



REPORT OF:	Elizabeth Fleming – Children’s Services
TO:	Children and Young People’s Scrutiny Committee
ON:	4th November 2024

SUBJECT: Strengthening Children’s Services Commissioning Arrangements including Development of a Commissioning Strategy

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

To update the scrutiny panel of the statutory function of the Council to deliver on the starting well commissioning plan, with aspirations that overtime we have a single plan which spans the commissioning responsibilities of the Local Authority and the Integrated Care Board. There are excellent foundations in Blackburn with Darwen for joint commissioning arrangements, and these build on the legacy work undertaken across the former Blackburn with Darwen Clinical Commissioning Group and Local Authority. Blackburn with Darwen Place Based Partnership has shared governance structures for joint commissioning planning and delivery, which include the 0-25 Joint Commissioning Group and the Joint Collaborative Resources Group (JCRG).

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee is asked to:

2.1 Note the content of this report and the resource implications.

3. BACKGROUND

Commissioning is a statutory function of the Council and includes the planning and purchasing of care and support services. It is a cyclical activity which involves the process of assessing needs, designing, and planning, purchasing, maintaining, and monitoring services.

The Council’s statutory responsibilities are outlined in legislation. With respect to Strategic Commissioning for Children and Young People, the Council has a duty of sufficiency whereby it must ensure that there are enough suitable homes for children who are looked after. Additionally, part 3 of the Children & Families Act (2014) sets out the duty to promote integration and ensure that joint commissioning arrangements are effective in meeting the education, health and care needs of children and young people with special educational needs and learning disabilities for whom it is responsible, and for those with other disabilities.

The Health & Care Act (2022) sets out further commissioning responsibilities, including the need to work with a system wide and integrated approach, seeking opportunities to work collaboratively and commission jointly, rather than from the perspective of the Local Authority alone.

Significant work has been progressing to review and implement changes to commissioning team structure and function, and this paper provides and overview of this work.

The Procurement Act 2023 (which is now expected to come into effect on 24 February 2025) will apply to the Council's commissioning arrangements and must be considered with in when developing strategies.

4. RATIONALE

Commissioning restructure including Start Well.

Effective commissioning ensures that services provide positive outcomes, are value for money for the public pound and are sustainable for providers. Commissioning is both strategic and operational. Strategic commissioning (otherwise called macro commissioning) involves long term planning, understanding future needs and designing services to ensure that commissioning plans are aligned with the system vision and strategies and are implemented in a sustainable and cost-effective manner. Operational commissioning (otherwise called micro commissioning) is the day-to-day management and delivery of services and includes the process of matching an individual's needs with local services. This operational process is person-centred and ensures that service user specific care and support needs are met by commissioned services.

The Council is progressing a restructure of the commissioning team for People Services, and this work is now at implementation phase. The first phase of this work is complete and has involved a full review and redesign of the commissioning function of the Council, a business case to expand capacity, consultation with affected staff and an internal implementation process.

Phase two of the commissioning restructure is underway and includes recruitment to key post. This phase of work commenced in September 2024 and is expected to be completed by December 2024. The new structure is aligned with the life-course approach of start-well, live-well and age-well and includes both strategic and operational commissioning functions. When fully implemented there will be 28WTE staff within the team. The redesign and implementation of the commissioning function provides an exciting opportunity to ensure that commissioned services maximise outcomes for residents across the borough.

The new commissioning structure includes two strategic commissioning roles which are specific to start well. These roles are a Service Lead and a Commissioning Lead. Interviews for these roles have taken place in October 2024, and both roles have been recruited to, with post holders expected to take up these roles in November 2024 and January 2025, respectively.

The commissioning team will operate within matrix working arrangements, and staff with responsibilities for contracting, procurement, quality assurance and care navigation will work together with the strategic commissioners, to deliver a start well programme of work.

Scope of commissioning priorities

Once in place, staff with responsibility for start well commissioning will establish a programme of work, and the outline objectives will be as follows:

- Using a co-production approach, develop a strategic commissioning programme for Blackburn with Darwen 'Start Well' service area.
- Use a Programme Management approach to develop a Programme Plan which includes clear milestones, a system for tracking implementation, reporting risk and monitoring outcomes.
- This programme will include:
 - SEND
 - Early Years
 - Looked after children's requirements.
 - Children's commissioned placements
 - Care Leavers
 - Children's transitions
 - Integrated Neighbourhood Team and Family Hub developments

- Effectively 'horizon scan' to identify key policy and legislative changes related to areas of 'Start Well' commissioning activity. Interpret the relevant national, regional, and local guidance across Blackburn with Darwen and ensure this is reflected within the local programme plan.
- Actively shape the market to support the delivery of commissioning plans.
- Refresh and maintain a Blackburn with Darwen Sufficiency Plan
- Implement strategies over the medium and long-term resulting in the continued development of partnership working and a clear integrated approach to commissioning across health, social care, education and VCFSE sectors.

All areas of work will be aspiring to achieve excellent outcomes for our children, young people and their families, a high quality and stable market and value for money.

Key enablers in building the Start Well Commissioning plan.

In the development of our Start Well commissioning plan, there are some critical enablers which will be built into the plan development.

Voice of the Young Person and Families

There are already excellent foundations within Children's and Families directorate for the co-production of plans and services. The Start Well commissioning plan will be developed with a co-production approach, and the priorities within the plan will be shaped through input from young people and families.

Alignment with strategic priorities

The Start Well commissioning plan will be aligned with the delivery of the strategic priorities of the Council and Children's Service and Education. In particular, the priorities in the commissioning plan will be mapped against the delivery of the six Children's Service & Education priorities:

- 1) Stable homes built on love.
- 2) Right support, right time, right person
- 3) Effective transitions for all ages and needs
- 4) Raising aspirations and fulfil potential.
- 5) We are systemic.
- 6) Best start in life

Commissioning will become a vehicle that further enables the deliver our strategic priorities.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

No legal implications identified.

6. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

No policy implications identified.

7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The financial implications associated with the establishment changes in the commissioning team have been considered and approved by Workforce Management Group.

8. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

Recruitment - Complete the recruitment to the whole commissioning structure, including to the start well specific posts. Subject to successful external recruitment, this is expected to be complete by December 2024, with new post holders starting in January 2025.

Start Well Commissioning Plan - Start Well commissioning plan to be drafted and ready for governance processes by end of March 2025.

9. EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

None identified.

10. CONSULTATIONS

All consultations have been undertaken and completed in accordance with council processes and in consultation with the Unions.

VERSION:	1
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DATE:	28/10/2024
BACKGROUND PAPERS:	