



Draft 1

**Integrated Commissioning Framework
Position Paper**

**A Starting Point for Discussion
by the
Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership
Integrated Commissioning Sub Group.**

1 Introduction

1.1 Purpose of CYPSP

1.1.1 The purpose of the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership, as stated in the Draft Children and Young People's Plan, is:

- To put in place integrated planning and commissioning across agencies and sectors, which is recorded through the Children and Young People's Plan, aimed at improving wellbeing and the realisation of rights of children in Northern Ireland, in relation to the 6 outcomes for children:-
 - Being Healthy;
 - Enjoying, learning and achieving
 - Living in safety and with stability;
 - Experience economic and environmental well being;
 - Contributing positively to community and society;
 - and
 - Living in a society which respects their rights.
- To ensure that the CYPSP will be informed by and inform individual organisational business, corporate and community plans.

- To ensure the participation and involvement of children, young people, families and communities in the integrated planning process.
- To ensure an effective and efficient, fully mandated structure, which is representative of all key stakeholders is in place to carry out the work of the partnership.

1.1.2 This document is a starting point for discussion by the CYPSP Integrated Commissioning Sub Group, so that CYPSP partner agencies can together consider the challenges and possible solutions in relation to integrated commissioning for children and young people in Northern Ireland, in order to provide these for consideration by the CYPSP. This document also starts to point up some of the practical issues that need to be that need to be addressed in order to allow integrated commissioning to take place.

1.1.3 The CYPSP has already decided that part of this process will be to put in place the integration of separate planning processes. Furthermore, the CYPSP also decided that each partner agency's business plan, in relation to children and young people, should include the commitments required by the agency to contribute to the Northern Ireland Children and Young People's Plan. This will include both how the agency will contribute to improvement in the outcomes for children and young people as a single agency, and as a member of the Partnership.

1.1.4 The CYPSP therefore needs to work through the practical issues which arise in relation to integrated commissioning as well as how issues of trust can be addressed, (essential in relation to any type of collaborative working). This document sets out some of the issues that will need to be addressed in relation to integrated commissioning, as a starting point for discussion. This consideration will enable the CYPSP Sub Group members to provide suggestions to the CYPSP in relation to an integrated commissioning framework. Such a framework will need to address the complex issues of tracking diverse funding streams being used for jointly agreed purposes along with the less complex issues that arise in arrangements to align resources across agencies.

2 Research

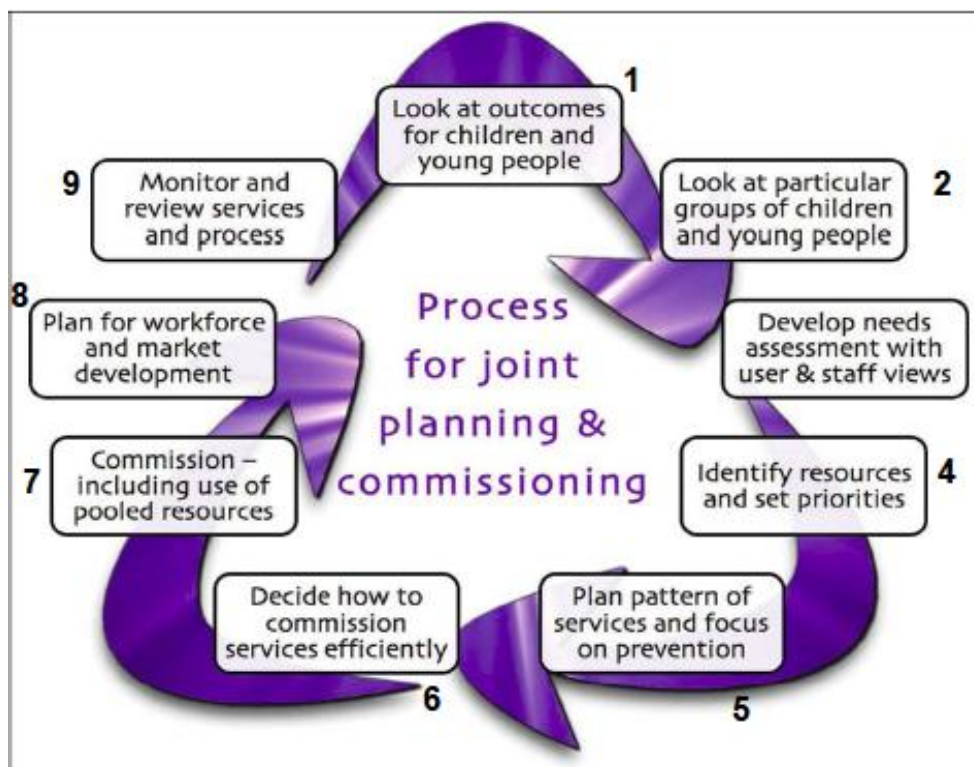
2.1 Introduction

2.1.1 In England, joint planning and commissioning, through Every Child Matters, was an essential and fundamental change in the delivery of services for children and young people. Instead of fitting children and young people to the existing services in place, Every Child Matters put children and young people's needs at the heart of planning and delivering services in order to improve their lives against the 5 high level outcomes adopted. Critically, the most efficient and effective way to do this was to bring together all relevant agencies and organisations concerned with the lives of children and young people. Too often individual agencies were conducting their business distinct from all other relevant agencies and with little communication or partnership working. The risks of this way of working are epitomised by the case of Victoria Climbié and the subsequent Lord Laming report¹, which was the catalyst behind Every Child Matters. Consequently, identifying the needs of children and young as a first step in joint planning and commissioning services has become the adopted approach by authorities in England. This fundamental change was adopted to bring together the joint planning and commissioning of those services that required a joint approach and that agencies could not put into place alone.

¹ The Victoria Climbié Inquiry: Report of an inquiry by Chairman Lord Laming. 2003.

2.1.2 The approach agreed by the CYPSP is similar to that in England. **The integrated planning and commissioning of the CYPSP does not replace the statutory responsibilities, lines of accountability or commissioning responsibilities of individual agencies.** Rather, the CYPSP provides the space for agencies to come together, and critically, with children, young people, families and communities, to make sure that individual efforts to support children and young people (across the whole range of needs) link up with and work well with other supports and services in the lives of children and young people.

2.1.3 Many local authorities in England have adopted the Joint Planning and Commissioning Framework (JPCF) outlined below:



2.1.4 The Children and Young People’s Strategic Partnership (CYPSP) has been continuously working to achieve the first four steps of this model using outcomes based planning at varying degrees. A challenge remains in achieving the next steps, the joint planning and integrated commissioning of services to achieve these outcomes for children and young people.

2.1.5 In establishing this framework in England, it was recognised that such a process might take several years to be fully implemented and will likely face challenges along the way. Initial research into the process of integrated planning and commissioning for Children’s Services in England highlights these challenges, which are outlined below.

2.2 Structure

2.2.1 Many structures in England reflect those established in Northern Ireland. Most have an overarching high-level body, such as a Children’s Trust Board. Many have established Joint Commissioning Units (JCU) that report to the high-level body. This is the equivalent of the CYPSP and Outcomes Groups. In some cases, procurement sub groups, a joint commissioning manager, and financial support were also included. A joint commissioning manager overseeing the commissioning process and financial support was useful to provide expertise for commissioners. In some cases a procurement sub group was established to remove providers

from the decision making process thereby removing any potential conflict of interests².

2.3 Challenges

2.3.1 Many of the challenges highlighted from the research are well known and have been accounted for in designing the CYPSP planning process. These include, for example, securing senior level leadership and the involvement of individuals who have the authority to make changes and commit resources.

2.3.2 Many challenges remain however. The main finding from England is that planning and commissioning services jointly takes time to develop. There are a number of reasons for this³:

- Case studies stress that there will be a resistance to joint commissioning;
- Integrated commissioning requires a cultural shift for many agencies and organisations;
- It takes time to develop relationships and build trust between partners involved in integrated commissioning;

2.3.3 Other challenges identified by practice in England include⁴:

- A lack of shared vision or perspective;

² For example South Tyneside Commissioning Arrangements

³ PA Consulting Group (2007). Effective Practice in Commissioning Children's Services Final Report

⁴ NFER (2007). Analysis of Children and Young People's Plans

- A need to develop a common understanding and shared use of language associated with integrated planning and commissioning;
- A lack of stability and integration for effective commissioning;
- Resource issues including a lack of funding, budgets and dedicated staff;
- A lack of good practice examples from which to learn from due to the relatively new (and now changing) nature of joint commissioning in England;
- Complexities regarding pooled resources and conflict between individual and joint accountability and governance.

2.3.4 Despite these challenges, authorities in England recognise the value of joint planning and integrated commissioning to, achieve better outcomes, avoid duplication, and increase efficiency⁴. Therefore, there is a wealth of information and ideas on how to overcome the challenges and develop a robust and effective commissioning process. The first stage is having a shared vision of what an integrated commissioning process should look like and dedicating a significant amount of time to allow this vision to develop. The next section makes suggestions about such a vision and the stages needed to achieve it.

3 Continuum of Commissioning

3.1 Rationale

3.1.1 A consistent finding from the research is that integrated commissioning takes time to develop as agencies and organisations change culturally from an individual way of thinking to a more integrated way. Agencies and organisations in Northern Ireland have experienced integrated planning and commissioning to some degree. It is suggested that it would be useful to provide a description of different types of integrated commissioning – which could be usefully named a Continuum of Commissioning. The use of the term continuum relates to the fact that some types of integrated commissioning will require time for the building up of trust and shared knowledge to develop.

3.1.2 It is suggested that the adoption of such a continuum will help to overcome many of the challenges identified in the previous section. Firstly, it outlines a shared vision for common agreement. Secondly, it gives time and different experiences of integrated commissioning at each stage that will allow relationships between members to prosper, build trust, and increase stability. In addition, a continuum approach will give members enough time to decide on the resource contributions they can make⁵.

⁵ This approach has been adopted by local authorities in England e.g. Redbridge Joint Funding Agreement Case Study 2007

3.1.3 The continuum has four distinct stages, joint delivery, joint commissioning, aligning resources, and pooling resources. These stages are outlined in detail below. The stages are not mutually exclusive i.e. earlier stages are not disregarded as the vision is achieved as they will still be necessary in certain circumstances. Rather the later stages of the continuum reflect the complexities associated with integrated commissioning that can be achieved over time

3.2 Stage 1: Joint Delivery

3.2.1 Joint delivery is two or more agencies co-ordinating to plan and deliver supports or services. For example, a local Trust and a local Council jointly plan and deliver a service that involves, for example, a Trust programme being delivered in a Council facility. Other examples could be an agency working to open up existing services to a particular group of children and young people, or co-location of staff from different agencies.

3.2.2 It is likely that many members have experienced such joint delivery of some form in the past. Through this process, all agencies and organisations will be able to share resources in this way to deliver services jointly.

3.3 Stage 2: Joint Commissioning

3.3.1 Joint Commissioning is defined as a multi agency group, provided with funding from one source, jointly

planning and commissioning services and supports for children and young people.

3.3.2 For example, the Outcomes Groups have been provided with recurrent DHSSPS funding, through the Health and Social Care Board, for integrated planning and commissioning. The funding has been provided to give the groups the opportunity to foster partnership working, to achieve ‘quick wins’ and build confidence as a whole. Through this stage, members can develop relationships and build trust, overcoming the challenges identified in the literature.

3.4 Stage 3: Aligning Resources

3.4.1 This is when two or more agencies have jointly determined priorities and included them in individual business/commissioning plans thereby setting aside individual agency resources to ensure action against jointly agreed priorities.

3.4.2 In developing integrated planning and commissioning, aligning resources was often seen as a vital stage or authorities in England. Aligning resources can help better understand the resources required, develop confidence and better understand the aims of partners⁶. Furthermore, aligning budgets was viewed as being easier than pooling resources for ease of accounting⁴. Aligning resources requires more commitment from member organisations as

⁶ Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council Children’s Services Commissioning Handbook

they are asked to consider resources, financial or otherwise, that they can contribute to the partnership rather than working with a dedicated funding stream. In England, aligning budgets was often seen as a step towards pooled budgets. Both are problematic because of the complexities of joint accountability, however, aligning resources can act as a bridge towards pooled resources, providing members with necessary experience in integrated commissioning and enhancing partnership working with contributed resources.

3.4.3 The CYPSP has already agreed that it will make the first two steps towards aligning resources, as follows:

- Members decide together on the priorities of the CYPSP;
- Individual agencies and organisations then incorporate those priorities into their own business/commissioning plans;

Once the CYPSP agrees the Action Plans of each of its planning groups, these will together make up the CYPSP priorities.

Once individual member agencies or organisations incorporate these into their own business/commissioning plans, aligning resources is beginning to take place.

This will mean that resources are set aside in individual agencies and organisations to meet joint priorities;

This will ensure the objectives of both the CYPSP and the individual agency or organisation, and the performance management requirements of both are met.

3.5 Stage 4: Pooling Resources

3.5.1 Pooling resources is the allocation of resources to one pot from more than one funding stream to be used for integrated planning and commissioning by more than one agency.

Pooling resources epitomises the suggested vision outlined here for integrated commissioning. It involves looking at outcomes for children and young people and identifying priorities first, and then working towards improving those outcomes in partnership, joining together partners' contributions. This reduces duplication, optimises the use of resources from all contributing sources, and increases efficiency while improving outcomes for children and young people.

3.5.2 Experience in England suggests that pooling resources is difficult to achieve without a statutory mandate in the form of legislation. Section 10 of the Children Act 2004 provided this legislation for local authorities in England as part of Every Child Matters. A lesson from the integrated commissioning process in England, therefore, is that similar legislation would benefit the process of integrated commissioning in Northern

Ireland for two reasons. Firstly, in addition to the added value of pooling resources, a legislative mandate would support members contributing to a pooled fund, as this would be seen as more intrinsic to the core business of each agency. Secondly, a legislative mandate would encourage the gradual development of integrated funding streams across Government Departments, which would clearly only benefit the integrated commissioning of CYPSP. The issue of a statutory duty to cooperate is outside the scope of the decision making of the CYPSP, but the learning from elsewhere is relevant background information.

3.6 The proposed **Continuum of Commissioning** is presented for discussion by the CYPSP Integrated Commissioning Sub Group, as a staged approach to integrated commissioning that can overcome the challenges identified by practice in England. It is important to stress that the stages outlined are not mutually exclusive. Instead, they reflect the complexities and opportunities associated with integrated commissioning and the staged approach provides a vision and an opportunity for partners to build experience as they move through the stages. Therefore, all the stages identified constitute integrated commissioning in some form and all will be relevant to use at times.

4 An Integrated Commissioning Framework

4.1 In order to carry out integrated commissioning, the CYPSP will need to agree an integrated commissioning framework. The suggestions here are intended to provide the Integrated Commissioning Sub Group with a starting point for discussion on any issues that would need to be considered by the CYPSP in relation to such a framework.

It is also important to note that the framework outlined below does not constitute a complete process and that detail will need to be added. Most notably lacking is the specific detail about how pooled resources will be traced back along individual agencies accountability lines. Identifying the detailed mechanisms for such accountability will be part of the work of the Integrated Commissioning Sub Group, so that a working model of an Integrated Commissioning Framework can be provided for discussion by the CYPSP. This work will be informed by research into existing mechanisms for integrated planning and commissioning.

4.2 Strategic Context

The CYPSP commissioning framework is supported by the strategic context outlined in the Northern Ireland Children and Young People's Plan 2011-2014.

4.3 Commissioning Principles

- 1.** Service design and development is based on the promotion of the rights of children and young people;
- 2.** Services reflect the a whole child perspective, that is, awareness of the inter-relationships between the child, family and community;
- 3.** Working in partnership is an integral part of supporting vulnerable children and families. Partnership working should seek to include children, families, professionals and communities;
- 4.** Commissioned services and supports are needs led based on the process of outcomes based planning;
- 5.** A clear focus on the wishes, feelings, safety, and well-being of children and young people is maintained;
- 6.** Services are based on a strength-based perspective, which is mindful of resilience as a characteristic of many children, young people, and families lives;
- 7.** Commissioned services and supports strengthen informal support networks;
- 8.** Interventions should be accessible and flexible in respect of location, timing, setting and changing needs;
- 9.** Families are encouraged to self refer, and multi access referral paths are facilitated;

- 10.** Promoting the participation of service users and providers in the planning, delivery, and evaluation of services on an ongoing basis;
- 11.** Interventions seek to promote social inclusion, addressing issues around disadvantage, ethnicity, disability, and rural/urban communities;
- 12.** Measures of success are routinely built in to facilitate evaluation based on attention to the outcomes for service users and thereby facilitate ongoing support for quality services based on best practice;

4.4 Performance Management

4.4.1 Commissioned services and supports will be monitored in the context of a Service Level Agreement with each provider, which will include a Performance Management Framework. This Framework will address value for money, the six high-level outcomes, and agreed priorities and indicators outlined in specifications.

4.4.2 It is worthwhile to highlight that the responsibility for monitoring and reviewing performance should not be held by one agency. Rather, different agencies and should be responsible for reviewing services where this is appropriate.

4.5 Process

4.5.1 Specific priorities and indicators are identified as a result of outcomes based planning and consistent with the six high level outcomes

4.5.2 Service specifications will be developed consistent with the first step. This will include:

- Descriptions of the service or support required
- Objectives
- Indicators
- Regional criteria
- Principles

4.5.3 Partners develop proposals to advertise for tender. In applying:

- The organisation details how it would use the funding to meet the objectives and achieve the outcomes outlined in the service specification;
- There should be no more than one application from any organisation in any specific funding stream;
- If the funding requires cooperation from other organisations then the proposal should contain evidence that this has been secured;
- Applications should be clear about how they compliment existing strategies and programmes and how they will fit into the existing pattern of provision;
- Statutory organisations should clearly demonstrate that what they are doing is different from their core statutory

functions. Generally, all applications should be clear about the 'added value' they represent.

4.5.4 A sub group is established to form a funding panel.

Importantly, the funding panel is multi-agency in nature in order to negate any potential power imbalances and enhance partnership working within the group.

4.5.5 The funding panel reviews applications using agreed standard eligibility and clearly defined criteria for each service priority. Funding panels should clearly document the decision making process to ensure a record of the rationale for decisions made. The funding panel can decide to fund parts of proposals that best fit the agreed priorities and available resources. The group will approach the applicant to discuss any changes to the proposal.

4.5.6 Decisions open to the panel include:

- Approve a proposal in total for commissioning
- Approve parts of a proposal for commissioning
- Approve a bid in principle pending clarification or refinement of identified elements
- Decide not to commission

4.5.7 The funding panel then presents its recommendations to the wider group for final approval.

4.5.8 Letters of offer will be issued, contracting arrangements will be put in place, including monitoring arrangements.

4.5.9 To appeal in the event that an applicant thinks that there has been a misapplication of the criteria to their proposal, they should write to the group and outline their views. A fresh panel may be constituted to examine the issue. In all other instances the panels decisions are final.

4.6 Conflict of Interest

4.6.1 Conflicts of interest are likely to arise as the active participation of the voluntary and community sector in the integrated commissioning process is encouraged. In the event that a conflict of interest should arise, for example, if a member from the voluntary sector sits on a funding panel for which their organisation has applied then that member should not be involved in the decision making process and this declaration should be recorded in the decision making process.

4.6.2 The process of integrated commissioning is robust, based on a framework of outcomes based planning involving relevant agencies and organisations working together. The process is transparent, with clear and indisputable rationale for the joint commissioning of services. This reduces the likelihood of instances of conflict of interests⁷.

⁷ Examples of how local authorities managed conflicts of interest in England include Brighton and Hove Joint Planning and Commissioning Framework and South Tyneside Commissioning Arrangements.

5 Terms of Reference for the CYPSP Integrated Commissioning Sub Group

5.1 Purpose

The purpose of the Integrated Commissioning Sub Group of the CYPSP is to provide the CYPSP with recommendations on how to take forward integrated commissioning to support better outcomes for children and young people. The Sub Group will do this by

- Interrogating lessons from integrated planning processes elsewhere
- Learning from integrated planning carried out to date in Northern Ireland
- Drawing up an agreed Continuum of Integrated Commissioning,
- Drawing up an agreed Integrated Commissioning Framework to be used by the CYPSP planning groups.

5.2 Membership.

The CYPSP has already agreed that the Sub Group will be chaired by Mr Liam Hannaway, one of four Solace representatives on the CYPSP.

CYPSP members are asked to nominate appropriate staff from their agencies with expertise in commissioning/finance/governance in order to advise on the issues under discussion.

It is suggested that members are required from the following statutory sectors within CYPSP:-

- Health and Social Care
- Education
- Local Government (one additional representative alongside the chair)
- The justice agencies (Youth Justice Agency, PBNI, PSNI)
- Northern Ireland Housing Executive
- Department of Justice
- Department of Social Development

It is also suggested that the community and voluntary sectors within the CYPSP should be represented, in order to provide the perspective of agencies which respond to commissioning intent.

5.3 Method of working.

It is envisaged that the work of the Sub Group will be carried forward by meetings and work on papers for the CYPSP.

5.4 Support.

The Health and Social Care Board will support the work of the Sub Group, through minuting and drafting of papers.