

## **Bristol Children and Young People's Partnership**

### **Feedback from Consultation Event:**

The Future Funding for Bristol's Children's Services;  
VCS Views on the Joint Commissioning Framework

Tuesday 22<sup>nd</sup> May, 1.30-3.30pm, The Fonthill Centre

#### **Overview**

This event was arranged with the help of the children and young people's network co-ordinators to discuss the Joint Commissioning Framework. The Framework was consulted on from 19<sup>th</sup> March to 8<sup>th</sup> June 2007. It was felt that a positive dialogue was opened up between the Joint Commissioning Unit and those members of the VCS who attended with regards to joint commissioning and it is hoped will continue as these processes develop.

These notes are not a verbatim report but attempt to capture the main discussion points raised and some of the actions that were agreed at the meeting. There are also some responses to questions included here that were not made available at the time of the meeting.

An overview of the Joint Commissioning Framework was given in a presentation by Claudia McConnell; this was followed by a group discussion. Before this attendees were asked to list their expectations for the meeting. This list was clearly too extensive for the session planned but gave an important overview of the expectations and concerns of the sector with regard to joint commissioning, and broader developments within children's services in Bristol. These have been included here in one single log of the issues raised at the meeting.

A full attendance list is available at the end of this report. From the Joint Commissioning Unit the meeting was attended by Claudia McConnell, Programme Director Health Partnership, Rebecca Cross, Strategy Leader Health and Strategic Commissioning and Nicola Waterworth, Policy Officer Joint Commissioning Unit (JCU).

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#### **Feedback**

##### **1. Priority Setting**

There was general concern that there is a lack of clarity about what the priorities are for children's services in Bristol. Although it was discussed that the Children and Young People's Plan is the key strategic document it is clear that this concern remains and has significant implications for the sector:

- Limits the ability to respond and develop in line with the priorities and thus contribute effectively and secure funding
- How are the VCS, particularly those working at the frontline, involved in contributing to priority setting?
- How are priorities within the localities decided and, again, how are arrangements ensuring the VCS are involved in this?
- Are there clear criteria for priority setting and decision making?

## **2. Working in Partnership and decision making**

There was a request for greater clarity around the decision making structures and how the VCS are involved in these at different levels:

- There needs to be improved transparency and accessibility around decision making
- There is a feeling that some areas of the statutory sector continue to lack respect for the contribution of the VCS to delivering services to communities and contributing to outcomes. There should be a real commitment to equitable partnership where the evidenced contribution of all to outcomes is recognised, regardless of size, values or sector
- There is concern that in the past Bristol has not been good at capturing learning from initiatives/ pilots and other developments. This can result in disengagement by organisations and communities in new/ continuing processes. How can this be improved?

**ACTION:** *It was agreed that improved communication about the Partnership and VCS representation and involvement is necessary from and between both the CYP Partnership and the network coordinators. This will be undertaken following sign-up of the Executive Board to the Foundation Agreement.*

## **3. Engaging in localities and linking agendas together**

There was a very strong message that there is growing confusion amongst the VCS about the various roles and responsibilities with regards to the preventative and locality/ area based agendas:

- Clarity was asked for over the roles of ESP Managers, Area Prevention Coordinators, ESP Coordinators, and Locality Champions – who are the VCS supposed to be engaging with?
- Are there any plans to rationalise these arrangements?
- What arrangements are being put in place for those VCS organisations that need to engage with more than one locality e.g. citywide services?
- How are Children's Centres, ESPs, multi-agency locality working and commissioning arrangements (including Practice Based Commissioning) all linking together? How will the CAF operate within these arrangements?
- Are there clear expectations to ensure that the VCS is engaged in these developments consistently?
- How do these developments and locality planning feed back in to the 'centre'?
- There is a complicated range of meetings with different titles and varying purposes that are not clearly understood? Would it not be good to have streamlining/ consistency in the terminology across localities?
- It appears that a number of audit processes of local services are in place all at once but not joining up – how is duplication of effort being avoided? Will there be an overarching map of services across the city used for planning/ commissioning purposes?
- Is it possible to have a more consistent method of communication for each locality and ESP? – a regular joined-up newsletter was suggested.

**RESPONSE:** *The need to improve coordination and communication around these developments is recognised and there will be further discussion of these issues within Children and Young People's Services.*

**ACTIONS:**

1. *It was agreed that the map of the areas and localities would be circulated again to network coordinators and made available on the internet. It was noted that an interactive map that allowed you to look at street level would be very useful.*
2. *The discussion around Extended School Partnerships will be shared with the ESP Managers at a similar meeting regarding the Framework planned for early June.*
3. *A contact list for the ESP Managers and coordinators will be circulated to the network coordinators.*

#### **4. Communications and relationship building**

- It was agreed that successful commissioning is reliant on good communications and relationship building, and it was suggested that this commitment is not prominent enough in the framework.
- Do we know what makes a successful network? Can we share experiences of what has worked in networking/ joining multi-agency arrangements and what hasn't?
- The potential for the existing VCS networks to run locality networks for all stakeholders was raised
- Could there be an engagement officer in each area? Have an engagement officer in each area – sole job is to go out and talk to VCS organisations and get them involved

#### **5. Support for VCS organisations in the commissioning process (particularly small ones)**

There are concerns that commissioning processes could be burdensome and inaccessible for (particularly smaller) VCS organisations and that safeguards need to be in place to ensure that smaller VCS do not lose out. There was also a desire to build capacity with and within the sector to partake in commissioning processes. Specific concerns around engaging were:

- Training and learning needs to be made available for the VCS to effectively to participate in the outlined commissioning processes.
- There is reassurance required that commissioning will build on, and strengthen, existing services where they are effective. The balance in the recent past has been in favour of innovation over track record, resulting in a constant need to repackage and reinvent services rather than embed in communities and build real trust and confidence.
- Demonstrating outcomes remains challenging for lots of providers and difficult to implement
- Delivering outcomes is more difficult for providers if they are not involved in deciding and setting priorities in the first place
- There are continuing concerns regarding the implementation of Full Cost Recovery
- It is important that there is a commitment within the Framework to robust impact assessments on outcomes and organisations of the withdrawal of funding/ decommissioning. Removal of funding can destabilise other services provided by organisations. Assessments should be undertaken collaboratively, in a timely fashion with exit strategies agreed.
- VCS providers need improved sustainability of funding – increased contract lengths would improve security and allow sustained investment by VCS in engaging in networks and communities, stability. Lessons should be learnt from traditional business procurement in this respect.

**RESPONSE:** Reassurance was given that the joint commissioning framework is built on principles of a capacity building approach, it may be necessary to make this more prominent within the framework. Organisations will not be excluded from commissioning processes because they are in need of support in either application or in achieving baseline and quality standards. Learning from the experiences of the Children's Fund in Bristol in this capacity building approach is being incorporated. It was also discussed that adopting a commissioning approach does not necessarily mean that all funding will be allocated through a rigid tendering process. The JCU aims to work in partnership with all potential providers to develop services. In addition:

- There is a small grants scheme administered by Quartet <http://www.quartetcf.org.uk/> designed to fund work to help implement FCR.
- Currently a training course is in place for key commissioners and strategic managers in which the network coordinators are involved. The network coordinators and the JCU will then be exploring how to develop training and guidance for providers and potential providers (statutory, independent and voluntary sector) to roll out this training.

## **6. What funding will be available for the VCS/ other external providers?**

There was some feeling that existing money, e.g. around ESPs, was already committed to particular services or areas of existing work and in reality there is not much available for the VCS to tender/ apply for.

**RESPONSE:** There is uncertainty regarding additional money for preventative services, particularly as a result of the delay in the Comprehensive Spending Review. However, there is a clear message from government that services should be increasingly commissioned from the '3<sup>rd</sup> sector'. There is also a responsibility on Extended School Partnerships to work in partnership with the local community and VCS and not to duplicate services that are already in place.

## **7. Monitoring, reporting and evaluation**

What are the expectations around this and will attempts be made to reduce this burden, particularly where small organisations are in receipt of multiple funding allocations from different Council departments and/or different agencies? It was recognised that there are significant issues of trust between funders to be overcome in order to implement lead funder/ shared monitoring arrangements.

**RESPONSE:** The need to ensure monitoring is proportionate to the funding received, joined up with other departments and undertaken in a supportive manner is recognised by the JCU. It is hoped that some small organisations in receipt of multiple funding pots from Bristol City Council and/ or the PCT can be supported to develop lead funder arrangements in this financial year in order to develop the necessary protocols and trust between funders.

## **8. Timescales**

What are the timescales for joint commissioning?

**ACTION:** To be addressed in improved communication regarding the JCU and processes around securing the future of effective short-term funded preventative services.

## **9. Individual budgets and personalisation**

There is a lack of discussion within the Framework about how commissioning will support the drive towards individual budgets, child focus and packages around the child.

## **10. Workforce Development**

It was raised that the framework is not detailed in its discussion of workforce development or how Trade Unions will be engaged in discussions around the move towards the commissioning of services.

## **11. The role of the Joint Commissioning Unit**

- There were concerns that if the JCU is to provide technical advice, guidance, policies and support around commissioning processes how can it ensure that it is used by those doing the commissioning? Does it have a clear mandate?
- Does the JCU have the capacity to undertake the work that is needed to ensure there is consistent and clear practice around commissioning?

## **12. Youth Housing & Transient Young People**

Currently the Children and Young People's Plan is lacking a concerted focus on youth housing and the difficulties of accessing locality based services for some:

- How are we ensuring that this agenda is joining up with the rest of the children and young people's agenda and the Partnership?
- Transient young people lose out with a purely locality based service model. There was some concern that there has already been an impact from some services aligning themselves on a locality basis

## **13. Language and terminology**

The Framework has introduced a range of new terms and these are in addition to the range of terminology being used in other developments – are we clear that we are using the same language?

## **14. Complex Needs**

There was concern that there was not a specific focus on the needs of children with complex needs and whether there was a strategy group in place for this?

**RESPONSE:** *Strategy for Complex Needs will need to be revisited in light of the 'Aiming high for disabled children: better support for families' report from the Comprehensive Spending Review. A strategic delivery group to undertake this is being formed and there will be a VCS representative on the group.*

## **15. Links with adult services**

These are not made clear within the Framework – both in terms of transition work for young people and the commissioning of services for adults and the impact this will have on children and young people. A number of VCS organisations are in receipt of funding from both adult and children's social care for example.

## **16. Review**

It was suggested that the framework included a date for review so we can look at how effective it has been and what might need to be changes/ revised in light of practice. It would then be a working document able to evolve with our needs.