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Foreword

Strategic Commissioning is defined by the Social Work Inspection Agency as ‘the term used for all the activities involved in assessing and forecasting needs, agreeing desired outcomes, considering options, planning the nature, range and quality of future services and working in partnership to put these into place.

Argyll and Bute Council is committed to meeting the needs, wishes and aspiration of citizens. We want to understand the outcomes which give people a better quality of life and use this knowledge to help us design, deliver and procure services. We really value the feedback that people continue to give us on how we engage and consult with service users, carers and providers. We want to continuously learn from this feedback and integrate consultation and engagement at all stages in the commissioning cycle as described later in this draft strategy.

One of the key principles described in this document is that of delivering and procuring quality services within a ‘Best Value’ environment, we believe that an effective commissioning strategy is essential to achieve this.

This document offers a draft framework for strategic commissioning for the period 2011 – 2016. We know that this is going to be a time of severe economic restraint where we will need to ensure that we as a local authority discharge our duty to spend money wisely.

The Service Commissioning Strategy has been developed with the purpose of providing a formal statement of commitment approach and intent in relation to securing, specifying and monitoring commissioned social care services to meet people’s needs.

In turn the Commissioning Strategy outlines

- An approach to the engagement and consultation of service users, customers and their families.
• Summary of current services.
• Description of the proposed commissioning processes.
• Analysis of the financial context and future resources.
• Key principles which the Council will adopt when commissioning services.
• Definition of what we mean by personalisation and outcomes and its relationship with the commissioning strategy.

Draft strategies have been completed for all social work services via a series of workshops. During these events a range of social work staff comprising

• Heads Of Service
• Service Managers
• Operational Managers
• Service Managers
• Senior Social Work staff
discussed and identified the commissioning priorities for their service based on their knowledge of existing provision, service achievements, strategic direction, future priorities and anticipated budgetary resources. In turn each services has developed a vision of which services need to be in place to meet client needs throughout the next 5 year period, 2011-2016.

These are the Council’s proposals for outcomes and future supply – these are not plans which have already been decided upon. We want to promote a consistent way forward for the commissioning and procurement of care and support services. We believe that this will help us to work better in partnership with service users, carers, providers and other key stakeholders.

This document provides a draft strategy for consultation process in 2011. We hope you will give us your feedback through the consultation document which accompanies this strategy.
Our Principles

Argyll and Bute Council is committed to working in partnership with service users, carers, the NHS and other social care providers from the independent sector to meet the needs of the people of Argyll and Bute.

Social Work matters in Argyll and Bute because of the very positive difference it can make to the quality of people’s lives who may be disadvantaged, vulnerable because of age, ill health, disability or social and economic circumstances. Social Work services ensure people are safe, healthy and have the opportunity to fulfil their personal potential.

The overarching aim and vision of Argyll and Bute Council’s Social Work Service is to work with our communities to develop and improve quality of life and opportunity by realising our potential together.

To this end, the Council and its staff will work with key stakeholders to promote our core values as outlined in the strategy. By setting out our approach to commissioning, the Council aims to promote understanding and transparency, increase client choice, aid effective partnership and ultimately improve community based provision in the long term.

Why We Are Developing a Commissioning Strategy

The Social Work Service within Argyll and Bute offers a diverse range of services to people of all ages within the area. In this current economic climate, facing issues such as

- Budget Reductions
- Increasing Demands
- Policy changes (e.g. Introduction of Charging Policy, which will affect service demand)

mean Care Services need to take a more decisive and informed approach to planning their commissioning activity. The severity of the financial pressures which we are facing, and the resulting budgetary reductions mean we cannot continue providing services using the current infrastructure.
We have to change current methods of service delivery in order to protect the most vulnerable people within Argyll & Bute, using our Priority of Need framework to determine the needs of service users. An effective Commissioning Strategy outlines the changes we will make in designing services to meet these challenges. This document outlines the strategy and associated plans which together provide a framework for delivering care to vulnerable people who have been assessed as requiring these services.

A recent SWIA inspection of Argyll & Bute Social Work Service recommended the development of a commissioning strategy in order to meet these challenges. The strategy sets out the high level approach to how social care services will be commissioned. In turn the strategy links with commissioning plans from each service

- Older People
- Sensory Impairment
- Learning Disability
- Mental Health
- Substance and Alcohol Abuse
- Homelessness
- Children and Families

To this end, each service has been tasked with developing a commissioning plan which addresses the following points:

- The strategic context for their commissioning and purchasing activity
- The profile of service users to whom their support is targeted
- What is provided through the current infrastructure and where gaps exist
- The priorities which are considered key with regards to commissioning services between 2011-2016.

**Key Principles**

Our current and future service users rightly have high expectations of the care services that they receive. The Council needs to be able to meet these and future expectations by focusing on outcomes, maximising choice and promoting the delivery of personalised services. By addressing the requirements of the Scottish Governments review of Social Services which identifies service personalisation as
enabling the individual alone, or in groups, to find the right solutions for them and to participate in the delivery of a service. From being a recipient of services, citizens can become actively involved in selecting and shaping the services they receive


This means moving increasingly towards service user defined outcomes by involving the users of service in the commissioning process and facilitating, where appropriate, service users taking control of their own budgets. This is not just about increasing direct payments but taking an approach that sees more individually set goals and monitoring how well they are achieved. The Personalisation approach to the provision of social care means we need to have commissioning processes which embrace the involvement of the service user in the design of a service which meets jointly agreed, individually focussed outcomes. Flexibility and the provision of choice will be key consideration.

We already have a significant number of Direct Payments, but need to build on the existing infrastructure to support the increasing number of individuals employing their own Personal Assistants or who decide to have services provided by an existing social care agency. Those employing staff to provide services will need more support with commissioning and monitoring services including managing payroll and staff. Services also need to be more focussed on the person’s needs and not established service commissioning arrangements.

All purchasing or “commissioning” required to be underpinned by an audit trail and represent Best Value at all times. The key to delivering effective social care services is to ensure service users are provided with the outcomes they want and need, at the right time and in the right place. Understanding, mapping and forecasting the supply and demand factors within the market to meet the current and evolving needs of users is an essential and key function of commissioning strategies.

The Council is committed to continuing its support for a mixed economy of care and to engaging formally with its partners and independent sector providers as a means of delivering the required services.
The Social Work Service Commissioning Strategy outlines the Council’s statement of intent of our approach to commissioning services.

- The principles the Social Work Service will adhere to throughout the commissioning process.
- The high level approach to how services will be commissioned.
- The principles, standards and values to be adhered to and the Council’s general and overall approach to engaging with service providers.
- The requirements of future commissioning strategies to deliver clear and costed commissioning plans which provide direction as to the required services to be secured in the future.

The aim of the Commissioning Strategy is to identify the intended outcomes in response to identified needs and the consequences for services, including finance and the workforce. In turn this approach will form the basis of future commissioning by the Council of services that support people to live as independently as possible in a range of settings. The strategy describes a “shopping list” of

- What services are required
- When these services will be required
- The commissioning processes by which we will ensure these services are delivered

This overarching strategy will set the framework for commissioning plans for Adult, Older People and Children and Families Services.

The document provides:

- An approach to the engagement and consultation of service users, customers and their families;
- Summary of current services;
- Description of the proposed commissioning processes;
- Analysis of the financial context and future resources;
- Key principles which the Council will adopt when commissioning services.
- Definition of what we mean by personalisation and outcomes and its relationship with the commissioning strategy.

**Prioritisation of Need Framework**

In common with many other Local Authorities across Scotland, Argyll and Bute Council need to consider the introduction of a prioritisation framework to guide the allocation of resources to those in the greatest need. The need for such a framework
is a direct response to the increasing gap between assessed need and available resources.

The concept that underpins the Councils approach to prioritisation is that access to scarce resources should be determined on the basis of comparative “greatest need” and is not on any other basis such as length of waiting time for services. Individuals assessed as having higher needs must receive priority over those with lower needs, at this time Argyll and Bute Council provides services to needs which can be classed as either Priority 1 or 2.

**Priority 1: Critical risk where serious harm or loss of life may occur**

- There is an immediate risk to the persons survival
- Serious abuse to self or others has occurred, or is suspected to the extent that protection measures are required
- There are extensive and constant care and support needs on an ongoing or time limited basis that, if not met, present an immediate risk to the person or others.
- The carer relationship(s) has collapsed and there is a need for immediate care and support.

**Priority 2: Significant risk where harm may occur now or in the near future**

- Abuse to self or others has occurred or is at risk of occurring
- There are extensive care and support needs on an ongoing or time limited basis.
- Absence or inadequacy of care and support is causing the person significant distress and their health to deteriorate
- The carer relationship(s) is at risk of collapse and the person needs care and support.

Clients with lower level needs will be directed towards relevant strategic partners. This will involve referrals to agencies who can assist with specific advice and targeted input where appropriate.

**What Will Change**
We are currently facing a period where the amount of local authority funding available for social care is being reduced within the context of increased demand for services due to societal demographic changes. We also face other drivers such as shifting the balance of care. Increasingly we are looking to develop personalised, flexible services which promote good outcomes but are provided in a community setting or within the clients home where appropriate.

Responding to these pressures in an effective manner requires considering other modes of service delivery which can cope with these new pressures. Simply doing more of the same is not a realistic option. Opportunities exist to deliver better services but this means we need to make changes now to how existing services are managed and delivered. As such the Commissioning Strategy will seek to deliver services which meet changing social, societal and budgetary demands. We have an opportunity to use effective commissioning to deliver improved services, but this will involve making changes to how we currently operate.

In response to these demands Community Services has begun a series of service reviews. The purpose of the reviews is to identify options to deal with the future level of resource demand. Whilst the review processes has not completed in all areas, the review of Older People and Learning Disability Services has recommended the use of tendering to externalise the provision of care and this will potentially be mirrored in other areas. The withdrawal of the Council from direct provision and the increasing use of private and third sector partners to deliver services has been identified as the best available option to meet future service and resource demands.

Service Commissioning plans will outline the approach adopted for each area. Deciding on the correct approach will reflect a number of different criteria such as

- Demand for future resources
- Availability of suitable external provision.
- Need to improve Performance Management and achieve better client outcomes
- Acknowledgment that any decision has to recognise the Council's ultimate duty of care
- The need to deliver Best Value
Stakeholder Feedback

Target audiences for this draft strategy include

- Current and future service users
- Their carers;
- Parents and families of children for who services are provided.
- Third sector and private sector service providers;
- Other Council departments
- Other statutory partner agencies such as
  - Argyll & Bute Community Health Partnership (CHP)
  - NHS Highland
  - Alcohol and Drug Partnership (ADP)
  - Strathclyde Police
  - Members of the Community Planning Partnership

This overarching strategy is intended to stimulate discussion. Between July and August 2011 stakeholders will be consulted and engaged in discussion about the strategy. The Council will listen to the views put forward and the final approach will be refined where it is appropriate and possible to do so. The Council will also engage its own staff in consultation about the strategy. Issues raised during the consultation will be reported to the Council before a final version of the Commissioning Strategy is agreed by the Council in the 2011/12 financial year.
Introduction

Argyll and Bute Council is committed to working in partnership with service users, carers, the NHS and other social care providers from the independent sector to meet the needs of the people of Argyll and Bute. Social Work matters in Argyll and Bute because of the very positive difference it can make to the quality of people’s lives who may be disadvantaged, vulnerable because of age, ill health, disability, social and economic circumstances, whilst feeling safe, healthy and fulfilling their personal potential.

The overarching aim and vision of Argyll and Bute Council’s Social Work Service is to work with our communities to develop and improve quality of life and opportunity. To this end, the Council and its staff will work with key stakeholders to promote our values, to

- Put the needs of our service users at the centre of everything we do
- Protect the most vulnerable citizens from harm
- Respect and uphold the rights and dignity of service users at all times
- Listen to what people say about how services are delivered
- Build partnerships with our communities and with other Agencies
- Respect the work and contribution of staff and carers
- Ensure services are fair, equitable and based on clear priorities
- Constantly strive to improve the way we meet people’s needs

By setting out our approach to commissioning, the Council aims to promote understanding and transparency and aid effective partnership and ultimately improve community based provision in the long-term. Our current and future service users rightly have high expectations of the care services that they receive. The Council needs to be able to meet these and future expectations by focusing on outcomes, maximising choice and promoting the delivery of personalised services.

Legislative and Policy Context

Social Work services for children, for community care groups and for those who offend is governed by a range of legislation including:

- Regulation of Care (Scotland) Act 2001
- Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968
- Children (Scotland) Act 1995
- Carers (recognition and Service) Act 1995
- NHS and Community Care Act 1990
- Adults with Incapacity (Scotland) Act 2000
- Protection of Vulnerable Groups (Scotland) Act 2007
Commissioning will also promote equality within service delivery consistent with our stated Equality and Diversity scheme. Commissioning activities and decisions will be informed by equality impact assessments. EIA’s will be conducted at appropriate stages to prevent any risk of discriminatory activity and uphold the principles of the Equalities Act (2010) when commissioning new services.

Social Work Services are largely governed by the Social Care and Social Work Improvement Service (SCSWIS) which assumed the responsibilities of the Care Commission and Social Work Inspection Agency in April 2011. The Scottish Social Services Council is the regulatory body governing the workforce. Other bodies which undertake an inspection and scrutiny in the role in respect of social work and social care services are Audit Scotland, Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Education (HMIE) and the Mental Welfare Commission.

The Scottish Government places high priority on partnership working as the means of delivering the best outcome. Key initiatives in this regard include:

- The Single Outcome Agreement
- Getting it Right for Every Child
- Community Care – A Joint Future
- Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements
- Data Sharing Partnerships

The Scottish Government recognises the key role played by social work and social care in making a difference. Notwithstanding, the Review of Social Work in the 21st Century (Changing Lives Report) published in 2006 concluded that:

“with rising expectations and increased complexity, doing more of the same would not work, therefore there needed to be engagement with people as active citizens and participants in order accessible responsive quality services that promoted wellbeing; and

that social work could not do it alone and that changing lives and improving chances required the cooperation and engagement of universal services in all sectors thereby refocusing energies to prevent problems.”

(Changing Lives Report, 2006)
The Changing Lives Report set out an exciting vision of more personalised services based upon enabling and building capacity of individuals, families and communities to exercise more choice and control. This vision represents a long term aspiration and aim for Argyll and Bute’s Social Work Service. The Service will seek to advance this agenda in partnership with users, carers and key stakeholders and at a pace which engages these interested parties and enables them to shape the route the Council takes.

Fundamental to this approach is a recognition that each person is unique, that people should not have to fit in to existing services, that promoting general health, well being and social inclusion will enhance outcomes and that formal or specialised services are not always the best way to meet peoples’ assessed needs.

This Commissioning Strategy has been drafted to take account of this direction of travel.

Profile of Argyll and Bute Council and Local Context

Argyll and Bute Council is the second largest Scottish local authority in terms of geographical area, stretching for over 100 miles from Appin in the north to Campbeltown in the south and more than 80 miles across from the island of Tiree in the west to Helensburgh in the east. Furthermore, Argyll and Bute has the third sparsest population of all Scottish local authorities, with an average population density of 13 people per square kilometre. This presents a significant challenge in terms of delivering social care services in an equitable way region wide.

The latest population count for the region estimated a total of 91,390 people living in Argyll and Bute. Although this total figure is projected to decrease by 1.5% in the next 25 year period it is further projected that the number of people aged 60 + (pensionable age) will increase by 28% during the same period. This too will present significant challenges for commissioning of social work services in this area in the future.

The overarching vision and objectives of Argyll and Bute Council’s Social Work Service are set out in the Social Work Service Plan 2009-2012. The overall aim of the service is to develop and support community based provision in order to enhance the quality of life and opportunities available to our service users so that they may enjoy better outcomes in life.

The overarching composition of this expenditure for the year 20011/2012 internally and externally is as follows:
Table 1 - 2011/2012 Gross Budget

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service Area</th>
<th>Approved Budget (11/12)£'000</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CHILD PROTECTION</td>
<td>3507</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LOOKED-AFTER CHILDREN</td>
<td>6,061</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHILDREN WITH A DISABILITY AND EARLY YEARS</td>
<td>5,448</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OLDER PEOPLE</td>
<td>32991</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LEARNING DISABILITY</td>
<td>15826</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MENTAL HEALTH</td>
<td>3988</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL EXPENDITURE</td>
<td>67821</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

With an overall budget in 2011/12 of £67.8m, approximately 49% of the available budget is used to secure external services through commissioned services. Figure 1 illustrates the composition of spend for all social work cost centres to other external bodies from the approved budget 2011/2012.

Figure 1

Approved Budget (11/12) £’000

- TOTAL CHILD PROTECTION
- TOTAL LOOKED-AFTER CHILDREN
- TOTAL CHILDREN WITH A DISABILITY AND EARLY YEARS
- TOTAL OLDER PEOPLE
- TOTAL LEARNING DISABILITY
- TOTAL MENTAL HEALTH
Purpose of the Commissioning Strategy

This Commissioning Strategy is a formal statement of commitment, approach and intent in relation to securing, specifying and monitoring commissioned social care services to meet people’s needs. In meeting the needs of current and future service users, the Social Work Service can deliver the required services directly through in-house services or externally, through commissioned services from the independent sector.

As a public agency, there are obligations placed upon Argyll and Bute Council regarding external expenditure and the Council has a duty to ensure that such decisions are transparent, accountable and represent the effective and best use of public funds. The purpose of this document is therefore to set out the policy approach to how services will be commissioned in the future and the principles to be adhered to in doing so, in order to ensure that the right type and level of services, in the right places, are available to the Council in the future, at a price that represents best value.

In adopting a robust commissioning strategy, the Council has incorporated the principles contained in the SWIA Guide to Strategic Commissioning, the Scottish Procurement Directorate SPPN 1/2010 and the Social Care Procurement Scotland Guidance.

The Council sets out its commitment to balancing the need for develop close partnership working within individual and groups of providers while being fair to all providers in a competitive market.

This strategy is required in order to

- Articulate the Social Work Service’s approach to commissioning services
- Promote the development and support the delivery of personalised services
- Ensure consistency of approach across Social Work Services, with other Council services and with the Council’s key independent sector partners
- Promote and ensure continuous service improvement and better outcomes for future service users
- Make clear links with strategic plans detailing current and future unmet need
- Ensure commissioning decisions are fair, open, transparent, accountable and consistent
- Meet statutory duties regarding best value

What is Commissioning?

The Council accepts the definition of commissioning as
“the term used for all of the activities involved in the assessing and forecasting needs, agreeing desired outcomes, considering options, planning the nature, range and quality of future services and working in partnership to put these into place”.

(SWIA: Guide to Strategic Commissioning, September 2009)

Thus there is a distinction between the terms commissioning purchasing and contracting. Purchasing can be described as the technical process of securing or buying of services and contracting as the process of putting the purchasing services in a legally binding agreement. The process of commissioning relates to ensuring the best use of resources (time, money, people and premises) to secure services of the appropriate quality in order to meet the identified and assessed needs of individuals and aspirations of individuals requiring a care service.

Argyll and Bute’s Approach to Planning and Commissioning

The Council’s approach to commissioning must be considered in the context of the wide range of joint plans and strategies developed and to be developed internally and externally, with other local authorities and partners in the independent sector.

As such the Commissioning Strategy and associated plans link with the objectives outlined in Argyll & Bute Council’s Corporate plan and in turn to relevant Scottish Government National Outcomes. The Council’s Corporate plan establishes 4 main outcomes and underpinning values which are critical to achieving the shared vision of “realising our potential together”. The 4 main objectives are

- Working together to improve the potential of our people
- Working together to improve the potential of our communities
- Working together to improve the potential of our area
- Working together to improve the potential of our organisation

As such Commissioning Plans will cover the following areas

Table 2- Scope of Commissioning Plans

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SERVICE</th>
<th>AREAS COVERED</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ADULTS</td>
<td>Sensory Impairment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mental Health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Learning Disability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Carers Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Residential Care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Day Care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Advocacy Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OLDER PEOPLE</td>
<td>Care at Home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Residential Care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Day Care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Carers Services</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Respite Advocacy Services

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHILDREN AND FAMILIES</th>
<th>Residential/Secure accommodation Community/Home based support Parenting Fostering and adoption Children affected by disability Preschool and Early years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HOUSING</td>
<td>Housing Support Homelessness Services</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Commissioning plans which flow from the Commissioning Strategy underpin individual service plans which in turn describe how services will be provided. Table 2 contains the explicit links between Commissioning Plans and Corporate outcomes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COMMISSIONING PLAN SECTION</th>
<th>CORPORATE PLAN</th>
<th>CORPORATE OUTCOMES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adult Services</td>
<td>Working Together to improve the potential of or people</td>
<td>Our children are protected and nurtured so they can achieve their potential</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Older People</td>
<td></td>
<td>Our Older People are supported to live more active, healthier and independent lives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing</td>
<td></td>
<td>Vulnerable children and families are protected and are supported in sustainable ways within their communities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children and Families</td>
<td></td>
<td>Our young people have the skills, attitudes and achievements to succeed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Working together to improve the potential of our communities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3 – Links between Commissioning and Corporate Plans
throughout their lives
The impact of alcohol and drugs on our communities, and on the mental health of individuals is reduced

It is widely recognised that approached to commissioning and procuring care require an individual approach, one which is dynamic and flexible and takes account of individual needs, changes, performance and quality. All purchasing or commissioning must be underpinned by clear information in respect of:

- What is being purchased
- Why this is the appropriate provider
- How the commissioned service will be funded, delivered, managed, monitored and reviewed

The approach to commissioning is described at length in the ‘How to Commission a Service’ document developed by the Commissioning team. Training to support this document has been rolled out to all area teams, care managers and finance employees working within Argyll and Bute Council. The approach being adopted takes the form of a cyclical activity referred to here as the Commissioning Cycle. The Council’s procedure follows this cycle as described in SPD guidance to identify the services to be secured, and the process for securing them.
The Commissioning Cycle is comprised of 4 connected processes (the outer circle) which in turn drive the procurement cycle (the inner circle) as follows

- **Analyse** individual needs, intended outcomes and service providers. Typically this will involve gathering information on predicted population and service demand trends, how services are accessed by existing service users and the performance of existing services against required outcomes/standards
- **Plan** the procurement process and develop the service specification in conjunction with stakeholders to identify a picture of what future services are required
- **Do** the procurement exercise and award and manage the contract. Activities here require decisions on how services will be provided via commissioning plans. Decisions will also be made on service configuration and any changes required before services are procured or are provided by the Council. Ongoing supplier relationship management ensures continued delivery of Best Value.
- **Review** the arrangements and individual outcomes to determine if needs are being met. Again the stage is critically dependent on stakeholder feedback.
Commissioning Principles

The way in which the Council secures future services will be underpinned by the following general principles, the Council will

- Provide service users and their carer’s with the outcomes they want and need, at the right time and in the right place
- Promote a mixed economy of care
- Secure all commissioned services in line with the Council’s Contract Standing Orders
- Demonstrate transparency, fairness and accountability in all commissioning activity and decisions
- Secure quality services, at the best price, using the most appropriate contracting approach
- Explore collaboration opportunities and jointly commission services with partners where there are shared objectives
- Ensure contracts are in place for all services commissioned
- Where practical, consolidate contractual relationships in a single contract, for those organisations delivering more than one service to the Council’s Social Work Service
- Adopt an outcomes based approach to commissioning
- Regularly monitor and review services, encouraging self evaluation, ensuring proportionality and avoiding duplication
- Provide a named and accountable person responsible for each service purchased
- Embrace the personalisation agenda in securing services and involve service users/carers in commissioning processes
- Ensure arrangements are in place to enable service users and carers to contribute, where appropriate, to service planning
- Positively engage, consult and communicate with the independent sector
- Develop long term and effective relationships with the independent sector
- Promote a level playing field approach for all providers including in-house services
- Ensure that the value of the services commissioned can be contained within available financial resources
- Fulfil all equities and other relevant legislative obligations
- Where appropriate, incorporate the principles of sustainable commissioning to ensure a quality of service which takes social, environmental and economic benefits into account

Procurement and Contracting
In securing services from external providers, public agencies are required to comply with European procurement regulations, namely the Public Contracts (Scotland) Act 2006. The obligations of this Act are contained within the Council’s Contract Standing Orders which must be adhered to in the process of securing services through third parties. This policy is therefore consistent with the Council’s Contract Standing Orders and also the Council’s overall procurement strategy incorporating SPD guidance.

The Council will ensure that all decisions to secure services are fair, transparent, open and accountable and that competition will be afforded unless there are evidenced and recorded reasons, in line with the Contract Standing Orders, not to permit competition. Decisions to secure services will be supported by a business case and confirmation of available resources.

The Council will continue to utilise block contracts, spot contracts and framework agreements and will adopt the most effective type of contract for the value of service being procured to both minimise risk and maximise Best Value. SPD guidance is based upon the principles of

- Fairness
- Openness and
- Transparency

being applied in the commissioning of care and support services. These principles are being adopted in current service reviews and may result in changes to existing service provision arrangements.

The opening of services to a competitive tender process may result in the Council no longer being involved in the direct provision of some services. Where services are not tendered for valid reasons such as cost, inadequate alternative provision or existing contractual agreements the risk of legislative challenge must be minimised to ensure the principles outlined above have been adhered to and Best Value protected.

**Strategic Plans**

An effective commissioning strategy depends upon effective contributions from Heads of Service, Area managers and other key Social Work strategic staff. The relevant Heads of Service will be responsible for ensuring that lead officers for a commissioned service understand their responsibilities in relation to commissioning and also for ensuring the appropriate engagement of key managers in all stages of the commissioning cycle from specifying the service through to monitoring and evaluation.

Links between Commissioning plans and relevant strategic documents such as
• Corporate Plan
• Integrated Children’s Service Plan
• Integrated Older People Services Plan

will ensure service priorities are met and incorporate broader planning needs of partner agencies such as Community Health Partnerships, Police etc by including the broad framework of national and strategic objectives for the development and improvement of services.

Outcomes based commissioning

The Council’s aim in commissioning services is to achieve the best outcomes it can for Argyll and Bute at both a strategic and individual/personal level. Social Work practice in Argyll and Bute is underpinned but assessments and a care planning approach focused on achieving tangible outcomes which are developed in partnership with service users and carers, are recorded and shared and thereafter the focus of reviews in line with statute and guidance. The outcome based approach is evident in service and corporate plans and in the context of the multi agency working in Argyll and Bute’s Single Outcome Agreement.

Sustainable Commissioning

In line with the Scottish Government’s Sustainable Procurement Action Plan, the Council will endeavour, where appropriate, to take social and environmental benefits into account in order to optimise the social return on investment. Sustainable commissioning will help the Council to better understand the longer term impact of spend on the wider community. Recognising the importance of wider community outcomes will increase the opportunity for third sector organisations, service users and communities to be involved in design and delivery of services.

Joint Commissioning

Joint commissioning is the process when two or more commissioning agencies act together to coordinate their commissioning, taking joint responsibility for translating strategy into action. In practical terms this means making the best use of available resources to meet identified needs.

The Council’s Social Work Service works with a number of partner agencies to deliver services across Argyll and Bute and will continue to maximise opportunities to work with its partners to ensure efficiency of approach to commissioning and will actively seek out joint commissioning initiatives. The Council continues to strengthen its ongoing partnership with NHS Highland in a joint commissioning project for integrated equipment.
Commissioning and the Third Sector

The third Sector is defined as the voluntary and community sector including registered charities, voluntary organisations, and community groups, faith groups engaged in voluntary social action, not for profit organisations, community interest groups and social enterprises. Commissioning services in partnership with the Third Sector will harness the advantages of sustainability to produce potentially more effective, better quality, service user focused services, whilst also providing opportunities to achieve wider local social and economic benefits such as increasing local employment and improving local skills.

With this in mind, the Council will endeavour to provide an accessible and equitable process through which the Third Sector, in particular, the local Third Sector can demonstrate their potential to provide high quality, value for money services to the citizens of Argyll and Bute.

Stakeholder Consultation and Engagement

The Council is committed to ensuring services are person centred and personalised. This will be the primary consideration of all commissioning decisions. As such The Council will take an inclusive approach to the involvement of key stakeholders in the commissioning process and will directly or indirectly (e.g. through established consultation forums) elicit views from key stakeholders to inform the services to be commissioned, to ensure that services meet stated needs.

Contract Management and Monitoring

Contract management and monitoring will be the mechanism by which the Council is assured that the services it has sought to procure are being delivered to the quantity and quality that it has specified. During the Financial year 11/12 the Procurement and Commissioning Team have merged. In future, monitoring activity will follow best practice as stipulated in the Scottish Procurement Directorate toolkit. Activities will focus on the use of Key Performance Indicators and Balanced Scorecard techniques to evaluate contract compliance and enhance Supplier Relationship management to deliver continuing Best Value.

Accurate, relevant and timely information about service provision will be obtained to inform future commissioning decisions. The Council also promotes self evaluation by providers and has processes in place to support this approach.

The Council’s approach to the monitoring of individual services will be proportionate to the level of risk and investment. The Commissioning Team will act as a key point of contact for service providers and ensure that service levels are maintained for the
life of the contract. Furthermore, the Commissioning Team will endeavour to form an effective ongoing relationship with service providers by proactively managing contracts to realise improvements in client outcomes and Best Value for the Council.

All providers will have a contractual obligation to provide information to the Council on the services procured from them. Where appropriate, the following information will be supplied by providers as part of commissioning activity.

- Annual accounts (audited where appropriate)
- Annual reports
- Details of service usage
- Service outcomes achieved
- Results of customer satisfaction surveys
- Complaints received and actions taken
- Self evaluation return
- Regular Key Performance Indicators

In line with national priorities, duplication of provision of information will be avoided where possible, and the Council will work with its partners and regulating bodies (e.g. SCSWIS) to share information where possible and to minimise any unnecessary duplication.

**Commissioning Decision Making**

It is the Council's intention to incorporate strategic commissioning activity and decision making within existing strategic planning and management structures. This will require the appropriate Head of Service to ensure commissioning intentions are outlined in future strategic plans and to furthermore ensure these comply with corporate priorities. A service overview of the different strands of commissioning activity will be discharged by the Departmental Management Team who will be responsible for:

- Determining the overall commissioning strategy and give approval for the commissioning of new services, following receipt of a business case and confirmation of available resources
- Ensuring services commissioned are secured in line with the Council’s Contract Standing Orders and SPD guidance.
- Receive performance monitoring reports on purchased services
- Approve decommissioning of services
- Ensure commissioning actions take account of the move to promote more personalised services
- Ensure commissioning intentions are reflected in the Social Work Service Plan
- Consider update reports of progress in delivering on these intentions as part of performance review and review of the Social Work service plan
Monitor good practice elsewhere and keep abreast of national developments in relation to commissioning (e.g. SWIA, Joint Improvement Team, Cosla, ADSW)

Include consideration of issues associated with the commissioning of services in the Chief Social Work Officer’s annual report

Review of Strategy

The Council is committed to ensuring its approach to commissioning is relevant and reflects best practice. The Social Work Management Team, who have the responsibility for this strategy, will ensure regular review to reflect and include national developments.

END OF COMMISSIONING STRATEGY