

Commissioning and Resourcing in Children and Young People's Plans

This paper is one of a series of 12 that presents the findings from NFER's analysis of Children and Young People's Plans (CYPPs) from a representative sample of 75 Local Authorities¹. It sets out how aspects of commissioning and resources feature in this sample of plans and includes illustrative examples. Areas covered are:

- Strategies and approaches to commissioning
- Commissioning teams and their focus
- Actions and further development for commissioning
- Approaches to resourcing in the CYPPs
- The focus for budgets and resources.

Summary of findings

- Although most plans refer to commissioning as part of their strategy for children and young people, coverage of commissioning strategies in many of the plans reflects their early stages of development.
- The majority of plans refer to joint commissioning strategies under development/to be developed. Most plans do not yet indicate a specific framework for commissioning.
- Overarching joint commissioning teams, located under the auspices of the Children's Trust and the Children and Young People's Partnership, are in place in just over one-fifth of the plans, and under development/to be developed in over a quarter. These teams would typically commission by service, but also by locality, by level of need, by ECM outcome and by key group.
- Reflecting its early stage of development, authorities indicate a range of actions to be carried out in order to develop their commissioning function. Most frequently, actions refer to moves towards prevention and early intervention and multi-agency approaches.
- The involvement of the voluntary and community sector and alternative providers in the strategic approach to commissioning features in a quarter of the plans.
- More CYPPs cite plans for pooling budgets than for aligning budgets. Most plans make some mention of resources, although the extent to which they are mentioned varies from general statements to detailed budget information.

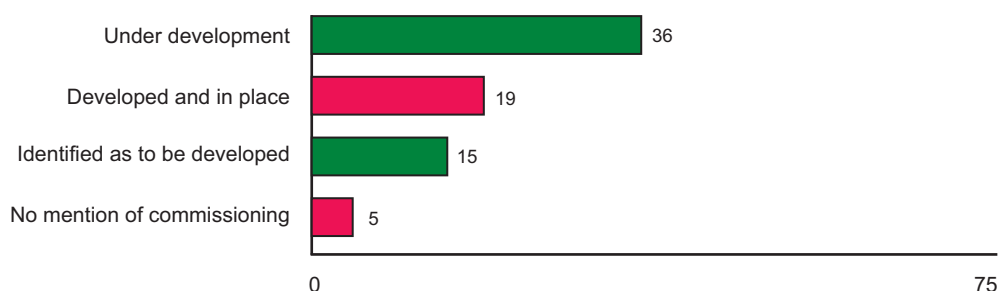


Strategies and approaches to commissioning

All but five of the 75 CYPPs analysed make reference to commissioning. The plans indicate that authorities are at different stages in developing strategies and approaches to commissioning. In terms of joint commissioning, strategies are generally in the early stages of development.

As shown below, an overarching or joint commissioning strategy is under development in half the plans. A quarter of the plans clearly indicate that an official joint commissioning strategy is in place. A fifth of the plans indicate that a joint commissioning strategy is yet to be developed.

Figure 1 Stage of development of a joint commissioning strategy



Where plans indicate particular approaches to a commissioning framework, this includes the nine-step model as laid out in the Joint Planning and Commissioning Framework (DfES, 2006)². In addition, a small number of plans set out alternative approaches, such as a six-point model, a ten-point approach, and, in one unitary authority, the Department of Health model of practice-based commissioning. However, two-thirds of the 70 plans which reference commissioning do not specify an overarching approach or framework for their commissioning strategy.

The nine-step model

'identifying and assessing local needs for children and young people'; 'identifying the resources available and priorities for their deployment'; 'deciding how to commission services effectively'. (DfES, 2006)

A six-point model, in a metropolitan authority

'get the views of children, young people and their families; identify the needs, circumstances and aspirations of the children and young people; agree priorities, plan provision and identify the resources available across the partner agencies and the contribution that each will make; commission services; monitor service delivery and evaluate the impact on outcomes; and plan for continuous improvement'.

A ten-point approach in a unitary authority

'ensure provision of needs-led, evidence-based services to children, young people, families and carers' involving: 'analysis of need; analysis of current markets; involving stakeholders; forecasting future; defining outcomes; making decisions; matching decisions and resources; procuring activities and services; service delivery and monitoring; evaluating and reviewing service outcomes'.



Commissioning teams and their focus

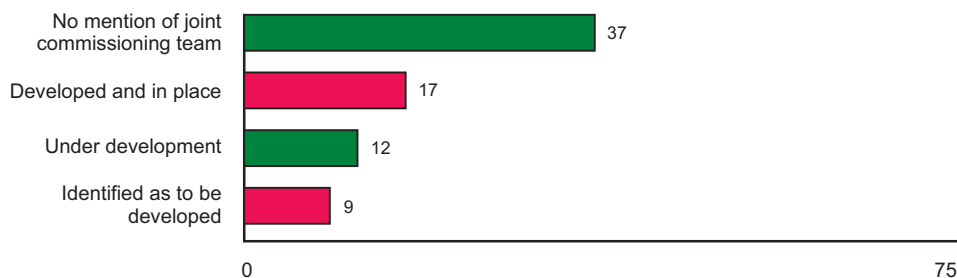
As part of their approaches to commissioning, plans identify, to varying degrees, overall joint commissioning teams, as well as subsidiary or further commissioning teams with a range of foci. These are outlined below.

Joint commissioning teams

The extent to which an overall joint commissioning team, unit or board is in place varies across the plans.

Of the plans with overarching joint commissioning teams in place or under development, most locate this team under the auspices of the Children's Trust, the Children and Young People's Partnership or the council. The full membership of joint commissioning teams is indicated in a small number of plans. Here, membership includes, amongst others, Health (PCT and CAMHS), Education (including schools), Youth Offending and Housing, as well as some specific mention of the voluntary and community sector.

Figure 2 Stage of development of a joint commissioning team



The focus of joint commissioning

Where indicated, the most common focus in authorities' joint commissioning strategy, mentioned in nearly half the plans, is commissioning by service. Other foci include commissioning by sub-region, level of need, ECM outcome, key group and, in one plan, by sector.

'The Alliance Board is overseeing the development of a number of service-specific Mini Children's Trusts. These are integrating the commissioning, funding and delivery of services based on the priorities that children and their families have identified as making the most sense to them initially. In this way we are staging the wholesale integration of all children's services, so that we can learn lessons as we go, make sure transitions are seamless and there is no disruption to meeting children's needs. The first four Mini Children's Trusts are for Looked After Children, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS), Preventative Services and Children with Disabilities.' (Unitary LA)



Further commissioning teams

Over a third of the plans mention further commissioning teams in place, under development or to be developed. About one in six plans identifies such teams as in place. Reflecting some of the foci in authorities' joint commissioning strategies outlined above, further commissioning teams in place and to be developed include: ECM priority sub-boards, local children's safeguarding and

prevention sub-groups, disabled children’s commissioning services in at least four plans, and sub-groups around services and level of need, including several plans with alcohol and substance misuse commissioning teams.

‘The Board has already approved the formation of the Disabled Children’s Services Commissioning Group. [This will] build on existing joint commissioning and planning structures for services for disabled children, young people and their families to develop stronger joint agency working and equality of access to services across the county. [The lead agency with] responsibility will be the Strategic Development Manager for Children with Disabilities.’ (County LA)

Approaches to commissioning are chiefly within the authority and sub-regional or ‘locality-based’. However, a few plans include specific mention of cross-regional commissioning as part of their commissioning strategy.

‘Working with partners locally and beyond [the authority] to commission specialist services which meet the needs of and are accessible to [the authority’s] most vulnerable children and young people.’ (Unitary LA)

Actions and further development for commissioning

In over half of the plans the authorities state that they would carry out one or more focused actions and activities in order to develop their commissioning function. Examples of the most common of these activities are shown in table 1.

Other actions listed in individual plans include: neighbourhood profiling, learning from previous commissioning models developed in early years’ services and children’s fund, and information sharing agreements.

In order to take joint commissioning forward, the CYPPs also identify a range of agencies (services, sectors and individuals) that would become engaged in joint commissioning activities. In some cases, the CYPPs also prioritise key groups as recipients of commissioning.

Agencies to become engaged in joint commissioning activities

Almost three-quarters of the plans indicate at least one agency which would become involved in joint commissioning activities.

Figure 3 Agencies most frequently prioritised to become involved in joint commissioning activities

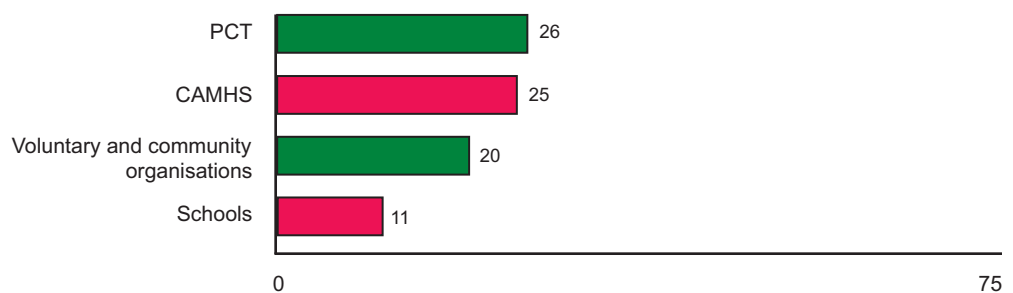


Table 1 Most common actions to develop LAs' commissioning function

Action	Example
Move towards prevention and early intervention models	<i>'Develop and implement joint commissioning strategy for targeted early intervention services for children under 13.'</i> (Unitary LA)
Develop multi-agency or partnership strategies/approach for commissioning	<i>'[We are] committed to embedding a joint commissioning framework to promote a more systematic approach to commissioning and de-commissioning across all areas of service provision ... This will include the development of a commissioning structure which ensures that all decisions about commissioning are taken at the appropriate level through multi-agency collaboration.'</i> (Metropolitan LA)
Activities related to needs analysis	<i>'Maintain and refresh a clear picture of need, expressed in terms of the ECM outcomes, to provide a basis for prioritising actions and targeting resources.'</i> (Unitary LA)
Further consultation with or involvement of children and young people, parents and families	<i>'Young people can contribute to developments via the new Young People's area forums that mirror the existing six area forums [in the authority] primarily attended by adults.'</i> (Unitary LA)
Further consultation with and involvement of others, e.g. service providers, voluntary organisations, employers	<i>'The partnership intends to work with other partnerships to develop regional and sub-regional collective commissioning where appropriate.'</i> (London borough)
Develop further capacity for commissioning, in general	<i>'Work with partners to develop a strategic commissioning partnership to meet the holistic needs of 16–25 year olds including housing, health, employment, education and training.'</i> (County LA)
Develop monitoring, evaluation and performance review	<i>'Continuous review of needs assessment, including feedback from children, young people, families and communities.'</i> (Unitary LA)
Develop contractual, procurement, financial and legal aspects of commissioning	<i>'We will develop agreed principles about how we intend to commission services locally by working with our partners in a clear, open and transparent manner.'</i> (London borough)
Activities related to service mapping	<i>'Mapping current services directed towards the outcomes of Every Child Matters, starting with children's health services.'</i> (County LA)
Develop a common language and understanding across services	<i>'...to agree a definition of commissioning for all agencies and partnerships to work to and agree levels of commissioning e.g. strategic/ operational/ individual.'</i> (London borough)
Develop tailored packages and targeted support	<i>'Commissioning appropriate transport to access educational provision.'</i> (County LA)

Eighteen different services and organisations are identified in the plans in this regard, most frequently Health at PCT level, CAMHS, and Education at school level. Over a quarter of plans specifically indicate that the voluntary and community sector would become strategically involved in commissioning.

'The voluntary and community sector have a key role to play at all levels of service development and delivery across children's services. Work will continue to ensure that there is effective involvement of the voluntary and community sector at all levels, including through representation on the Partnership Board, on its sub groups, and on the Partnership's proposed Strategic Joint Commissioning group ...' (London borough)

Other services that would become engaged in joint commissioning activities include Social Services, Education – Local Authority level, Connexions, and Youth Offending Services (each identified in a small number of plans).



In addition, just under a third of the plans highlight particular individuals and professionals to be involved in taking forward the commissioning strategy. Among these, children and young people and parents and families are planned contributors (as shown in Table 1 above), as well as in a small number of cases general practitioners, nursing officers and education welfare officers.

Key groups as recipients of joint commissioning

As illustrated in Figure 4, when setting out joint commissioning strategies, almost three-fifths of plans prioritise at least one key group as a recipient of joint commissioning. Eleven different groups are identified in this regard, most frequently children with learning difficulties and disabilities, looked-after children and substance misusers.

'[We are developing a] joint commissioning strategy for targeted preventative services and early intervention services for vulnerable children and young people.' (Unitary LA)

Figure 4 Key groups prioritised as recipients of joint commissioning



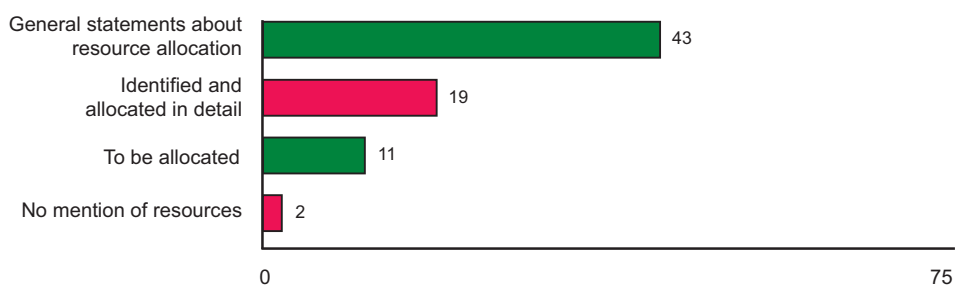
Approaches to resourcing in the CYPPs

Of the 75 plans analysed, almost all mention resources in some form. The analysis considered the stage the authorities are at in allocating and identifying resources in relation to the Children and Young People's Plan.

As shown in Figure 5, over half of the plans make general statements about resources and how they plan to allocate them. Whilst detailed financial information is not required in the plans, a quarter allocate their resources in detail, for example including figures and budget plans.

Strategic approaches to resourcing in the plans include references to pooling, aligning and re-routing budgets. Some examples of these approaches are outlined in Table 2.

Figure 5 Stage of development in allocating and identifying resources



Overall, more CYPPs cite plans for pooling budgets than for aligning budgets – with four-fifths of the 75 plans referring to pooling budgets and just over half referring to aligning budgets. Just under half of the plans make reference to both aligning and pooling budgets. Under two-fifths of plans refer to re-routing budgets.

The level of detail with which resourcing is presented varies across CYPPs, for example, between plans that specify figures and budgets, and those that make general statements about resourcing.

Table 2 Strategic approaches to resourcing

Approach	Examples
Pooling budgets	<i>'Formally pooling budgets where that will make a substantive difference in terms of effectiveness and/ or efficiency' (Metropolitan LA)</i>
Aligning budgets	<i>'Align financial and service planning across agencies' (London borough)</i>
Re-routing budgets	<i>'The County Council has diverted funding into preventative services through the Social Services Childcare strategy, which has seen the number of Looked After Children reduced from 540 in 2001/2 to 400 at the end of February 2006. This has released funds of £2.3 million which has been reinvested in front line services' (County LA)</i>

Of the plans that refer to 'pooling budgets', nearly a third identify detailed figures and budgets. Among the areas identified in plans for pooling budgets are: CAMHS (identified in several plans as an area where the pooling of budgets already takes place); Drug and Alcohol Teams; and Teenage Pregnancy Partnerships.

'The Teenage Pregnancy Parenting Partnership, the CAMHS partnership, the DAAT Partnership and the Youth Work partnership work together and used pooled resources to develop integrated services for children and young people' (County LA)

In terms of pooling budgets, plans highlight such aspects as setting up formal/legal arrangements for service standards, responsibilities and management arrangements, e.g. 'Clarify the scope of the pooled and aligned arrangements and the full range of resources'. (Metropolitan LA)

Of the plans that refer to 'aligning budgets', two-fifths identify detailed figures and budgets. Among the services highlighted for aligning budgets are: CAMHS and complex needs; SEN and services for disabled children; early years, health and social care.

'For 2006–07 we are aligning the resources of the Children's Fund with the work of the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership and these resources, together with any other identified funds and programmes, will be managed within the children's trust arrangements by 2007/08' (County LA)

In the small number of plans referring to re-routing or redirecting budgets, budgetary details are not given. The plans mentioning redirecting budgets typically intend to reroute funding towards prevention and early intervention.

The focus for budgets and resources

As part of their resourcing strategy, over half the plans present resource destination broken down in a variety of ways. The most common of these is by service.



Some plans cite priorities within their resourcing strategies, most commonly early intervention and prevention.

'Plan the pattern of service most likely to secure priority outcomes, considering carefully the ways in which resources can be increasingly focussed on prevention and early intervention.' (Metropolitan LA)

'The Partnership recognises the need to focus on prevention and progress is being made. For example, all partners are part of the Child Action Project. Organisations such as Police and Fire Services have invested in prevention activities.' (County LA)

Grants

A third of the plans refer to one or more grants in their resources information. Twenty-six different types of grant were mentioned. The most frequently cited areas to receive grants include Sure Start; CAMHS; teenage pregnancy; and schools (e.g. designated schools, dedicated schools, building schools for the future).

Notes

- 1 When interpreting these findings from analysis of 75 plans, it is necessary to bear in mind that LAs had freedom to draft their CYPPs in order to meet their needs and circumstances best. Therefore, there would be no imperative for every plan to include all the pieces of information and detail discussed in the findings in this paper.
- 2 HM Government (2006). Joint Planning and Commissioning Framework for Children, Young People and Maternity Services. [online]. Available: http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/_files/312A353A9CB391262BAF14CC7C1592F8.pdf [3 October, 2006].

Research team: Pippa Lord, Anne Wilkin, Kay Kinder, Jenny Murfield, Megan Jones, Tamsin Chamberlain, Claire Easton, Kerry Martin, Caroline Gulliver, Catherine Paterson, Juanita Ries, Helen Moor, Alison Stott, Carol Wilkin, Sheila Stoney.

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