young people and families we will ensure that we constantly explore and build on areas of strength and agree effective plans for improvement where risks are identified.

Similarly, we will constantly explore and build on areas of strength in the quality of

services we deliver to children and young people and their families and agree effective plans for improvement where the quality of practice does not meet required standards.

We have developed a quality assurance framework which sets out the principles and standards of practice expected from across Children’s Services. It also sets out the mechanisms we will use to assess the quality of our practice, systems and processes, and use the learning to make improvements in practice and outcomes.

We will monitor all of the contracts we commission on a quarterly basis. We will develop an accurate Contracts Register so that evaluation and re-commissioning/de-commissioning is scheduled well in advance with colleagues in Procurement.

# Quality Assurance Officers

* Contribute to the promotion of effective arrangements for governance of commissioning, contracting and procurement activity and compliance with legal, ethical, social and regulatory responsibilities.
* Contribute to the development, maintenance and implementation of systems and practices for the effective management of risk, quality and quality assurance in relation to commissioning and contracting processes.
* Contribute to the evaluation of potential service providers to ensure that they are viable, reliable and able to deliver required services and share a commitment to the Council’s aims and values.
* To work with the Commissioning Support Manager and Commissioning Officers to proactively manage existing contracts, monitor performance, plan and undertake service reviews and monitoring visits.
* To provide written reports on the findings of service reviews and monitoring visits, including making recommendations and agreeing action plans with providers to achieve the quality of service and outcomes specified and where necessary secure contract compliance through contractual procedures.
* To develop strong, positive and professional working relationships with colleagues, providers, regulators, stakeholders and service users, providing advice and assistance on legislative and contractual requirements and service standards to ensure commissioned services are working satisfactorily.
* To identify and promote best practice and assist providers to improve their performance and the quality of their services.
* To engage appropriately with service users and carers for the effective planning, monitoring and evaluation of services.
* Respond appropriately to concerns expressed, by internal and external sources, about performance of service providers, including notifying appropriate parties accordingly and assisting in the investigation of those concerns.
* Inform and update members of the Commissioning Support team and other relevant parties of any potential issues which could affect the quality or delivery of services and offer guidance as to possible solutions and alternatice courses of action.
* Contribute to Safeguarding Procedures regarding contractual and quality matters undertaking any complex investigations where required.

# Placements Team

The Placements Team is a team created to provide sourcing support for Placements and Support Packages. A Placement search is a shared process between the Placements Team and Social Worker. As a Council we want to be able to help ensure that all care we commission not only meets the needs of the individuals and their families but is sourced in a timely manner and is a fair, consistent price. (See Placements Manual)

* Identify and arrange residential, fostering, supported accommodation, short break placements for vulnerable children and young people following a social work assessment
* Work with Council Services and Independent Providers to find appropriate placements which meet the needs of individual children, ensuring that quality and safety checks are completed, negotiating and brokering individual arrangements with Providers
* Participate proactively in decisions in respect of placement matching for individual children and the delivery of good outcomes, quality service and value for money
* Respond positively and professionally to referrals from Social Workers, ensuring the quality of information enables the identification of placements that meet the child’s or young person’s assessed needs
* Work on your own initiative, responding to referrals for placements by quality assuring them and providing robust challenge as necessary to social workers to drive up the quality of referrals and maximise the opportunity for identifying the best placement for children and young people

* Receive, screen and track progress of referrals providing updates to social workers regarding placement finding activity. This includes Identifying key information within a child’s referral and comparing it to the suitability of available placements

# Placements Team Manager

To manage the Children’s Placements Team including its operational delivery, its performance and its human and financial resources

To ensure that the placements sufficiency and commissioning ambitions are realised through effective leadership and management within your service area

To support staff, enabling a strength-based approach to service delivery, ensuring that the placement finding team is highly effective, outcome based and meets statutory, financial and legal requirements through highly effective performance management oversight

# Business Support

**JOB PURPOSE**

Working as part of a team providing an efficient and effective administrative service to a range of teams within the Strategic Support Service.

**MAIN DUTIES**

* To prioritise own workload, work to pre-determined deadlines and engage in multiple initiatives simultaneously, with a pursuit of excellence.
* Attend to visitors with the correct salutation, with due regard to maintaining a customer focus and for the security of staff, the building and the equipment belonging to the service.
* Undertake clerical tasks including answering the telephone, photocopying, filing, faxing, emailing, shredding and archiving documentation, producing standard letters, effectively and within agreed timescales.
* Respond to general correspondence and enquiries, face-to-face, across the telephone and/or in writing, from a wide range of contacts using the correct salutation. Provide a response where possible, take and record messages, generate and send standard information or redirect more complex matters to appropriate officers, departments or agencies.
* Process post - receive, date stamp, sort and distribute incoming, outgoing, internal and external mail in accordance with service standards.
* Administer financial matters in the service in accordance with financial regulations. Handle and account for cash. Monitor income and expenditure across budget lines. Process requisitions for goods and services and process invoices and bills through appropriate transactional systems, verifying expenditure and liaising with external agencies to solve inaccuracies when required.
* Administer stationery and other consumables within an agreed budget. Catalogue resources, monitor stock levels, distribute and re-order were necessary. Ensure accurate records are maintained and undertake audits as required.
* Administer the issuing or replacement of identification cards required for all staff within the Service, working collaboratively with Sefton Security Services.
* Liaise with the ICT Client Service regarding procurement, registration, allocation, upgrades, cancellation, recycling and delivery of mobile phones. Instigate mitigating action for lost or stolen devices by informing the ICT Client and contracted providers. Produce ad-hoc reports on request of the Service Managers or Head of Service for monitoring device usage, applying discretion and maintaining confidentiality.
* Input/enter or update data into Council IT systems as directed, maintaining database records and having due regard to accuracy, confidentiality and data protection.
* Support commissioning, contracting and procurement processes by assisting in maintaining contract documentation and procurement registers, ensuring that records of commissioned services are accurate.
* Support the co-ordination of client surveys, public engagement, consultation and communication. Prepare and distribute questionnaires and/or marketing materials, collate responses, input data and support the analysis and reporting of information to inform decisions.
* Support the organisation of relevant conferences, seminars, workshops and events, ensuring that appropriate arrangements and bookings are made and that all costs are met within budget.
* To provide support in facilitating meetings, assisting with the organisation of room bookings, the distribution of agendas/records of meetings and, where appropriate, taking notes where directed.
* To undertake any other duties appropriate to the work and grade of the post, as may be directed from time to time to meet the exigencies of the service.

# Commissioning Managers

**TBD**

# Commissioning Officers

* To support the commissioning function so as to ensure that a strategic approach is taken, in line with Council priorities and with local and national policy objectives.
* To understand the needs of Sefton residents and develop the local market to meet those needs in the most cost-effective way, promoting and providing choice to service users.
* To develop specialist understanding of the commissioning environment within specific areas of need, activity and service types, including: outcomes required; national and local strategies and policies; the nature of the local and national supply market; and the potential for future developments and innovations.
* To develop and implement evidence-based commissioning policies and strategies to achieve positive outcomes.
* To promote effective arrangements for governance of commissioning, contracting and procurement activity and compliance with legal, ethical, social and regulatory responsibilities.
* To support the development, maintenance and implementation of systems and practices for the effective management of risk, quality and quality assurance in relation to commissioning and contracting processes.
* To encourage innovative approaches to commissioning and commissioned activity, initiating, implementing and supporting change and improvement in services, provision and systems.
* To ensure that service users and carers are appropriately engaged in all commissioning activities, including the development of commissioning strategies and the planning, development and evaluation of services.
* Advise Council staff and Providers in relation to the Council’s commissioning and contracting processes, tendering procedures, government and European Commission directives, and contract documentation.
* Support operational staff/service area leads to specify service requirements, including service objectives, inputs, outputs, outcomes and monitoring arrangements.
* Oversee the evaluation of potential service providers to ensure that they are viable, reliable and able to deliver required services and share a commitment to the Councils aims and values.
* Prepare and present written and verbal reports, as necessary, to Council Committees, Senior Managers, service area teams, partners and providers.
* To manage Contracts to achieve outcomes and improve contract performance.
* To assist with the analysis of expenditure and financial risk, and to account for (e.g. monitoring, auditing, quality assuring, authorising etc.) expenditure relating to commissioned services and departmental budgets.
* To ensure effective communication and information sharing within the commissioning teams, relevant service areas, Senior Management and with colleagues and partners within and outside the Council.
* To ensure that service areas are advised of problems which exist in relation to service provision and service providers, offering guidance as to possible solutions and alternative courses of action.
* Respond, in an appropriate manner, to concerns expressed about existing services and/or their providers.
* Support service users and/or carers where appropriate in resolving provider issues regarding commissioning activities and assisting in the development of service specifications.
* Participate in Safeguarding strategies and allocate where necessary any ongoing actions defined from strategies.
* Support the maintenance of the Council’s List(s) of Approved (Contracted) Providers.

Facilitate, attend, lead and chair meetings, including, project groups, service user forums and provider forums, as necessary and appropriate to the role.

**Availability**

To ensure that adequate cover is provided at all times a Placements Officer will be available between 9-5.30 Monday – Friday.

No more than 2 Staff from Placements or 2 Commissioning Officers will be on leave at any time.

This Manual will be used to support mutual understanding of roles and responsibilities and will clarify some of the regulatory framework within which the commissioning function operates.

The processes contained within this manual have been signed off by SMT failure to follow documented procedure will result in escalation.

# Commissioning Processes

## Requires Improvement/Inadequate Rated Provision Process

Following a Requires Improvement or Inadequate Ofsted rating the notification will be sent to the DCS, HoS Commissioning, HoS Children’s Services and the Commissioning Service Manager. The Process detailed in this document will then be followed.

Any future placement request should follow the following process:

* All placement requests should ask providers to submit their current Ofsted Judgement and date of last inspection/review
* Wherever possible RI or inadequate provisions should not be used
* If an RI provision or inadequate provision is a good match to the child or the only option, then the Placements Team will ask for a summary of the Ofsted requirement and their action plan
* This should then be escalated to the CSW Service Manager and Commissioning Service Manager
* The Commissioning Service Manager will then liaise with the CSW Service Manager and agree an appropriate risk management approach which will include a quality visit to the provider
* Where it is agreed for a child to be placed in an RI/inadequate provision the CSW and the IRO should be alerted, and additional monitoring of the placement should be implemented
* The Commissioning Team Quality Assurance Visits Schedule will prioritise inadequate and RI provisions in accordance with the concerns that have been raised, how the action plan is progressing, further visits from Ofsted and feedback.

**Process for responding to inadequate notification of placement**



## Challenge and Escalation Process

Effective partnership working is vital to ensure that outcomes for children and families are central to all assessment, planning and intervention. This includes the need to consider differing views and experiences which evidence the value of exchanging ideas and developing critical thinking with regards to how best to achieve improved outcomes. There will be times when disagreements occur, or concerns are raised and require informal resolution and possibly lead to formal escalation. There needs to be a clear process in place to achieve and evidence this.

Principles:

* Challenge is positive and should always be focused on the desired outcome for the child and family.
* The safety and wellbeing of the child is always paramount.
* It is the responsibility of each individual professional and agency to progress challenge if they are not in agreement with the outcome of any aspect of assessment, planning or intervention (any level of need and support)
* Challenge should be restorative, and relationship based.
* Language should be respectful and where possible discussions with the relevant practitioners should take place first.
* Challenge and escalation should be resolved in a timely manner.
* Challenge must be evidenced based and recorded on the child’s file, including details of how the resolution improved outcomes for the child and/or family.
* If you have an immediate concern regarding the safety of a child, this should be reported to ??????.

Ensure your safeguarding lead is consulted throughout the escalation process. Please attempt to resolve any disagreements informally, before initiating the formal process. Inform the Lead Professional / IRO / child protection/ young person’s plan coordinator or Chair of multi-agency meeting for information and monitoring. The process detailed below should be followed in the case of a concern or disagreement escalation.

Challenge and Escalation Process Provider Concerns

Issue remains unresolved through stages

Timescales should be agreed at each stage ensuring outcome for the child dictates timescales. Each stage must not exceed 10 days.

A clear record should be kept and shared at each stage.

Issue remains unresolved through stages

Timescales should be agreed at each stage ensuring outcome for the child dictates timescales. Each stage must not exceed 10 days.

A clear record should be kept and shared at each stage.

**Professional disagreement/escalation process for looked after children and young people residing in Sefton**

#

## Process for Unregulated Placements

**Introduction**

Sefton Council is committed to the health and well-being of all its residents and to building strong and sustainable neighbourhoods.

In order to achieve these aspirations, Children’s Services will ensure that all children receive the support that they need for happy and secure childhoods which give them the best start in life.

An essential element in achieving these objectives is to ensure the effective safeguarding of all unregulated placements, where they are necessary, for all Sefton’s children in care.

There has been sustained media coverage regarding unregulated placements, specifically highlighting the vulnerability of young people to exploitation and the inadequacy of some of the provisions.

Nationally, partners in children’s services and the police service have raised concerns about the safety of children and young people in unregulated placements. As a result of these concerns, in this document Sefton is making a clear statement of its policy and procedures relating to these placements.

When considering placing a looked after child in an unregistered and hence, unregulated placement, Sefton will always seek to discharge our duties within the relevant legislation and statutory guidance;

* Section 22 (6)(d) of The Children Act 1989
* Regulation 27 of the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Regulations 2010
* The Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations. Volume 2. 2015
* Care Standards Act 2000

**What type of placement is deemed a crisis placement?**

For the purposes of this guidance, a crisis placement relates to a placement that is available for a child/young person **immediately** for a **set period**.

These can be activity-based placements, outward bound placements or placements in a children’s home for a limited time period.

The duration of the placement will vary and is usually set by the provider. They range from 28 days to 90 days

**What type of placement is deemed an unregulated placement?**

Some establishments and types of accommodation are not required to register with Ofsted. These are sometimes known as ‘unregulated settings’.

A service where the accommodation is **not permanent** (such as a tent) or is **constantly moving** (such as a boat, narrow boat or motorised caravan), or has **no permanent base** is unlikely to meet the definition of a children’s home and will not be required to register with Ofsted.

Supported accommodation is **not** Ofsted registered and is therefore deemed an unregulated setting.

Where a service is providing care for a child under the age of 18 in a **static** placement, this service must be registered by Ofsted. Failure to do so results in the placement being unregistered and therefore illegal. It is the departments policy that we do not place in an unregistered setting.

**Unregulated/unregistered fact sheet**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Care/support being provided** | **Type of Placement** | **If it should be regulated** |
| CARE+ | MOBILE PLACEMENT = | **UNREGULATED** |
| CARE + | STATIC PLACEMENT = | **REGULATED** *(if the placement is not registered with Ofsted, C/W or CIS then this is an unregistered placement and is therefore illegal)* |
| SUPPORT + | STATIC PLACEMENT = | **UNREGULATED** |

**Exception to the rule:**

1. If a child/young person is currently in a regulated placement and the provider is taking the child away for a ‘holiday’ the placement they go to for the ‘holiday’ does not need to be registered as their main placement is within a regulated placement. This type of arrangement can only be for up to 28 days.
2. Some mobile placements are regulated, this only applies to those that registered with Ofsted prior to May 2018 (example being Care Afloat).

**Support + Static Placement**

Examples of such placements are:

* Post 16 placement in a shared house with communal facilities (providers such as Step by Step, Two Saints, Alabare, Fair ways)
* Post 16 placement with a supported lodgings host (providers such as Step by Step)
* Post 16 placement in self-contained flat with floating support (providers such as Key 2, Next Step Care Management)
* Post 16 placement in solo occupancy building with staff (providers such as Sportfit, Transform Care) - *staffing ratio of 1:1 + at all times would translate to care. YP must have free time it if is a supported accommodation placement*

**Care + Static Placement**

Examples of such placements are:

* Crisis placement in a home (providers such as Keys Child Care, Fair ways and New Forest Care)
* Residential short/long term placements
* Post 16 placement where care is being provided in line with Ofsted Annex A (providers such as Fair ways Athelstan

**Care + Mobile Placement**

Examples of such placements are:

* Crisis placement on a barge (providers such as Exceptional Care offer this)
* Crisis placement in a tent (the department do not use this type of placement

## Unregulated Placement Process Pre 16 from Point of Referral



## Risk Assessment for Unregulated Placements

**Child Details**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| ICS Number |  | D.O.B |  | Legal Status |
| Name |  | Age |  |  |

**Provider Details (PT)**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Provider Name |  |
| Company Number |  |
| Location of Placement |  |
| Type of Placement |  |
| Staffing Arrangements |  |
| Provider Insurances |  |
| Provider Policies & Procedures |  |
| In Date Gas Safety Certificate |  |
| Wiring Checked with last 5 years |  |
| Statement of Purpose |  |
| Response from Host Authority |  |
| Other Reference |  |
| Financial stability |  |

**Matching Consideration (SW)**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| How will the needs of the child be met in this placement? |  |
| How will risks to/from the child be managed in this placement? |  |

**Monitoring (SW)**

|  |
| --- |
| Statutory visits to be undertaken by allocated Social Worker. Support and accommodation to be reviewed as part of visit.  |

**Ongoing Review (SW)**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| What is the frequency of Social worker visits? |  |
| When will a review of the child’s risk assessment take place? |  |
| What is the move on plan? |  |
| What are the time scales for move on? |  |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Social Worker Signature |  | Date |  |
| Team Manager signature |  | Date |  |

## Contract Price Uplift Process