



COMMISSIONING SUPPORT PROVIDERS ANNOUNCED

23 October 2008

A new source of support that will help local authorities and their Children's Trust partners improve the lives of children, young people and their families has been announced by Children's Minister Beverley Hughes today.

The Commissioning Support Programme will help Children's Trusts plan, design and implement services more effectively by providing tailored support as and when Trust partners need it, developing online resources and networks to help commissioners share best practice, and holding face-to-face events, such as national and regional conferences.

Jointly sponsored by the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) and the Department of Health (DH), the Programme will run until April 2011 and will cover the commissioning of all services for children, young people and their families, including both health and education, in England. Initial planning for the Programme has been shaped by the sector and practitioners will continue to be actively engaged as the Programme develops.

Following a competitive bidding process, a consortium of five partner organisations has been chosen to deliver the Programme. The consortium comprises the Office for Public Management (OPM), Boxwood, the Institute of Public Care at Oxford Brookes University (IPC), PIPC (UK) Limited and The Reform Programme – together with the consortium's technology partner, Reading Room. The strengths of the individual members of the consortium mean that the Commissioning Support Programme will offer considerable expertise in the commissioning process, skills in facilitating complex change programmes, knowledge of the policy context, and a real understanding of the challenges commissioners face.

The emphasis of the Programme will be on peer to peer support, ensuring better access to existing expertise, and supporting the development of new ways of working. The Programme will build on current good practice and mesh with other initiatives, for example it will work closely with regional stakeholder and with national bodies such as the new Centre for Excellence and Outcomes and IDeA to get the best out of these networks collectively.

Minister for Children, Young People and Families, Beverley Hughes said:

“There are some great examples of commissioning practice, for example local authorities and their Children's Trust partners developing imaginative ways of consulting with children and young people, then designing the services around what those service users want. However, it's fair to say that the processes are not embedded everywhere.

“We recognised the need to provide more support for those who are commissioning services, to ensure that children and young people across the country can benefit from excellent services in their area. The Commissioning Support Programme will help commissioners deliver the best possible outcomes for children, young people and their families by providing the services they need – whether that is new schools, more family-friendly health services or greater support for

children in care.”

Preparation and initial development of the Programme will begin immediately, and it is anticipated that the Programme will begin to come on stream from the end of 2008.

Editor's Notes

This press notice relates to 'England'

1. Commissioning for children and young people is the overall process by which services are planned and implemented by Children's Trust partners, taking into account the needs of the service users (children, young people and their families) in their area and selecting the most appropriate provider(s) to deliver that service, regardless of whether they are from the public, private or third sector. It is driven through close co-operation by local partner agencies and puts children, young people and their families at the heart of public services.

2. The supplier consortium selected to deliver the Commissioning Support Programme offers substantial knowledge and capability relating to commissioning, the delivery of children's services, education and public sector reform and the management of large-scale, complex change programmes.

Many members of the consortium will be familiar to commissioning and children's services practitioners through their publications, or through the training and consultancy they have done in the leadership of children's services commissioning or related fields.

Individual organisations within the consortium have specific expertise and experience to offer:

The Office for Public Management (OPM) has specialist– expertise in commissioning children's services and developing multi-level commissioning; capacity building across local government, health and partners; and research and development skills. OPM's team includes the author of *Integrated Commissioning: A Practical Guide* and the team who designed and delivered the 'Commissioning in 4 days' courses.

The Institute of Public Care at Oxford Brookes University– (IPC) has specific experience in children's services planning and commissioning in programme design and management; consultancy, mentoring and action learning support for authorities; skills development; research and publications. The IPC team includes the team that designed and delivered the Oxford Brookes postgraduate qualification in Commissioning and Purchasing in Public Care, and that developed the commissioning frameworks for the East Midlands and other regions.

PIPC (UK) Limited has expertise in overall programme– management of government change programmes, as well as technical expertise in children's services commissioning and local authority transformation. The PIPC team includes the author of the DCSF Joint Commissioning Guidance and teams that conduct service and performance reviews in children's services under the DCSF Children's Services Intervention Framework.

The Reform Programme will contribute the capabilities to– plan and execute complex reforms through building change capacity within the teams and networks responsible for commissioning. The Reform Programme team includes people who managed the Financial Management in Schools programme, the first two years of the Extended Schools programme and the Targeted Youth Support Pathfinder.

Boxwood will contribute expertise in delivering sustainable– transformation in the public and private sectors from overall design and delivery, IT transformation, programme management to organisation and frontline capacity development.

The consortium's technology partner, Reading Room, is a web– design and applications development agency with significant experience in the public sector, including work for the National Audit Office, the Cabinet Office, and the Department of Health.

3. The Department has identified a number of case studies to illustrate how effective commissioning is being used improve service provision for children and young people. If you are interested in being put in touch with practitioners involved in this work, please contact the department on the number below.

4. The Department for Children, Schools and Families has committed to spending £25m between 2008/09 and 2010/11 on a range of commissioning support for Children's Trusts over the next three years, of which the Commissioning Support Programme is the key part.

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