



Sector-led support for commissioning and productivity

The Commissioning Support Programme is contracted by the Children's Improvement Board to provide support to local authorities in creating more effective and efficient children's services through improved commissioning. In the period between January and end of March 2012 we will be working to lay the foundations of a self-sustaining system of support that local authorities can draw on in the coming years.

We will be working with the sector to:

- Establish **regional and sub regional networks** of commissioning champions
- Populate the **LGA knowledge hub** with the commissioning and productivity resources that the sector has found the most helpful
- Develop new **commissioning and productivity materials** in the areas where the sector has identified they are needed
- Develop a self-sustaining **team of sector specialists** who can continue to provide peer-to-peer support for improved commissioning and increased productivity
- Identify a **national pool of commissioning and commercial experts** that local authorities can access through the brokerage of the Children's Improvement Board

This brief document sets out how we will be working with local authorities in the coming weeks and what our objectives are for each of these activities.

The Commissioning Support Programme is also responding to the increased instances of People Directorates and wider local area commissioning by adapting our wider support offer to drive efficiency and transformation through mature commissioning models. For more about the Commissioning Support Programme and our other work with local authorities and their partners go to www.commissioningsupport.org.uk or contact office@commissioningsupport.org.uk

Regional networks of commissioning champions

We will be working closely with Directors of Children's Services, lead members and the regional brokers identified by the Children's Improvement Board to create practical regional networks of commissioners that can share insights and expertise. These networks may look quite different in different regions, building on what's already there and what is most helpful. Wherever possible we will work with the commissioning champion networks facilitated by the Commissioning Support Programme since 2009.

As well as helping to establish these networks we will be making recommendations to the Children's Improvement Board on how they can best be supported and sustained in the future.

Contacts for CS regional links:

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The LGA knowledge hub

There are many resources created and used by commissioners that can help support improvement of children's services but they are not always easy to access. We will work with commissioners to ensure that we understand

which of the plethora of publications, resources and tools that are in the system are the most helpful. This includes looking at resources from beyond the children's sector that can add value to the commissioning of children's services. We will then make sure that these are accessible through the Local Government Association knowledge hub. We will work to signpost these resources in the clearest possible way so that commissioners can find what they are looking for quickly and simply.

We will be actively consulting with commissioners to understand what resources they value most but you can email suggestions for inclusion to chris.knighton@commissioningsupport.org.uk

Developing new commissioning materials

We will work closely with commissioners to understand where they would benefit from the development of new resources. Building on our experience of creating the *Commissioners Kitbag*, (available at [**www.commissioningsupport.org.uk**](http://www.commissioningsupport.org.uk)) we will co-develop new materials that focus on commissioners' real priorities and that are practical and easy to use.

We will test any new materials through the regional commissioning champion networks and with leading commissioners to make them as helpful as they can be. The Children's Improvement Board has identified the following as the priority areas for new materials:

- Youth services
- Schools and special educational needs
- Placements
- Families with complex needs
- Prevention and early intervention

We will be developing one new resource in each of these areas. New materials will be made available through the LGA knowledge hub.

For more information contact [**fiona.richardson@commissioningsupport.org.uk**](mailto:fiona.richardson@commissioningsupport.org.uk)

Developing a team of commissioning sector specialists

We will work with local authorities to recruit commissioners, who are working in the sector and well placed to support improvement within the system by sharing their knowledge and expertise on a peer-to-peer basis. This is an important step in creating a self-sustaining network of improvement support.

In the period to March 2012, we will identify between 20 and 30 specialists who will be given the opportunity to attend initial training to allow them to work effectively and efficiently with other local authorities. We will work with C4EO to ensure that our work is aligned with their approach to developing sector specialists.

We will also help to establish clear processes where CIB brokers and local authorities can access this sector specialist support. This work will build on the Commissioning Support Programme's experience in creating comprehensive development programmes for local authorities and recent training materials for all government commissioners.

For more information contact [**richard.selwyn@commissioningsupport.org.uk**](mailto:richard.selwyn@commissioningsupport.org.uk)

National pool of commissioning experts

As commissioners respond to the drive for better and more efficient services they will often need to access specific expertise to help them make the necessary changes. We will create an easy-to-use directory of experts that can be accessed by local authorities as and when they are needed.

We will test this directory through the regional commissioning champion's networks to make sure that it is organised in the most helpful way and covers all the areas where commissioners may want to call on support. The directory will be made available through the LGA knowledge hub and we will also make recommendations on how it can be kept up to date and relevant in the future.