

**COUNCIL SEMINAR
10th December, 2013**

Present:- Councillor (in the Chair); Councillors The Mayor (Councillor John Foden), Atkin, Beck, Buckley, Burton, Clark, Currie, Dalton, Dodson, Gilding, Goulty, Hoddinott, Kaye, Lakin, Pickering, Read, Roddison, G. A. Russell, P. A. Russell, Sangster, Sims, Steele, Watson, Swift, Wallis, Whelbourn, Wootton and Wyatt.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Ali, Jepson and Smith.

STRATEGIC COMMISSIONING FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SERVICES.

Councillor P. Lakin, Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Families' Services, introduced Joyce Thacker, Strategic Director, Children and Young People's Services Directorate, and Chrissy Wright, Strategic Commissioning Manager, Neighbourhood and Adult Services Directorate. Joyce and Chrissy had prepared a presentation for Elected Members informing them of how commissioning for Children and Young People's Services (CYPS) worked.

As background to the issues, Joyce outlined the following: -

- There was a statutory obligation to annually consult with all stakeholders on the commissioning plan;
- Ofsted inspections of services included scrutiny of the service's commissioning framework;
- The differences between commissioning and procurement;
- The role of the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment in commissioning framework would provide a 'golden thread' between need and commissioning of services.

Chrissy provided an overview of the position of commissioning for Children and Young Peoples' Services in the Council and its functions: -

- Directorate-wide commissioning was located in the Neighbourhood and Adult Services (NAS) Directorate;
- Commissioning's functions were: -
 - Not limited to buying things, although procurement was part of the process;
 - Learning the views of all stakeholders to determine need and address through the commissioning process;
 - Aligning corporate strategies and policies;
 - Maintaining links with the provider market;
 - Directing local resources to ensure the best outcomes for children and young people.

The Commissioning Team: -

- Commissioned Social Care on behalf of CYPS and the Health and Wellbeing Board by utilising revenue and grant allocations;
- Decommissioned to recommission for Early Intervention and Prevention to deliver efficiencies;
- Managed contract quality, performance and value for money on external contracts for the CYPS Directorate;
- Ensured compliance with statutory national standards and external inspection regimes including the CQC and Ofsted;
- Identified and realised budget savings, for example, the regional commissioning authority, the White Rose Consortium, delivered efficiencies on commissioning of placements for looked after children;
- Ensured Safeguarding was commissioned and delivered without compromise in all instances.

Recent achievements of the Commissioning Team: -

- Achieved significant levels of financial savings since 2011, without adverse customer impact;
- Contributed to and led regional and sub-regional commissioning frameworks for looked after children and Fostering Service (a similar approach for special educational needs was ongoing);
- Introduced the Contracting Concerns database that allowed stakeholders to report safeguarding concerns and the Council to manage, investigate and respond/ take appropriate action;
- “Transformed CYPS commissioning”;
- Introduced a range of customer-focused service improvements.

CYPS Commissioning was driven by reference to the Four Big Things (keeping children and young people safe, prevention and early intervention, tackling inequality and transforming Rotherham learning) and optimising efficiencies. CYPS’ current commissioning priorities were: -

- Special Educational Needs reforms;
- Commissioning of in-house services;
- Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services;
- Maternity and Children’s service – with a focus on prevention and early intervention;
- CHC;
- Market position statement;
- Commissioning in partnership with health partners.

Discussion ensued on the presentation and the following issues were raised: -

- The role and importance of prevention and early intervention activities for cost avoidance in the long run. For example, 75% of hospital admissions relating to asthma could be avoided with better management in the community;

- The importance of ensuring the CYPS commissioning remained a priority when considered against Adult Services and Health commissioning;
- The position of commissioning in the Council's organisational structure. Would the Service's placement in NAS's structure mean that CYPS commissioning would not be as prominent?
- No. The Strategic Manager was a champion for childrens' commissioning and was working with Council Directorates and partners to ensure that it remained a high priority. The revised JSNA document was also in place to ensure that CYPS had an adequate commissioning framework and would be updated on a quarterly.
- A number of recent and continuing Scrutiny Reviews were looking at commissioning's role in the Council, including the completed Domestic Abuse Scrutiny Review undertaken by the Improving Lives Select Commission and the ongoing Self-Regulation Select Commission Scrutiny Review into Commissioning and Procurement.
 - One area of the scope of the continuing Scrutiny Review was the role for local authority commissioning in using and championing local providers and the local economy, providing local added value and encouraging smaller companies to bid for contracts. In addition to performance management and governance of the commissioning process and voice and influence role for stakeholders.
 - The Strategic Commissioning Manager confirmed that the Commissioning Team did see their role as a contributor to the local economy in conjunction with the provisions relating to EU Commissioning Regulations. This already happened, for example, a stipulation for a local base had been written into the contract for Health Watch Rotherham.
 - Were the Commissioning Team close enough to the front-line to know and understand their needs, how were they ensuring that quality remained high in a time of reducing resources and how were personal budgets affecting service planning?
 - All members of the Commissioning Team had operational backgrounds in social care and additional qualifications in business, consultation and negotiation. They operated closely with Directorates and front line workers. All members of the Team saw their ultimate customer as children, young people and families, and worked hard to ensure that they got the best outcomes. The Team conducted open book accounting exercises and had positioned itself to support individuals utilise their personal budgets. The Connect to Support service that currently provided a database for adult services would be rolled-out to include a directory of services for children and young people.
 - Concerns existed around ensuring that private providers were fully meeting contract obligations around expectations, customer care requirements and staff terms and conditions, including payment of the minimum wage and certain minimum terms and conditions.

- The Council had the ability to default from contracts where it felt that basic needs and standards were not being met. Within CYPS an independent Review Team worked with service users to ensure that their needs were being met and they were satisfied with the levels of care provided. When provision was not considered to be adequate, or had received an inadequate inspection outcome from Ofsted, careful consideration was given to the placement to ensure that a managed move to better quality provision worked in the best interests of the child/young person involved.
- Financial savings could be achieved through commissioning without directly affecting the quality of the front-line services. For example, regional commissioning meant that management fees for contracts could be shared between all of the local authorities rather than stood by each local authority individually. In addition, bringing services in-house removed management and accommodation fees, which could be absorbed by existing structures and resources in the Council, without impacting negatively on the quality of provision directly accessed by children and young people.
- Concerns existed that external providers have been known to pay their workers less than the minimum wage and not honour expenses. Could Rotherham guarantee that they would not use providers where this was the case?
 - The Council was considering the implications of the living wage. There were safeguards in place so that commissioners could determine the amount paid to workers. Through commissioning to reduce costs, including management fees, the Council aimed to achieve efficiencies.

Councillor Lakin thanked Joyce and Chrissy for their informative presentation, which was echoed by Members present, and contribution to the discussion. Councillor Lakin also thanked the Members present for their robust questions of the Officers present.

Resolved: - That the information shared be noted.