

# debates and dilemmas commissioning children and young people's services





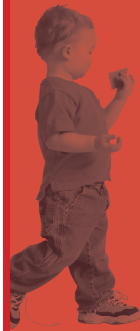
This briefing bulletin will help directors of children's services and senior managers with lead responsibility for strategic commissioning to improve outcomes for children and young people by developing more robust commissioning arrangements.

The briefing is informed by a study seminar sponsored by the Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA), the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) and Research in Practice (RiP). Office for Public Management (OPM) facilitated the seminar. The briefing was written by Research in Practice in collaboration with Jane Shuttleworth.

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Effective joint planning and commissioning is at the heart of improving outcomes for children and young people... The transition to joint planning and commissioning is a step change that requires clear leadership. Effective joint planning and commissioning necessitates new partnerships, redistribution of power towards the user, strategic understanding of how all outcomes in the local area are met, and a more commercially minded approach to procurement – all focused on the child and young person.

*Joint Planning and Commissioning Framework for Children, Young People and Maternity Services (2006) Department for Education and Skills and Department of Health*

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In order to help make this vital step change the Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA), the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) and Research in Practice (RIP) sponsored a seminar for directors of children's services and senior managers with responsibility for strategic commissioning.

The IDeA and DfES asked RIP to write this briefing bulletin for directors of children's services and senior commissioning managers. The briefing highlights the key points to emerge from the seminar in order to stimulate further debate and discussion and to suggest ideas for taking commissioning forward.

Discussion at the seminar was wide ranging; it provided a rich source of information and practical suggestions. The seminar confirmed that strategic commissioning is a complex process and that directors of children's services need to play a lead role in championing new approaches. Commissioning must focus on outcomes – and this is a different and challenging way of designing and performance-managing services. In order to deliver the best outcomes, services must improve – in fact, they may need to change radically. Commissioners need to improve their strategic understanding of markets. The need to make the most of scarce resources at a time when there are significant financial pressures is an underlying commissioning challenge.

### about this briefing

This briefing is structured around five themes which emerged from the seminar. These are:

- making the commissioning journey
- taking the lead
- being driven by outcomes
- understanding the market place
- making the most of financial resources.

Under each of those five themes you will find three short sections:

- **key points:** a list of the main points made at the seminar
- **debates and dilemmas:** here we list some of the questions and dilemmas that you will need to resolve locally as you develop your commissioning arrangements
- **tips for moving forward:** these are practical suggestions for how to tackle some of those dilemmas and on where to go from here.

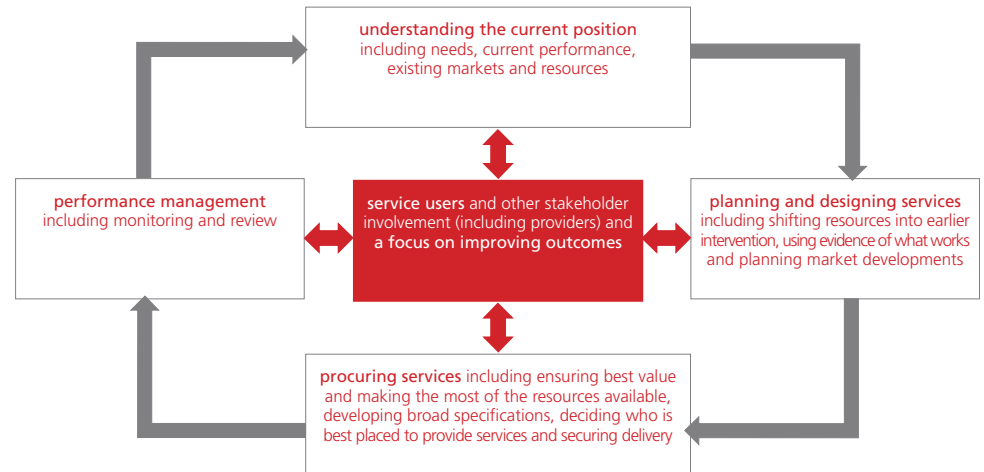
You will find a list of all resources mentioned in the briefing at the end of this booklet.

# debates and dilemmas

## making the commissioning journey

### key points made at the study seminar

- Successful strategic commissioning within available resources is the key to improving outcomes for children and young people.
- Joint commissioning is fundamental to delivering the priorities identified in Children and Young People's Plans.
- The Joint Planning and Commissioning Framework for Children, Young People and Maternity Services provides a useful starting point for local discussion. The commissioning journey will involve all stakeholders and agencies agreeing:
  - what commissioning is
  - what they want to achieve
  - the steps involved
  - the role and responsibilities of all stakeholders.
- Commissioning is not just a technical activity that is about procurement and purchasing services. Rather, it is a way of thinking and approaching service design and delivery. It involves:
  - understanding the needs of children and young people
  - deciding strategic priorities
  - designing services to meet needs and improve outcomes.



- Decisions about any service (for example, to decommission, extend or modify a service) must be made through the commissioning process, whichever agency provides that service.
- At each stage of the commissioning journey, it is important to think about outcomes and how to involve key stakeholders. This is a very different approach to the traditional way of doing things – it requires a fundamental shift in thinking.

### ensuring outcomes and stakeholders are central to strategic commissioning

This diagram has been adapted from the Joint Planning and Commissioning Framework. It highlights the major elements of strategic commissioning. Securing better outcomes and involving key stakeholders is central to the process. This means that at each stage strategic commissioners need to consider:

- how to make sure there is a focus on delivering better outcomes
- which stakeholders need to be involved and the best methods of achieving this.

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commissioning is not just a technical activity that is about procurement and purchasing services. Rather, it is a way of thinking and approaching service design and delivery

### debates and dilemmas

These are some of the questions and dilemmas that you will want to debate locally.

- Who are the strategic commissioners? Think about all agencies and all sectors.
- How can you make commissioning interesting and relevant for children and young people, parents and carers? How can you ensure they are involved at each stage?
- How can the Director of Children's Services and senior commissioning managers hear the voices of children and young people directly?
- Who are the service providers? (Think about all agencies and sectors.) What is their role in the commissioning process?
- Schools and General Practitioners provide services and have commissioning responsibilities with significant purchasing power. How can you involve them in your commissioning journey? Are there other agencies that both commission and provide? What implications does this have for ensuring commissioning is fair and that there is a level playing field?
- What is the role of local authority members in the commissioning process? At what stage(s) should they be involved? Which members should be involved and when?
- How will you resolve any differences of view on definitions of commissioning that might arise? For example, differences between health and local authorities?
- Is there a difference between commissioning for better outcomes and commissioning for better services? What commissioning skills are required?
- What are the principles underpinning your approach to commissioning?
- How can you ensure that governance arrangements result in a shift in the balance of power away from providers and towards service users and local communities?
- Are there different levels of commissioning? For example, some authorities have made a distinction between strategic, operational and individual commissioning. Do you agree with this distinction? What does it mean in practice?

### tips for moving forward

- Involve the Children’s Trust Partnership Board (or its equivalent) in a debate on commissioning. Use the *Joint Planning and Commissioning Framework* as the starting point for your discussion. During your debate, you will need to consider:
  - what will be commissioned on a whole-authority basis
  - what might be devolved to an area or locality.
- Develop a common language on commissioning. Decide on a strategic commission framework and what you want to achieve.
- Invite focus groups of children and young people, parents and carers to decide how they want to be involved in each stage of the commissioning process.
- Agree how you are going to involve those children and young people who are more difficult to engage – for example, those who do not want to take part in focus groups.

- Draw up a map of what is currently happening across all agencies in terms of strategic commissioning. Use this analysis to identify priorities and inform plans for developing more integrated approaches to commissioning.
  - What data is available on outcomes, needs and performance? Who is responsible for collecting and analysing this information?
  - What data is available on the use of financial and other resources? Include every source of funding available to all agencies.
  - Who is involved in the design of services? Are children and young people involved? Are providers involved?
  - How are decisions currently made on resource allocation, including decisions on savings and the use of new resources? Who is involved?
  - How are services procured? What are the ‘procurement’ rules for all agencies involved?
  - What performance-management systems are in place? Are these consistent across agencies and providers? If not, what are the differences?

### agree how you are going to involve those children and young people who are more difficult to engage – for example, those who do not want to take part in focus groups

- Develop a set of principles to underpin your approach to commissioning?
- Develop protocols that set out how key stakeholders will be involved in each stage of the commissioning process – for example, local authority members, service providers and children and young people.
- Undertake a commissioning skills audit.
- Use the Children and Young People’s Plan as the key strategic document to set out agreed priorities and commissioning intentions. Establish a project management structure that enables priorities to be implemented.

# taking the lead

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## key points made at the study seminar

- It is essential for strategic leaders to ensure:
  - that there is clarity about how services will make a difference to the lives of children and young people
  - services provide best value.
- The director of children's services (DCS) needs to be the strategic commissioning lead. The DCS has a key role to play in setting out a vision for the future and communicating how strategic commissioning will help realise that vision.
- The DCS also has a key role in leading the shift to a commissioning culture in which decisions are based on evidence and in which services are designed and performance-managed around outcomes.
- If you are to be successful in promoting culture change, it is essential to make sure leadership roles do not reside in the DCS and the top team only. It is also important to make sure middle managers understand and use their leadership skills.
- The DCS needs to make sure that commissioning is well co-ordinated and all agencies are involved in the commissioning process.

## debates and dilemmas

These are some of the questions and dilemmas that you will want to debate locally.

- How can the DCS demonstrate a commitment to a 'level playing field' between service providers when the DCS is also responsible for the day-to-day management of a significant amount of service provision?
- What should the DCS's role be within a commissioning children's trust?
- What should be the role of the DCS within a children's trust that both commissions and provides services?
- How will the DCS be accountable to communities and users?
- What is the role of a joint commissioning unit? Where should a joint commissioning unit be located – within children's services or elsewhere? Does its location matter?
- Will the joint commissioning unit be 'real' or 'virtual'?
- What is the role of the lead member for children's services in strategic commissioning?

## tips for moving forward

- Clarify the difference between leading and managing the joint commissioning process.
- Develop a protocol on the role of the DCS in terms of strategic commissioning and as a manager of service provision. Make sure your protocol covers getting direct access to the views of children and young people.
- Develop a protocol on the role of the lead member in terms of strategic commissioning.
- Consider the different options for the location of a joint commissioning unit – and the advantages and disadvantages of each one. This might include thinking about the advantages and disadvantages of having a 'real' or 'virtual' unit.
- List the local strategic commissioning leaders or 'champions' – and specify what is expected of them.
- Develop a plan for communicating the importance and role of commissioning in improving outcomes for children and young people.
- Establish early on the measures of success that you will have in place in respect of outcomes for children and young people – and the explicit link with what you have commissioned.



Capacity to evaluate needs is the building block to developing a responsive commissioning strategy. Good commissioning means developing a dynamic understanding of changing needs and a capacity to evaluate the range and effectiveness of services. . . . Few councils have developed the capacity to do this systematically

Dame Denise Platt  
Chair, Commission for Social Care Inspection, January 2006

key points made at the study seminar

- The IDeA is concerned that only a small number of commissioning strategies are driven by an assessment of local need. Where assessments of need have been carried out, there appears to be little consistency in their depth and range of analysis.
- A study by the National Foundation for Education Research of 75 Children and Young People's Plans shows there is no consistent understanding of what a needs analysis involves. The study found a limited connection between the needs analysis and the selection of priorities.
- In some cases, needs analyses appear to have been primarily a 'hoovering up' of all available information, with little thought being given to how to use it or what was actually required.
- To become outcome focused and driven requires a fundamental shift in thinking.
- National data sets – including the one used by Office for standards in education, childrens services and skills (Ofsted) for Joint Area Reviews – are not sufficiently outcome focused. Some authorities are, therefore, complementing established data sets with additional information, making for further complexity around consistent data sets.
- It is important to make use of qualitative information – including case studies – that capture children and young people's life stories.
- There is often not enough focus on what the data says and on local trends. This information is not used to inform planning and the selection of priorities.
- More emphasis should be put on identifying positive outcomes. At present, the outcomes measured are often negative – for example, statistics on youth crime.

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## debates and dilemmas

These are some of the questions and dilemmas that you will want to debate locally.

- What does being driven by outcomes mean in practice? What needs to change?
- What is a needs analysis? How can you make sure it is more focused on outcomes?
- How should information on needs and outcomes be used in the strategic commissioning process?
- What additional information do you need to get a rounded picture of children and young people's achievements and aspirations? How can this be obtained?
- What makes a real difference to children and young people's lives – and how can you measure this?
- Can a pathways approach help you understand the journey experienced by children and young people?
- How can positive outcomes like enjoyment or an increase in self-esteem be measured?

## tips for moving forward

- Work with children, young people and their parents and carers to define outcomes – and how to measure success.
- Use some real-life case studies to explore how outcomes could have been improved.
- Define key terms and make sure everyone shares a common understanding of them – for example, terms such as 'input', 'output', 'outcome', 'impact', 'process'.
- Develop guidance for carrying out a needs analysis. Make sure it focuses on outcomes and includes qualitative measures. Be clear why each piece of information is important to strategic commissioning and how it will be used.
- Ask all service providers the following questions:
  - what impact or difference are you making?
  - what evidence can you point to to show you are making that difference? How could you make more impact?
  - could you make the same impact with fewer resources?

- Consider the use of tried and tested 'outcomes based accountability' approaches, such as the one developed by Mark Friedman and outlined in his book *Trying Hard is Not Good Enough – How to Produce Measurable Improvements for Customers and Communities*<sup>1</sup>. This is sometimes referred to as a 'Turning the Curve' exercise. The DfES has produced a toolkit based on the experience of using the Turning the Curve approach to improve outcomes for children, young people and communities in Portsmouth; see the resources listed at end of this publication. See also a research report produced for the IDeA 'better results' programme, *Improving Service Delivery: Introducing outcomes-based accountability*, which reviews the key findings relating to the use of outcome-focused practice by four local authorities working to make a difference to the lives of children and young people.

<sup>1</sup> Mark Friedman (2005) *Trying Hard is Not Good Enough: How to produce measurable improvements for customers and communities*. Trafford Publishing

### key points made at the study seminar

- The children's services market is segmented. Different children's services markets operate in different ways, but not enough is known about local markets.
- In some cases, agencies both provide and purchase services. This will present particular challenges as you attempt to ensure fairness and equity through creating a level playing field for all service providers.
- Accurate costing of in-house delivery can be very difficult – but without it there is no proper means of determining value for money.
- Competition or competitive threat can be used to improve outcomes, reduce costs and increase sustainability and flexibility.
- Contestability – the use of 'competitive threat' – is different to 'market-testing'.
- Monopoly providers do not need to be exposed to actual competition in order to act competitively; the threat of competition might be sufficient.
- It might not be possible to manage some markets, but more could be done to stimulate and influence all markets for children and young people's services.

### debates and dilemmas

These are some of the questions and dilemmas that you will want to debate locally.

- What do you know about the local and regional markets for children's services?
- Will joint commissioning with other local authorities offer you any advantages?
- What is the best – and fairest – way of opening up internal services to competition?
- How can you use contestability to improve services?
- How can you improve service design? What are the best ways of designing innovative services?
- What does a 'level playing field' for service providers mean in practice? What steps are involved in ensuring there is a level playing field for all?
- Is it possible to ensure best value through methods other than competitive tendering – for example, through strategic partnering?
- Is there any mileage in stimulating or supporting the development of local markets? For example, should you be thinking about developing low-margin markets and/or creating ethical markets?
- How can you free up resources or create more time to work on market issues?

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### tips for moving forward

- Undertake some market mapping and analysis using techniques such as Porter's Five Forces or a SWOT analysis. These and other techniques are outlined in the publication Industry Techniques and Inspiration for Commissioners produced by the DfES. Information on this publication is provided at the end of this leaflet.
- Consider taking advice from those with skills in market management and development – possibly from leading edge partnerships, local colleges and universities.
- Take a particular priority outcome and look at the market for relevant services, including in-house services. Ask yourself the following questions:
  - what are the key strategic challenges?
  - how could contestability help?
  - are other measures needed?
  - what approach(es) could be used?
- Link children's services market development to other initiatives taking place within the council on regeneration or stimulating the local economy.
- Involve children and young people in service design.
- Allocate a lead or champion role on markets. Set some short, medium and long-term objectives.
- Look at the local procurement rules for all partner agencies. For example, those contained within Council Standing Orders. Do these allow for strategic partnering or similar arrangements?
- Establish long-term and creative relationships with providers to ensure they can be responsive to changing demand.

consider taking advice from those with skills in market management and development – possibly from leading edge partnerships, local colleges and universities

#### key points made at the study seminar

- It is often difficult to free up resources because they are tied into existing services; nevertheless, this will be necessary to achieve your desired outcomes.
- There is uncertainty regarding national funding priorities. This makes longer-term financial planning difficult.
- Commissioning strategies need to identify how resources will shift over time into early and earlier intervention.
- Some authorities are using capital investment available, for example through Building Schools for the Future, to support commissioning for the Every Child Matters agenda.

#### debates and dilemmas

These are some of the questions and dilemmas that you will want to debate locally.

- What does this mean in terms of decisions on financial resources for children and young people's services?
  - How can you move to evidence-based outcome-focused funding arrangements? This will involve shifting from historic patterns of funding.
  - How do you know you are making best use of existing resources?
  - What has been learned about de-commissioning services and commissioning more effective alternatives? (You might want to involve colleagues from adult social care in this discussion.)
- How can resources be shifted into early intervention? For example, is it necessary to have additional resources – or could this be done without an overall increase in expenditure?
  - How can capital investment be used to support the Every Child Matters agenda?
  - What impact will an increasing focus on personalised budgets have on strategic commissioning and on financial management? For example, what will be the impact of an increase in use of direct payments and lead professionals with budgets for purchasing individual packages of care?

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it will not...be appropriate for every need to be met through services that have been jointly commissioned...But all such individual commissioning must be understood and positioned within the context of the Children and Young People's Plan, and the children's trust should lead the planning and co-ordinate the commissioning of **all** services for children and young people

*Statutory guidance on the duty to co-operate (Children Act 2004)<sup>2</sup>.*

<sup>2</sup> DfES (2005) *Statutory guidance on inter-agency co-operation to improve the wellbeing of children: children's trusts.*

#### tips for moving forward

- Agree a formula for calculating the unit costs of all services. Make use of practical resources such as Unit Costs – Not Exactly Child's Play and the Cost Calculator for Children's Services.
- Focus on the total cost of services provided for a child or young person. Include services provided by all agencies. Cost each one and calculate the total cost of the service package.
- Identify funding sources that can be used to pump prime or support new developments. Consider using Local Area Agreements and unlocking funds within schools budgets.
- Develop a multi-agency strategy for shifting resources into prevention and early intervention. When developing your strategy, include timescales for making the shift. Identify also:
  - changes in activity (and the consequent financial changes) over a three to five-year period
  - milestones and targets for judging whether your strategy is on track.
- Analyse services along a continuum from low cost, big impact and good quality to high cost, little (or no) impact and poor quality. Use this as a framework for identifying your commissioning priorities.
- Consider what options you have for pooling budgets. Identify any potential budget savings that could be made by removing duplication, creating economies of scale and simplifying funding streams.

Unless otherwise stated, all the resources listed below can be downloaded at the appropriate web address.

#### the commissioning journey

- *Every Child Matters*  
The joint planning and commissioning pages of the *Every Child Matters* website contain links to guidance, toolkits and other practical resources. Go to [www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/strategy/planningandcommissioning](http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/strategy/planningandcommissioning)
- *Joint Planning and Commissioning Framework for Children, Young People and Maternity Services*.  
This government guidance for children's trusts can be found at the planning and commissioning pages of the *Every Child Matters* website. Go to [www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/strategy/planningandcommissioning](http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/strategy/planningandcommissioning)

- *Making Ends Meet*  
This is a web-based resource for councillors and senior managers on managing social care finances, produced by IDeA. Go to [www.makingendsmeet.idea.gov.uk](http://www.makingendsmeet.idea.gov.uk)
- *No excuses. Embrace partnership now. Step towards change!*  
This report from the Department of Health sets out the conclusions of the Third Sector Commissioning Task Force, which was set up to promote a sound commercial relationship between commissioners of health and social care services and the third sector as providers. Go to [www.policyhub.gov.uk/news\\_item/third\\_sector\\_dh06.asp](http://www.policyhub.gov.uk/news_item/third_sector_dh06.asp)

#### taking the lead

- *Statutory Guidance on the Roles and Responsibilities of the Director of Children's Services and Lead Member for Children's Services*.  
Go to [www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/strategy/dcsandlm/](http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/strategy/dcsandlm/)
- *The Leadership Imperative: Reforming children's services from the ground up*  
This report by Hannah Lownsbrough and Duncan O'Leary, published by the think tank Demos, explores the role of leadership in children's services reform. It suggests that if the integration of services is to work, leaders must focus on changing the prevailing cultures of organisations, rather than altering the structure of services and hoping that working practices will follow. Go to [www.demos.co.uk/files/LeadershipImperativePdf.pdf](http://www.demos.co.uk/files/LeadershipImperativePdf.pdf)

### driven by outcomes

- *Analysis of Children and Young People's Plans 2006*  
This study of 75 CYPPs, by the National Foundation for Education Research, builds a national picture of the content of the plans and how they contribute to the five outcomes of Every Child Matters (ECM). It is intended to inform future approaches to planning and highlight areas of support that will be useful to LAs. Go to [www.nfer.ac.uk/research-areas/pims-data/summaries/analysis-of-cypp-2006.cfm](http://www.nfer.ac.uk/research-areas/pims-data/summaries/analysis-of-cypp-2006.cfm)
- *'Turning the Curve' Toolkit – From Talk to Action – Making a Difference to Children and Young People and Families' Lives*  
This toolkit was developed by Portsmouth Children's Trust Development Team at the request of the Children's Trust Policy Team at the DfES. It is based on local experience of using the Turning the Curve approach in Portsmouth to improve outcomes for children and young people. Go to [www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/resources-and-practice/EP00201](http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/resources-and-practice/EP00201)

### – 'Better results' network

As part of its work to support local government improve outcomes for children, young people and their families, the IDeA sponsored the training of 50 children sector officers and professionals from across England in an outcome-focused methodology developed by Mark Friedman. A national 'better results' network has grown out of this initiative. The network, which includes representation from central government departments, the voluntary sector and inspectorates, seeks to promote the methodology and share good practice about the implementation and impact of outcome focused practice. For more information, go to [www.idea.gov.uk/idk/core/page.do?pagelid=5046700](http://www.idea.gov.uk/idk/core/page.do?pagelid=5046700)

### – *Improving Service Delivery: Introducing outcomes-based accountability*

This is a research report commissioned for the IDeA 'better results' programme and led by Professor Collette McAuley of the University of Southampton. It reviews key findings relating to the use of outcome-focused practice by four local authorities in their work with children and young people. Go to [www.idea.gov.uk/idk/core/page.do?pagelid=5046718](http://www.idea.gov.uk/idk/core/page.do?pagelid=5046718)

### understanding the marketplace

- *Overarching Report on Children's Services Markets*  
This is an overarching report produced by PricewaterhouseCoopers for the DfES. It draws together themes from four separate reports on children's markets – on childcare, on positive activities for young people, on parental and family support, and on residential homes and fostering – to support development of an evidence-based strategy for developing the market in children's services. All five reports are available at [www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/resources-and-practice/RS00020](http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/resources-and-practice/RS00020)
- *Industry techniques and inspiration for commissioners*  
This booklet, published by DfES and Care Services Improvement Partnership (CSIP), is designed to help commissioners by providing some insights into the way business and industry tackles challenges comparable to those of the Every Child Matters: Change for Children programme. It includes information about Porters' Five Forces and SWOT analysis mentioned on page 10 of this briefing. Go to [www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/resources-and-practice/IG00127](http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/resources-and-practice/IG00127)

### financial resources and costs

- *Unit Costs – Not Exactly Child’s Play: A guide to estimating unit costs for children’s social care.*  
This guide by Jennifer Beecham was published jointly by the Department of Health, the Dartington Social Research Unit and the Personal Social Services Research Unit at the University of Kent. It is intended to help children’s services managers understand how to calculate unit costs. Go to [www.pssru.ac.uk/pdf/B062.pdf](http://www.pssru.ac.uk/pdf/B062.pdf)
  - *Making Ends Meet*  
see ‘The commissioning journey’ page 14.
  - *Investing to Save: why it’s important to invest in placement services for looked after children*  
This information leaflet, produced by Research in Practice for the DfES, contains examples of four local authorities’ successful invest to save strategies for placement services for looked after children. Go to [www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/resources-and-practice/ep00093/](http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/resources-and-practice/ep00093/)
  - *Looking After Children: At What Cost? Resource Pack*  
This pack is designed to help local authorities cost placements and services for looked after children as part of the development of a local commissioning strategy.
- It is based on the messages and costing methodology from a research study carried out in six local authorities and a follow-up piece of work to pilot the Cost Calculator (see below). The aims of the study were to explore the relationship between costs and outcomes for looked after children and to develop a methodology to calculate the costs to social services of supporting these children. Go to [www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/resources-and-practice/search/IG00022](http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/resources-and-practice/search/IG00022)
- *The Cost Calculator for Children’s Services*  
A computer software application and database designed to help local authorities monitor the true costs of services to children and thereby improve strategic planning and commissioning. A demonstration is free to download at [www.cfcfs.org.uk](http://www.cfcfs.org.uk)
  - *Choice Protects – High-Cost Placements Audit Tool*  
This audit tool has been produced for the DfEs by the Looked After Children Task Force and has been piloted in a number of local authorities. It is designed to audit the needs of a selected small sample of children and young people in high-cost placements in relation to their social care, education and health histories. Go to [www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/resources-and-practice/search/TP00002/](http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/resources-and-practice/search/TP00002/)
- *Cost and Outcomes: Research on children in need*  
The government has commissioned research on the costs and outcomes of services for children in need. The work seeks to improve understanding about how service costs can be calculated, and how those calculations can inform decisions about service planning and budget allocation. The research programme is supported by a range of materials – leaflets, reports and workshops – all designed to help commissioners and providers use the research messages to inform their work. For more information and to download the materials, go to [www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/costsandoutcomes](http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/costsandoutcomes)
  - *Co-production in Children’s Services*  
This booklet by Clive Miller and Sue Stirling looks at how a focus on co-production could produce the greater public service effectiveness required by the Children Act and Every Child Matters: Next Steps. Based on research by OPM, it sets out the practical details of a new model for achieving this that will help public service managers. The booklet is produced by OPM and costs £6; for more information, go to [www.opm.co.uk/2006\\_pubs/book38.htm](http://www.opm.co.uk/2006_pubs/book38.htm)

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### **Improvement and Development Agency for local government (IDeA)**

The IDeA works for local government improvement so councils can serve people and places better.

We use experienced councillors and senior officers, known as peers, who support and challenge councils to improve themselves.

We enable councils to share good practice through the national Beacons scheme and regional local government networks. The best ideas are put on the IDeA Knowledge website.

Our Leadership Academy programmes help councillors become better leaders so they can balance the diverse demands of people living in the same community.

The IDeA also promotes the development of local government's management and workforce. We advise councils on improving customer service and value for money. We help councils work through local partnerships to tackle local priorities such as health, children's services and economic development.

The IDeA is owned by the Local Government Association and belongs to local government. Together we lead local government improvement.

[www.idea.gov.uk](http://www.idea.gov.uk)

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