

Northumberland County Council Commissioning Framework

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Welcome to the Commissioning Framework for Northumberland County Council. This framework serves as a guiding document that outlines the principles, processes and action plan for continuous improvement across commissioning.

Commissioning plays a crucial role in delivering high-quality and achieving positive outcomes for our residents that we serve and our staff. We are committed to providing efficient, innovative, and sustainable services that meet the diverse needs of our residents. The Commissioning Framework serves as a roadmap to ensure that our commissioning activities align with our strategic objectives, promote value for money, and drive positive social impact.

This framework sets out the key principles that underpin our commissioning approach, emphasizing collaboration, transparency, and residents at the heart of everything that we do. It outlines the steps involved in the commissioning process, from needs assessment and market analysis to contract management and performance evaluation.

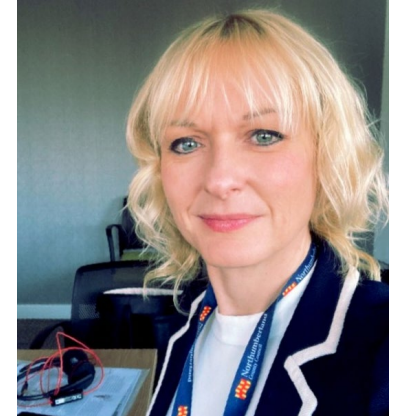
Our commissioning framework recognises the importance of engaging with stakeholders, including service users, community groups, and partners, to ensure that their voices are heard and their needs are considered in the commissioning process. We believe that effective collaboration and co-production lead to better outcomes and stronger relationships with our stakeholders.

Alongside the Commissioning Framework there is an action plan which sets out the initial steps in the continuous improvement journey for commissioning. This is a live document that is used internally in the Council to monitor progress. The focus initially is to ensure that our core commissioning and procurement activities are conducted in a consistent approach and to a proportionate level based on the value and risks associated. Over time, we would like to build on this to call out some of the alternative delivery models for commissioning and work across our communities and drive further innovation.

This Commissioning Framework is a living document that will evolve and adapt to changing needs, emerging trends, and best practices. We are committed to continuous improvement, regularly reviewing and refining our commissioning processes to enhance effectiveness and efficiency. The Commissioning Framework is of course underpinned by the Council's Constitution which sets out our Contract and Finance Rules.

We encourage all stakeholders, both internal and external, to familiarise themselves with this framework and actively participate in the commissioning process. Together, we can create a commissioning culture that drives innovation, fosters collaboration, and delivers services that make a positive difference in the lives of our residents.

Thank you for your commitment to excellence in commissioning. Let us work together to achieve our shared vision of a thriving and inclusive community.



Gill O'Neill
Executive Director of Public Health

There are three key components to the Commissioning Framework, covering introduction, key principles and the Commissioning Cycle, there is then a fourth component which is in a separate internal document which is an action plan to support the next steps in the continuous improvement journey for Commissioning.

1. Introduction and context

An overview of the purpose for the Commissioning Framework, key definitions, and broader context of Northumberland as a location and Commissioning.

2. Commissioning principles

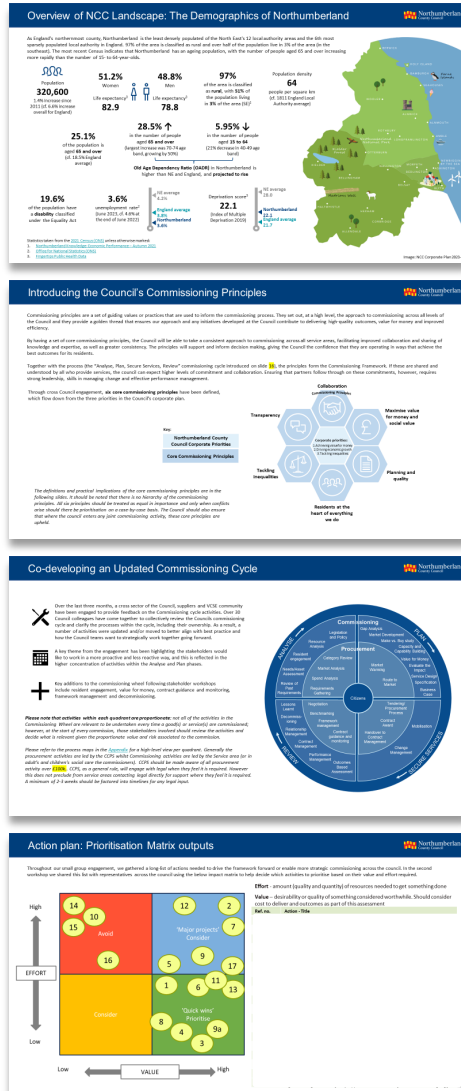
Commissioning principles are a set of guiding values or practices that are used to inform the commissioning process. They set out, at a high level, the approach to commissioning across all levels of the Council and they provide a golden thread that ensures our approach and any initiatives developed at the Council contribute to delivering high-quality outcomes, value for money and improved efficiency.

3. Overview of Northumberland County Council's Commissioning Cycle

Introduction to the commissioning cycle with slides that step through each quadrant of the cycle giving definitions of the commissioning and procurement activities as well as case studies to bring alive the commissioning activities across the Council.

4. Action Plan

Overview of the key continuous improvement activities to implement covering shorter 'quick win' activities and longer-term strategic activities to improve commissioning across the Council.
This is a separate document, due to the evolving nature of the actions and the plan held within it.



Introduction and context



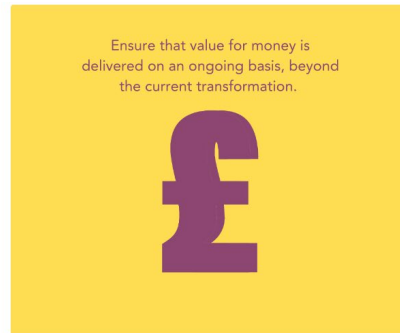
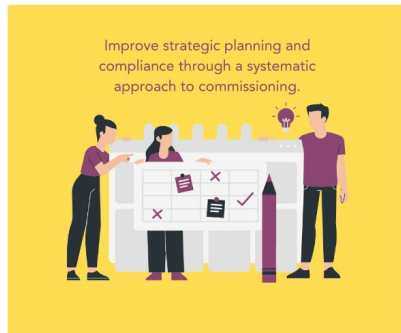
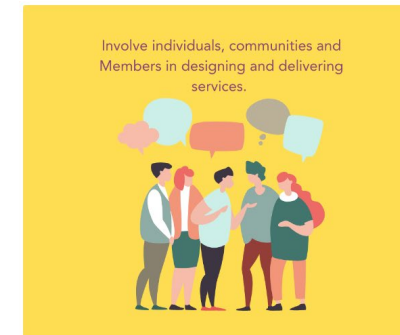


Northumberland County Council (the Council) have set up the **BEST ways of working** with the aim of making the Council more modern, efficient, and fit for purpose to achieve the best outcomes for residents, staff and customers. The key aims are:

- **Improved customer experience**
- **Enhanced experience for staff**
- **Improved efficiency and effectiveness** following a Best Value approach.

Best in Class Commissioning and Communities First is one of seven workstreams in BEST aiming to improve value for money, ensure effective delivery of customer and resident needs, and to improve organisational effectiveness.

Moving to more a strategic and proactive commissioning function is a key component of this workstream and this document aims to set out a commissioning framework that can help set the direction for the future state of commissioning at Northumberland County Council.



By introducing a new commissioning framework underpinned by a category management approach, we will improve the quality of public services in Northumberland, involve more people in how they are designed and delivered, and manage our spend with suppliers more commercially, ensuring overall better outcomes for the region.

The Commissioning Framework will also provide a robust approach to ensuring value for money and social value are maximised across all decisions to spend money with third parties.

The commissioning framework was co-developed with representatives across the Council over a 6-week period to mid 2024 with the aim of moving to a more proactive and strategic approach to commissioning, defining what activity needs to take place, when and which area each activity is led by. We undertook an extensive programme of stakeholder engagement to bring in views from across the Council and external stakeholders to gain widespread agreement on what the future of commissioning should look like at the Council.

The Ask

Review the Council's current approach to commissioning alongside best practice examples to produce a commissioning framework that is clear, proactive and allows for greater strategic thinking and planning. The new framework should consider value for money and social value alongside achieving good outcomes for residents. It was important the new approach to commissioning built upon existing good practice and was developed in collaboration with services across the Council. The final output should also encourage greater efficiency, giving staff more time to focus on core activities and removing blockers which slow down the commissioning cycle.

Our approach

1

Workshops



- Delivered **two co-production workshops** with representatives from CCPS, Environment and Transport, IT, Finance, Adults, Children's and Education, Public health, Communities First and Legal.
- Held **two supplier events** to obtain feedback with c. 80 representatives.
- Held a workshop with representatives for feedback from **Voluntary organisations**.

2

Targeted interviews



Held meetings with c.43 individuals from across the Council, drawing out key challenges, ideas and opportunities related to commissioning

3

Research



Conducted research into national best practice commissioning, sharing examples of commissioning frameworks from across the country and incorporating good working into the Council's commissioning framework

Best practice research has shown that it is useful to define a common, system-wide understanding of key terms that are central to the commissioning framework. This slide therefore outlines some of the key terms that are used throughout this document.

COMMISSIONING

The process of identifying the needs of the organisation and local community and using the available resources to design and deliver services to meet those needs.

It is a strategic process that involves setting priorities, defining outcomes, allocating resources and can include procuring goods or service, to achieve those outcomes.

PROCUREMENT

The process of acquiring goods and service from suppliers at the right place, for the right price, to the right quality and quantity, and delivered at the right time.

It also involves the strategic planning surrounding these processes to maximise value for money.

COMMISSIONING VS PROCUREMENT

Commissioning and procurement are two distinct processes, although they are intrinsically linked and are often used together to achieve a common goal. Commissioning is focused on identifying the needs of the local community and designing and delivering services to meet those needs, while procurement is one of the vehicles that can be used to deliver the required outcomes and is focused on acquiring goods or service. Commissioning does not always lead to procurement: alternate outcomes include making or buying in-house, partnering with a VCSE to deliver the service and even not making any changes at all.

NETWORKED COMMISSIONING

Networked commissioning is a collaborative approach to commissioning services or projects that involves building relationships between relevant teams and stakeholders, sharing resources and expertise, and working together to achieve shared outcomes.

This networked approach includes sharing and disseminating best practice across the Council to ensure consistent good practice.

CONTRACT MANAGEMENT

The ongoing management of contracts entered into with suppliers or partners for the provision of goods, works, or services.

Contract management includes contract creation, execution, and analysis to maximise operational and financial performance while managing risk.

DECOMMISSIONING

Decommissioning is defined as the withdrawal from or closure of a service by ceasing funding or ending a contract or service level agreement.

Decommissioning is an integral part of the commissioning cycle and should be undertaken proactively to ensure the Council continues to make best use of the resources available to deliver the most effective services. It is most likely to occur at the end of the agreed contract period but could occur during the contract term due to unforeseen circumstances. Ending obsolete services and recommissioning others where appropriate is part of the continuous cycle of commissioning.

Overview of the Landscape: The Demographics of Northumberland

As England's northernmost county, Northumberland is the least densely populated of the North East's 12 local authority areas and the 6th most sparsely populated local authority in England. 97% of the area is classified as rural and over half of the population live in 3% of the area (in the southeast). The most recent Census indicates that Northumberland has an ageing population, with the number of people aged 65 and over increasing more rapidly than the number of 15- to 64-year-olds.



Population

320,600

1.4% increase since 2011 (cf. 6.6% increase overall for England)

51.2%

Women

Life expectancy³

82.9



48.8%

Men

Life expectancy³

78.8

97%

of the area is classified as **rural**, with **51%** of the population living in **3%** of the area (SE)¹

Population density

64

people per square km (cf. 1811 England Local Authority average)

16.1%

of the population is aged **15 and under** (cf. 18.5% England average)

25.1%

of the population is aged **65 and over** (cf. 18.5% England average)

28.5% ↑

in the number of people aged **65 and over** (largest increase was 70-74 age band, growing by 50%)

5.95% ↓

in the number of people aged **15 to 64** (21% decrease in 40-49 age band)

Old Age Dependency Ratio (OADR) in Northumberland is higher than NE and England, and **projected to rise**

19.6%

of the population have a **disability** classified under the Equality Act

3.6%

unemployment rate² (June 2023, cf. 4.6% at the end of June 2022)

NE average
4.2%

England average
3.8%
Northumberland
3.6%

Deprivation score³

22.1

(Index of Multiple Deprivation 2019)

NE average
28.0

Northumberland
22.1
England average
21.7



Statistics taken from the [2021 Census \(ONS\)](#) unless otherwise marked:

1. [Northumberland Knowledge: Economic Performance – Autumn 2021](#)
2. [Office for National Statistics \(ONS\)](#)
3. [Fingertips Public Health Data](#)

Key Challenges: Population

Amidst the national trend of increased demand for public services in a period of austerity, the demographics of Northumberland and population changes pose unique challenges for the Council as a service provider. The Northumberland population is unequally dispersed across the vast local authority area, meaning that the county has a great number of communities with different characteristics, functions and needs. Some challenges are outlined below:

Ageing Population

25.1% of the population is 65+ and the population is projected to get older as there are also declines in the number of people under the ages of 15 (3.4% decrease since 2011) and 64 (5.95% decrease since 2011). The biggest decrease was in the 40-49 age bracket (21%).¹

Inequalities

Approximately 12% of Northumberland's population live in one of the 10% most deprived areas of England. Residents in the county's most deprived communities have an average life expectancy some 12 years shorter than those in the most affluent areas.² Residents in rural areas may also experience poorer access to services.

Employment

72.5% of Northumberland's population is economically active, which is lower than in the NE (74.7%) and Great Britain (78.8%). Amongst the economically inactive, there is a high percentage of retirees (16.0% compared to 14.8% in the NE and 12.7% in GB) and looking after family/home (24.1% compared to 18.3% in the NE and 19.4% in GB).³

Earnings

The median gross weekly earnings for full-time employees for England is £683.50. The NE median is £608.40 and in Northumberland it is £607.80.⁴ There is a lower proportion of professional, tech and administrative occupations compared to the NE and England, but senior officials, skilled trades, caring and elementary occupations are well represented.⁵

Key Challenges : Commissioning

The Council has been through a period of change since the Covid pandemic and there is energy and appetite to engage with challenges and opportunities. At the first Commissioning Framework Co-Production workshop in February 2024, colleagues shared their feedback on the current ways of work and gave their views on where there are opportunities to improve. The key themes of the feedback were:

- ✓ Individual departments have great subject matter expertise and good relationships with their supplier base
- ✓ Pockets of good practice in contract management in service areas, although this is not widely shared
- ✓ Confidence in the current tendering processes
- ✓ Confidence in ability to perform population needs assessments
- Resource capacity is often a constraint
- Timing of cross-functional involvement e.g. CCPS asked to support too late, Legal involved too early
- Reactive culture – conducting activities with the best intentions but that may not be fully aligned to Council's priorities and long-term plans
- Council has low influence broadly across the market and is not using its buying power fully to leverage better outcomes
- Unsure if the Council is achieving best value for money all the time due to reactive nature and capacity constraints
- Access to/visibility of data and contracts is sometimes creating a blocker

1. [2021 Census \(ONS\)](#)

2. Northumberland Council's Corporate Plan 2023-26

3. [Nomis by Office for National Statistics](#)

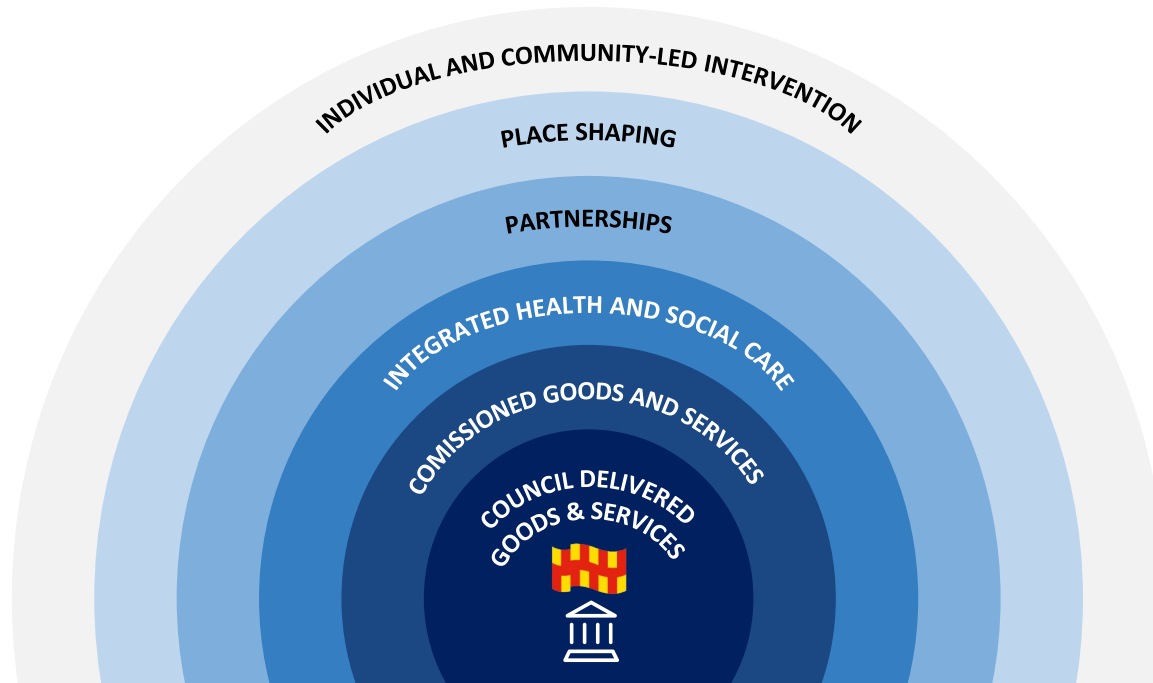
4. [Office for National Statistics](#)

5. [NCC Economic Performance Bulletin 2021](#)

Commissioning is one piece of the jigsaw puzzle in helping the communities we serve, but it's not the only piece. A successful Commissioning function should aim to allocate as much power and influence back into the communities it serves. We want to deliver an integrated Commissioning and Procurement function which moves away from the traditionally institutional view of the Council's role, to one which places emphasis on the role of communities and how the Council interacts with and supports them in a more holistic way.

The Levels of Commissioning's Role and Influence

Traditionally, a Council's role is often viewed within the narrow lenses of what is delivered directly by the Council or commissioned from its partners and providers. However, the Council plays an important role in shaping the support and care available to its communities through many different avenues, highlighted by the different levels below.



It is important that as a Council we are clear on what role we play in the place. The more responsibility we draw into the Council from our communities, the more we draw out of our communities which ultimately reduces their independence.

Individual and Community-led Intervention

- Supporting people to support themselves without formal contact with services.
- *E.g. Front Line (community book), MECC, digital access*

Place Shaping

- Influencing other organisations that play a role in delivering outcomes at a place level.
- *E.g. Influencing a Local Housing Association to leave lights on at night to help people feel safer.*

Partnerships

- Working with others to deliver outcomes
- *E.g. partnership working with the VCSE sector, bringing community organisations together (NCT)*

Integrated health and social care

- Joint agreement with ICB for NCC to assess for and arrange health and social care services (this may involve joint commissioning)
- *E.g. NCC has contract arrangements in place for health and social care*

Commissioned goods and services *(the rest of this document mainly focuses on this aspect of the commissioning levels)*

- Services the Council buys from its partners and providers, both independently and through collaborative arrangements at a regional level (e.g. NEPO).
- *E.g. Domiciliary care (ASC), IT services & goods, energy & utilities*

Council-delivered goods and services

- Services the Council delivers directly, using in-house provision.
- *E.g. Grass cutting services, civil engineering*

Resident

Service
User

Case study: Integrated health and social care – working with the ICB to deliver added impact

Overview

There can be cross over in the same residents requiring an assessment and provision to be put in place for their medical needs outside of hospital (e.g. for disabilities, long term conditions, or end of life care), as well as their social care needs. Sometimes the line between the two can be complicated and bureaucracy in having to engage with both the NHS and the Council can be frustrating for residents and cause a delay in them receiving the care that they need. Over the last 10 years, the Council and the NHS have been building on a partnership arrangement where the Council manage all Continuing Health Care (CHC), Free Nursing Care (FNC) and Section 117 mental health aftercare arrangements on their behalf.

This creates efficiency across both organisations and a much more seamless interaction for residents and providers irrespective of whether someone is Local Authority or Health funded for their care in Northumberland. We currently undertake this service for around 650 CHC clients and manage NHS funds in excess of £60m per year on their behalf.

Outcomes

- Improved outcomes for service users who see the same professional to assess their needs and arrange health and social care services for them.
- Efficient joint finance arrangements in place for health and social care providers.
- Consistent approach to contracting with providers for health and social care services.
- NHS benefits from Council initiatives including efficiency reviews undertaken by the Risk and Independence team.

Lessons learnt

Upon review, when compared to other models of operation in other locations this model compares favourably, delivering additional benefits to the NHS, Council, Service Users and Providers. This is a great example of where collaboration really is 'win:win'.



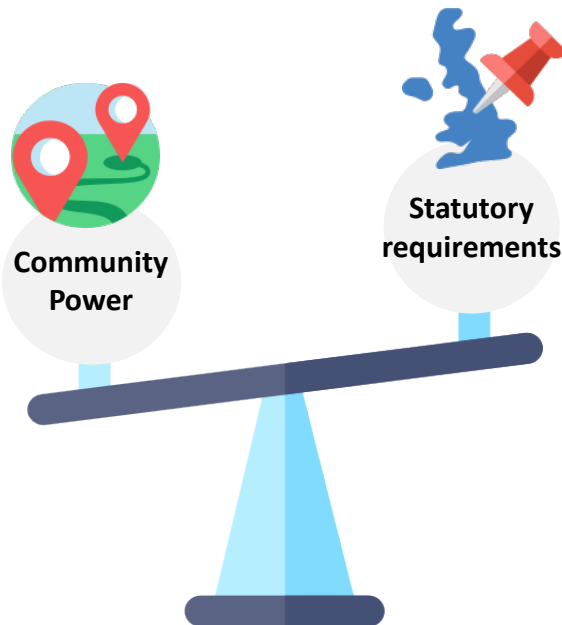
Dedicating adequate focus and resource onto the outer levels of commissioning's influence allows the Council to invest in keeping people healthier in the community for longer and meeting their needs closer to home.

However, whilst it is important to shift our focus wider than the traditional paternalistic model of delivering services to people, and towards the outer circles of a Council's influence, it is also important to ensure we have adequate control where necessary to ensure the services and care delivered to our most vulnerable populations are able to meet their higher levels of and more complex needs in a safe way which meets statutory requirements.

We want to balance shifting as much control as possible to communities, with ensuring we are effectively delivering our statutory responsibilities and taking care of the most vulnerable people in our population.

Giving power to our communities

- Supporting our communities to be independent, resilient and self-sustaining.
- Emphasising the role of the VCSE sector
- Allowing offers to be developed at a community level will contribute towards building a truly personalised, place-based and tailored offer that meets the differing needs of our diverse communities.
- Promoting prevention through influencing the wider determinants of health.
- Reducing demand for Council services to what it must deliver.



Meeting statutory duties and need

- Ensuring we have adequate provision to meet the needs of our populations through in-house provision where the market is currently not able to.
- Ensuring we have adequate oversight and safeguarding ability over the most vulnerable population groups (e.g. children's services).

Why do we want to move to a community-based mindset at the Council?

Historic models of care delivery, such as the major expansion of public services delivered through a centralised, state-run structure from the 1950s to universally improve welfare, were influenced by political ideologies, but were ultimately designed to meet the needs of the population at that time. However, we are now operating in a different environment with its own opportunities and challenges, and therefore need a model that is fit for these times.

Our collective response to Covid-19 has also demonstrated how our populations have a growing expectation of having more influence over their lives, which extends to influence over the services and local offer they have access to. Strength and power within our communities, and the success of local responses such as Northumberland Communities Together (NCT) that came out of the pandemic demonstrate the appetite for this type of approach.

The Demographics of Northumberland and associated population challenges today have implications for health, social care and community services:

How a Community-focused model addresses this:

1

Rising demand for services whilst there are supply bottlenecks

In line with national trends, we are seeing increased demand for public services due to a period of austerity which has reduced public funding to provision which supports healthier lifestyles, as well as demographic changes. Northumberland has seen more children needing complex specialist provision, whilst the level of recruitment and retention of carers has been a challenge, as well as the right kinds of placements in the right locations



A focus on prevention and community resilience

A community model focuses on investment in prevention at a local level, as well as equipping communities with the resilience to be self-sustaining, in order to meet needs closer to home to reduce escalation in need. Both these things contribute to reducing demand for statutory and more formal health and social care services in the long run.

2

A desire for community influence

Our populations have a growing expectation of having more influence over their lives, which extends to influence over the services and local offer they have access to.



Power is shifted back into communities

By moving from a focus on service delivery, to a more influential role where decision-making power is shifted to communities, we put control back into the hands of our communities and promote independence and choice.

3

Diverse communities

Northumberland has a diverse range of communities, both geographically and economically. Life expectancy differs by 12 years between the most deprived and most affluent areas. Each of these communities will have its own set of challenges and priorities it would like to see addressed by the local offer.



Communities can build a tailored local offer

By shifting power back into communities, we are able to support them to build tailored local offers, leveraging the strengths and existing assets within the community to meet the wants and needs of that specific locality / area.

Commissioning Principles



Commissioning principles are a set of guiding values or practices that are used to inform the commissioning process. They set out, at a high level, the approach to commissioning across all levels of the Council and they provide a golden thread that ensures our approach and any initiatives developed at the Council contribute to delivering high-quality outcomes, value for money and improved efficiency.

By having a set of core commissioning principles, the Council will be able to take a consistent approach to commissioning across all service areas, facilitating improved collaboration and sharing of knowledge and expertise, as well as greater consistency. The principles will support and inform decision making, giving the Council the confidence that they are operating in ways that achieve the best outcomes for its residents.

Together with the process (the “Analyse, Plan, Secure Services, Review” commissioning cycle introduced on slide 22), the principles form the Commissioning Framework. If these are shared and understood by all who provide services, the Council can expect higher levels of commitment and collaboration. Ensuring that partners follow through on these commitments, however, requires strong leadership, skills in managing change and effective performance management.

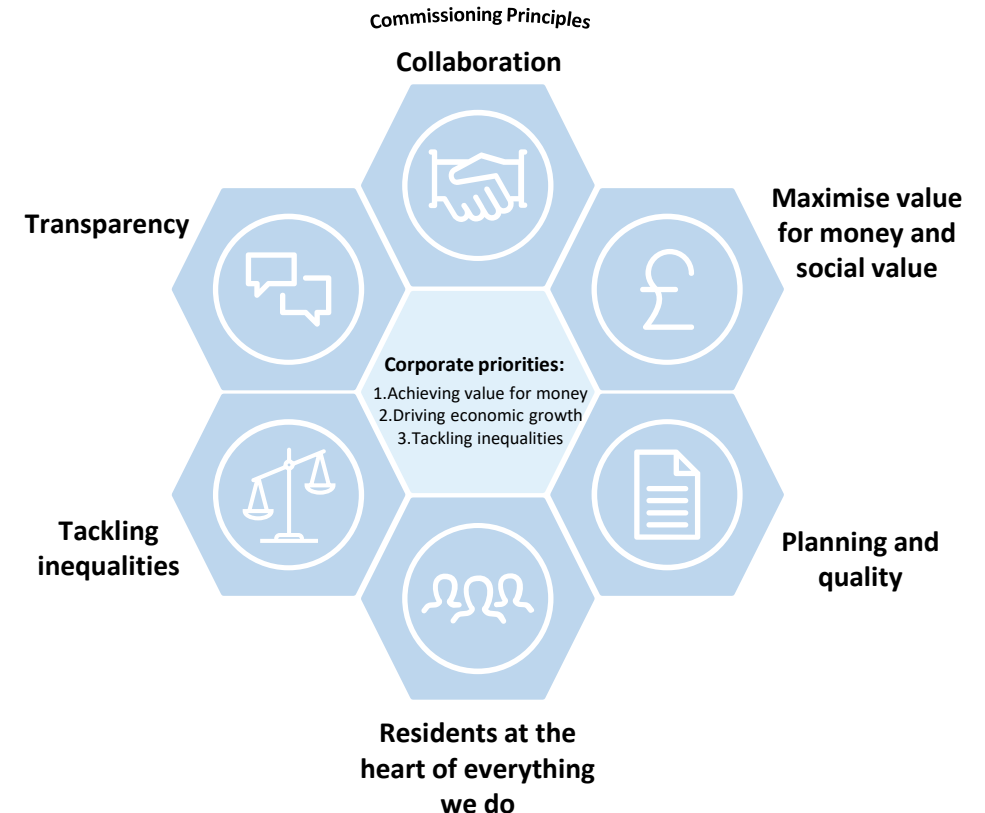
Through cross Council engagement, **six core commissioning principles** have been defined, which flow down from the three priorities in the Council's corporate plan.

Key:

Northumberland County
Council Corporate Priorities

Core Commissioning Principles

The definitions and practical implications of the core commissioning principles are in the following slides. It should be noted that there is no hierarchy of the commissioning principles. All six principles should be treated as equal in importance and only when conflicts arise should there be prioritisation on a case-by-case basis. The Council should also ensure that where the Council enters any joint commissioning activity, these core principles are upheld.





PLANNING AND QUALITY

Planning bridges the gap between the current and future states. It is deciding in advance what to do, how to do it, when to do and who should do it. Setting clear objectives and goals will allow a process to be easier to track and control, enabling quality standards to be upheld.

What does this principle mean for the Council?

The Council will move to a more proactive and strategic approach to commissioning, building in time for value-add activities e.g. strategy planning with the right people engaged, market warming and social value. Better planning will naturally lead to improved quality outcomes and establishing methods to monitor and demonstrate this improvement would support embedding this new way of working.

What are some examples of applying this principle in practice?

Colleagues across the Council will ensure all commissioning activities are captured and regularly updated in a workplan, to help identify resource requirements and help prevent duplication across departments. The Council will strive to create clarity by setting clear expectations upfront and bringing enabling functions into the process as early as possible, highlighting upcoming opportunities and grants.

Developing central guidance and support to develop more consistent ways of working across the Council, such as in contract management developing guidance on where to access further training, templates to support contract managers and guidance on how to manage different situations and a support network to lean on.



RESIDENTS AT THE HEART OF EVERYTHING WE DO

Northumberland is a county of many communities with different characteristics and needs. As such, it is of vital importance that the Council engages with the relevant stakeholders to listen and understand their requirements and to ensure that goods/services delivered have the intended outcomes. This communication can also be two way, where the Council explains some of the challenges that it is facing and brings residents on the journey to help prioritise the support it provides to achieve the best outcomes for its community.

What does this principle mean for the Council?

The Council will actively engage with the community, where applicable, throughout the commissioning cycle to place their needs and aspirations at the centre of all commissioning. Some services and goods that are commissioned for internal use, e.g. internal ICT software, would not require resident engagement, however ensuring that the relevant users and internal staff feedback has been taken into account would be just as important. This has the knock on effect, to ensure that staff are working as efficiently and effectively as possible, to support the valuable work that they do for our residents.

What are some examples of applying this principle in practice?

Engage with residents from the 'analyse' phase and throughout the commissioning cycle to understand what they expect from the Council and its services. Make use of needs assessments and resident engagement surveys and ensure appropriate feedback loops within the Council to make the most out of the information shared in every engagement. The Council will proactively re-engage with residents during the 'review stage' gathering user feedback, ensuring services are delivering to the expected levels of quality and align with user expectations.



TACKLING INEQUALITIES

Northumberland is a land of contrasts: coastal and upland, urban and rural, historic and modern. These differences contribute, to an extent, to the differences in quality of life that residents experience and the access they have to public services.

What does this principle mean for the Council?

The Council acknowledges that inequalities exist covering socio-economic, protected characteristics, geography and inclusion groups in Northumberland and we will seek to use its commissioning processes to understand, address and reduce inequalities, promoting equitable opportunities and access for residents through a 'communities first' approach.

What are some examples of applying this principle in practice?

During the commissioning cycle, all teams will make best use of tools available within the Council, including the integrated impact assessment (IIA), to evaluate activities from an inequalities perspective. This will help ensure commissioning activities do not unintentionally disadvantage groups within the community or those 'protected' under the Public Sector Equality Duty. The Council will strive to build upon existing community assets; including skills of local residents, public and private resources, and physical and economic resources within the region; empowering residents to develop a strong community foundation supported by the Council.



MAXIMISE VALUE FOR MONEY AND SOCIAL VALUE

Value for money (VfM) is based on the utility derived from every pound spent. The best VfM is achieved when the maximum efficiency and effectiveness are obtained at the minimum price. Local Councils across the UK are in difficult financial positions, Northumberland is in a better position than most, however ensuring that every penny spent is absolutely needed is critical to creating a sustainable standard of service to our residents for many years to come.

Through the Council's expenditure there is also the opportunity to drive additional impact through Social Value; wider non-financial benefits such as improving the wellbeing of communities. Social value is an area that the Council are looking to explore more in the coming year.

What does this principle mean for the Council?

The Council will consider the balance between quality and cost-effectiveness throughout the commissioning cycle, ensuring that the value set out at the start is being delivered and if not, taking steps to address. Similarly for Social Value, the Council has the ambition to stipulate the inclusion of clear social environmental commitments in all contracts and monitoring these commitments to ensure delivery.

What are some examples of applying this principle in practice?

The Council will increase the level of targeted market development activities, especially in rural areas to grow the supplier market and enable greater competition. Specifications will be drawn up to provide the right level of services/goods to achieve the desired outcomes. The Council will aim to develop its social value approach to include social value in all new contracts, establishing a clear set of guidelines to include in tendering activities going forward. The Council will work with suppliers to set the expectations around commitments and ensure they are able to deliver.



COLLABORATION

Collaboration involves building relationships with relevant stakeholders throughout the commissioning process, explaining and sharing some of the challenges the Council faces, listening and understanding each stakeholder group's needs and abilities, and working in partnership with them to design and deliver solutions.

What does this principle mean for the Council?

The Council will use its role as a 'anchor institution' to foster collaboration and work in partnership with stakeholders, where applicable, to achieve improved outcomes for service users and residents. The Council will promote collective problem-solving and work cross-functionally where applicable to deliver high quality commissioning.

What are some examples of applying this principle in practice?

The Council will engage openly and in a timely manner with stakeholders; including through supplier engagement events, resident surveys and needs assessments. The Council will ensure its internal ways of working promote cross-departmental working, drawing on specialist input where required and sharing existing contract and supplier information to have a more joined up one Council approach.

Opportunities for joint commissioning with other organisations will be considered if they have potential to benefit residents of Northumberland.

All collaboration with other organisations should be compliant with the Procurement Act 2023



TRANSPARENCY

As a public sector organisation, the Council is trusted with public money and therefore has a duty to ensure that decision making and working practices are legal, fair and transparent.

What does this principle mean for the Council?

The Council already has policies and processes in place to ensure that its commissioning process is open and accountable, however recognises that it could do more to have clear communication and engagement; internally, with suppliers, service users and the wider community.

What are some examples of applying this principle in practice?

- Clear overview shared across the Council explaining commissioning priorities and timelines, as well as clearer and more frequent communications with potential bidders/providers, suppliers and the community.
- The Council has a clear process for external feedback.
- Best practice examples are routinely documented and readily accessible across the Council.
- There is consistent signposting of tools and training available to support the commissioning process.
- Additional transparency notices (publications of information) will be provided to the public in accordance with the Procurement Act 2023 and the Health Care Services (Provider Selection Regime) Regulations 2023.

Case study: How greater collaboration with the third sector improves outcomes for residents

Overview

Thriving Together strives to help create meaningful connections, moving away from a long-standing commission after listening to concerns across the sector about the lack of equity in the current way of working. The commission no longer identifies lead organisations, but instead allow Voluntary Community and Social Enterprise's (VCSE's) themselves to decide who / which organisation was best to lead across the sector. By doing so, the Council enhanced its stakeholder engagement, utilising key insights to influence decisions and strategies. The initiative has focused on capturing all voices and actively engaging with stakeholders through meetings, events and 1-2-1 support; fostering a collaborative culture by investing in cross-sector partnerships, setting the right tone and utilising storytelling to influence positive change within the third sector. Ultimately, the aim of the commission is to facilitate effective and proactive communication and collaboration between all parties, leading to positive community outcomes for all.

Outcomes

This initiative was established through 'Northumberland Communities Together' (NCT) and has supported active relationship building and collaboration with the local community, between October 2021 and May 2023, it has provided 305 individuals with 1-2-1 support and helping a total of 156 organisations. Additionally, the programme supported the development of networks that link community services together across the county e.g. 'Northumberland Frontline' allows frontline workers/the public to find details on local health and wellbeing services and to contact services through call back and referral options.

The project also established a digital presence to facilitate greater connectivity and enable VCSE organisations to take full advantage of resources available across the county. From June 2022 to May 2023, 79% of visitors to the website were new, showing the value of creating digital tools to reach new individuals.

Another benefit is through collaborating with others, there is improved access to funding opportunities e.g. those projects that were partnership or collaboration led enabled an additional £2m of funding to be leveraged to support third sector activities. By working with stakeholders to understand the unique needs of each community - and creating a more inclusive and supportive environment – the Council has been able to better support the third sector as well as tailor it's solutions to match resident needs.

Lessons learnt

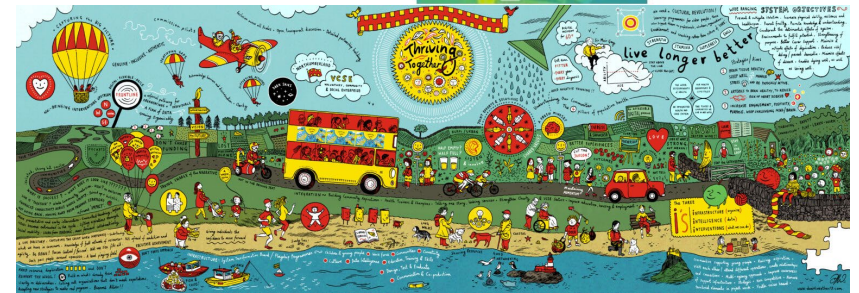
As set out in the Impact Report shared in May 2023; 'We have met many wonderful organisations but there are still more that would benefit from connectivity and support, particularly at a time of such structural change and economic challenge.' It is important to increase awareness across the Council of the community / third sector skills and knowledge that exist across Northumberland, to build that consideration into every commissioned project. The Council will be going through a re-procurement exercise and will be looking to improve and innovate this approach even further.

Website to find out more:

[Thriving Together Northumberland - Citizens Advice Northumberland](https://thrivingtogethernorthumberland.org.uk)

Email:

admin@thrivingtogethernorthumberland.org.uk

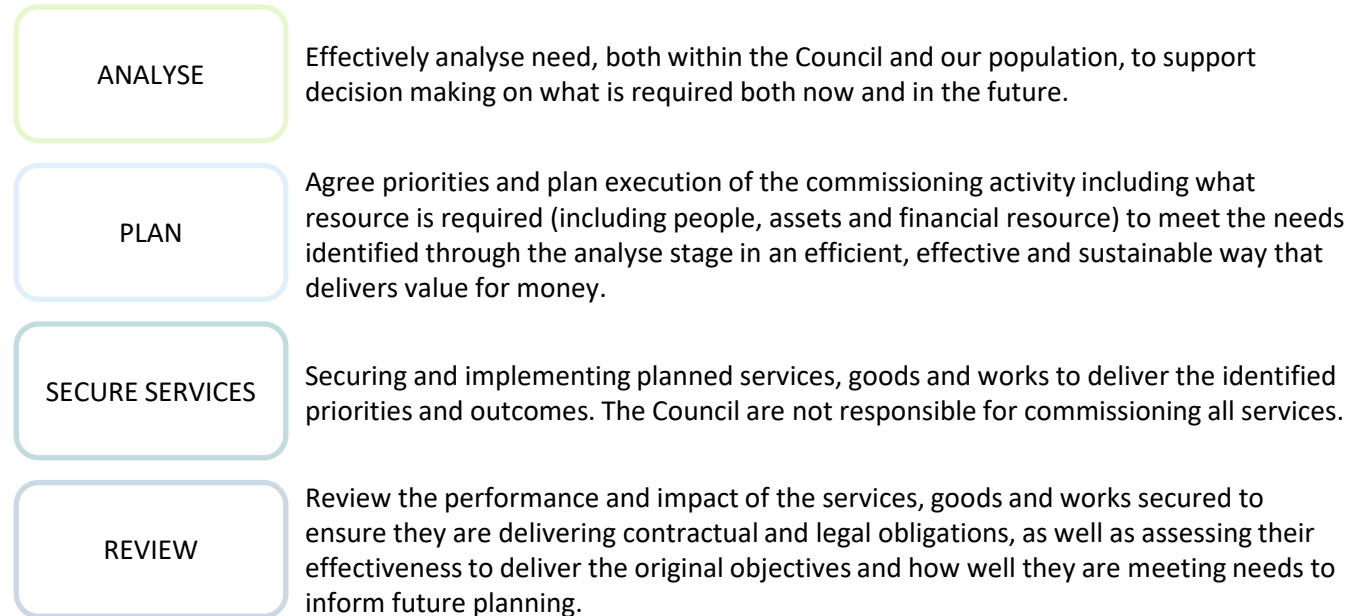


Overview of Northumberland County Council's Commissioning Cycle



The Council's commissioning cycle consists of four quadrants: analyse, plan, secure services and review. Within each of these quadrants there are commissioning and procurement activities (detailed on the following slide). At a high level the commissioning cycle applies to all commissioning activities or 'levels' (captured in slide 11) but the following slides do dive into detail that tends to concentrate on the commission of goods and services.

Overview of Northumberland County Council's Commissioning Cycle



Key assumptions

1

All four stages are of equal importance.

2

Procurement and commissioning activities within each stage are intrinsically linked and should inform each other.

3

The outputs of each stage should act as inputs for the sequential phase.

4

Engagement and collaboration with both internal and external stakeholders should underpin all activities.



Over the last three months, a cross sector of the Council, suppliers and VCSE community have been engaged to provide feedback on the Commissioning cycle activities. Over 30 Council colleagues have come together to collectively review the Council's commissioning cycle and clarify the processes within the cycle, including their ownership. As a result, a number of activities were updated and/or moved to better align with best practice and how the Council teams want to strategically work together going forward.



A key theme from the engagement has been highlighting the stakeholders would like to work in a more proactive and less reactive way, and this is reflected in the higher concentration of activities within the Analyse and Plan phases.



Key additions to the commissioning wheel following stakeholder workshops include resident engagement, value for money, contract guidance and monitoring, framework management and decommissioning.

Two key takeaways from stakeholder engagement

1. **Early engagement** across stakeholder groups in the commissioning process **is essential to deliver the best outcomes**. This also includes suppliers and VCSEs; who provided clear feedback they would prefer more transparent and earlier engagement to drive improved commissioning outcomes and work in partnership with the Council.
2. Ensuring that service areas are **clear on the governance required** within their area is important, to ensure that they have the authority to commission, undertake a procurement exercise and/or consequently award the contract at the end. **Ensuring that this governance is in place at the start of the cycle** helps to ensure no delays later on impacting on service implementation/execution. **Delegated authority needs to be exercised for every contract**, whether sealed or signed underhand, unless there is explicit cabinet decision saying a contract to a particular provider can be entered into.



Please refer to the process maps in the [Appendix](#) for a high-level view per quadrant. Generally, the procurement activities are led by the CCPS whilst Commissioning activities are led by the Service area (or in adult's and children's social care the commissioners). CCPS should be made aware of all procurement activity above £100k at the start of the commissioning cycle (as early as possible, to support resource planning and adequate time to develop a sourcing strategy and delivery of it). Please note that CCPS will also provide quotation service for between £25k - £100k (please note these thresholds updated in July 2024). CCPS, as a general rule, will engage with Legal when they feel it is required. However this does not preclude from service areas contacting Legal directly for support where they feel it is required. A **minimum** of 2-3 weeks should be factored into timelines for any legal input.

- The activities within each quadrant of the **Commissioning Cycle** are **proportionate**: not all of the activities in the Commissioning Wheel are relevant to be undertaken every time a good(s) or service(s) are commissioned



- At the start of every commission, those stakeholders involved should review the activities and decide what is relevant given the proportionate value and risk associated to the commission.
- It is also appreciated that the Council need to be pragmatic in its application as there can be situations of urgency where the ideal list of commissioning and procurement activities to be conducted are not possible in the available timescales. Immediate support is required for residents' wellbeing and to sustain the broader eco-system of public services. Examples of this would be:
 - On occasions the NHS is under intense pressure and requires additional support from the Council for residents requiring additional support in the short term to discharge from hospital and relieve pressure within the health system to prevent failure to deliver urgent patient care.
 - Unforeseeable Children's social care placements are required the same day in an emergency.
- Please note procurement rules are in place to ensure fairness, transparency, and competition in the procurement process. There are options to support and expedite processes, but they should only be relied upon in extreme urgency or in an unforeseeable event, for example where there is immediate threat to public health, safety or security or when there is an urgent need to address critical infrastructure failures or natural disasters.
- CCPS and Commissioner leadership should advise the appropriate course of action in these situations and assess the potential risks.





ANALYSE

Effectively analyse need, both within the Council and our population, to support decision making on what is required both now and in the future.

The commissioning cycle begins with the analyse phase. It is important that robust information is gathered and evaluated at the beginning of the process to inform future activity. Information should be gathered on, for example: legislation, guidance, best practice, current service provision, and resident engagement. Providing decision makers with the right data-driven insights upfront alongside a solid understanding of root causes of issues helps to ensure the right services are commissioned, in the right way, to address demand, needs of residents and ensure the best outcomes for Northumberland. This analysis is then used to underpin activity throughout the remainder of the commissioning cycle.

The analyse phase kick-starts thinking both around existing provision; making best use of current assets and starts the process of deciding what future goods and services should look like. It is important to consider the impact any new commissioning activity may have on resource, allowing the Council to prioritise core and high-impact activity.

Some key questions to consider, during the analyse phase could include:

1. Is the Council already delivering activity within this space?
2. Are current goods and services accessible to the widest range of eligible residents? How is the current service being used (if applicable)? What user feedback is there?
3. Are there any existing assets or services in place that could contribute to meeting need?
4. What budget is available in the short term to support this commission and what budget is available over the next 3-5 years?
5. Who and how many people are intended to use the services / support and for how long?
6. Where do services / support need to be located in the future?

Key activity during this quadrant is split across the below 4 categories:

1

Research:

Undertaking best practice research, checking current legislation, understanding demographics and resident needs

2

Engagement:

Speaking to residents and/or end users to gain views on past commissioned services, where applicable, and understand their needs in the future

3

Resource:

Early identification of required resource and any major skills / knowledge gaps

4

Market mapping:

Mapping and reviewing the supplier market, exploring offerings, range, quality, numbers etc.

The following slides outline all the activities included within this stage of the commissioning cycle alongside key definitions explaining what each the mean and what is expected under each activity, ownership of each activity and any touchpoints with other services / departments.

Key Activities within Analyse phase of the Council's Commissioning Cycle

ANALYSE Commissioning Activities	Activity	Definition	Other function involvement
	Review of past requirements / trends	Process of analysing historic data, trends and previous commissioning activities to inform future decision-making, including accessing the effectiveness of past commissioning activities, identifying key lessons learnt and any areas for improvement. Reviewing current market trends will also help the Council understand the wider context and ensure teams can plan for challenges/risks in the future.	CCPS can provide support on previous procurement strategies and may have some information on market trends.
	Resource analysis	Evaluation of resources required, including human, financial and physical assets to undertake and maintain specific commissioning activity. Resource analysis helps ensure all activity is realistic and feasible, enabling improved resource allocation throughout the end to end cycle. This analysis is important to ensure resource is not overburdened with too many competing priorities at once. With regards to Finance, this is about the internal resource to fund the project i.e. budget and funding streams, where as spend analysis is more about having a clearer view of the forecasted spend, so how the budget will be spent and doing so to demonstrate value for money.	Finance can provide information on budgets and funding, if required. Services are required to inform CCPS about the start of commissioning activities (including for all related to grant funding that is received into the Council), where spend is expected to be >£100k ¹ , or where there is perceived to be high risk ² associated with the contract. This will enable procurement resource planning and commercial input into initial strategy. The Procurement Request Form and process is currently being updated as part of the Action Plan in parallel to this framework, hence further communication will be shared on processes to be followed.
	Needs/Asset assessment	A formal, systematic process of gathering and analysing information to estimate the nature and identify extent of the needs, priorities and preferences of the Council's residents and the Council 's objectives itself, and then matching the needs to what is currently available and the assets available. Statutory requirements also need to be taken into account, where relevant, and prioritised. Needs assessments should inform planning for services and focus effort and resources where residents need or want them most.	
	Resident engagement	Active involvement and participation of local residents and service users in the commissioning process. This can include seeking input and feedback from residents on current services, what they would like to see in the future, and understanding their aspirations and expectations from the Council. All resident engagement activities should promote transparency and help amplify the voices of those living within Northumberland.	
	Legislation and policy	Ensuring an understanding of relevant laws, regulations, statutory duties and policies (both external and internal) that the Council must adhere to when commissioning goods and services. Any relevant legislation and policy implications to the commission should be considered upfront at this early point in the commissioning cycle, however there should be an awareness of any legislation changes throughout the commission and consideration of the impact on the project.	If specialist legal support is required to understand specific legislation changes then Legal may be able to directly advise or advise on how to access that support from external parties. If relevant, Legal can advise directly on procurement regulation changes and internal policy adherence.

1. CCPS obtain quotes for goods and service between £25-100k in value. For over £100k, CCPS will provide resource to support with developing the sourcing strategy and delivery of the sourcing activity.
2. Please see the [appendix](#) for an example of what could constitute high risk. The Council could benefit from developing their own definition.

Key Activities within Analyse phase of the Council's Commissioning Cycle

ANALYSE Procurement Activities	Activity	Definition	Other function involvement
	Requirements gathering	Gathering the requirements of the commission to develop timelines and ensure the right resource is available.	
	Spend analysis	Collecting, cleaning and analysing spend data (historic and future predicted spend), contracts and invoices to identify key trends, opportunities for cost reduction / improved value for money, as well as allowing for greater monitoring of controls and compliance.	Finance can provide input on and validation of spend analysis.
	Market analysis	Conducting analysis and review of the supplier market to understand information about potential providers, their capabilities, pricing structures and key market trends. Good market analysis will enable the Council to understand supply and demand dynamics within the region and can inform future market development activities as well as commissioning decisions around make vs. buy.	The service areas and commissioners will also have a lot of valuable market knowledge to contribute to the market analysis.
	Category review	Analysis of commissioning activities against and gathered requirements to the overall category strategy, considering areas including cost, quality, outcomes and resident / stakeholder feedback. Category reviews should be used to identify areas for improvement and drive continuous improvement within the commissioning process. Strategic category management is in the process of being designed and implemented across the CCPS team in FY24.	

Stage gate 1	Other function involvement
At Stage gate 1 , there should be a document which is prepared for high risk ¹ or high value projects (at least all over £100k), which provides an outline of the key objectives, scope and deliverables of a project and normally the resource requirements. This document should provide the information required by senior management and stakeholders to enable them to commit to the resources and timelines proposed to initiate a project and ensure alignment on the proposed target outcomes. It also provides a detailed proposition against which success can be measured. In the future developing a standard template project initiation document is recommended with clear governance routes.	The service areas and commissioners lead on the documents for stage gate 1, with CCPS and Finance providing input where relevant.

1. Please see the [appendix](#) for an example of what could constitute high risk. The Council could benefit from developing their own definition.



PLAN

Agree priorities and plan execution of the commissioning activity including what resource is required (including people, assets and financial resource) to meet the needs identified through the analyse stage in an efficient, effective and sustainable way that delivers value for money.

The planning quadrant of the commissioning cycle is focused on deciding how to address needs identified during the analyse stage in an effective, equitable and sustainable manner. It focuses on co-designing priority outcomes and services that align with the Council's corporate priorities and [Commissioning principles](#). Activities within the plan stage use an evidence-based approach to identify gaps between what is needed and what is available and solutions to address these. It also involves shaping the market to ensure that there is an optimal mix of providers that meet identified needs and identifying organisations for collaboration opportunities. It is important to note that not all activity within this quadrant leads to procurement activities and that all options are considered.

During this phase key decisions are taken around what future activity should look like including; clarity on desired outcomes, the type of service or activity required to deliver outcomes, scope for innovation, what model / framework should be used, setting of KPIs and developing detailed specifications.

Stage gate 2 and 3

- 2) A **procurement request form** is required to be completed to enable the CCPS team to commit resource to the project.
- 3) Ideally a document would be prepared (like an **Outline Business Case** or OBC) which provides the business justification for undertaking a project as well as target outcomes. There is government guidance called the 'Green Book' which can be used as a reference.

Some key questions to consider, during the plan phase could include:

1. Do we understand what is been delivered currently? Should we make this service in-house or buy from an external provider?
2. Have we engaged with the market to understand what innovation or trends that we should be aware of and may want to incorporate into our specification to future proof it?
3. Have we considered the advantages and disadvantages of each option, balancing expected outcomes against risk?
4. Establish the best route to market considering factors such as: are we clear on specification requirements, or do we need to work with the markets to develop them?
5. Has the full lifecycle of the service / activity been considered? e.g. decommissioning activities and long term costs?
6. Is there sufficient data and baselining to allow for performance monitoring?

1

Evaluate:

Utilising analysis to identify gaps between current provision and needs and understanding impact of any changes

2

Design:

Planning and designing the service delivery, with the aim of closing gaps identified and upholding corporate objectives

3

Develop:

Fostering interest and innovation prior to formal procurement processes, where relevant, to stimulate competition within the market

- **Ensure you give yourself plenty of time in the plan stage** to fully develop your design and specification. It is critical to delivering the best outcomes.
- Consider who you need to **review and approve your specification** with.

The following slides outline all the activities included within this stage of the commissioning cycle alongside key definitions explaining what each mean and what is expected under each activity, ownership of each activity and any touchpoints with other services / departments.

Key Activities within Plan phase of the Council's Commissioning Cycle

PLAN	Commissioning Activities	Activity	Definition	Other function involvement
		Gap analysis	Identifying the gaps and discrepancies between current state and desired future state, i.e. the opportunities for improvement. It should involve evaluating current services, resource and outcomes against needs identified during the plan phase of the commissioning cycle.	
		Market development	Strategic and proactive activity to foster a diverse, competitive and innovative market with providers and other stakeholders to help ensure there is a diverse range of high-quality services available and suitable provider competition to encourage price competitiveness and value for money.	CCPS to provide support and training.
		Make vs Buy study	Evaluation of whether to deliver a service in-house (make) or procure a service from external providers (buy). Studies should include assessment of factors including: cost (for the full lifecycle), expertise, capacity, quality, risk (consideration of future risks is important such as known changes in legislation upcoming) and value for money. This analysis can help to inform pricing strategies if the decision is to buy.	CCPS and Finance to provide support and guidance on this analysis. ICT team to be contacted if digital, or IT solutions are to be included.
		Capacity and capability building	Following resource analysis during the 'analyse' stage of the commissioning cycle, a clearer prioritisation of intentional and strategic efforts to enhance the skills, knowledge and potentially resource both internally and externally to deliver commissioning activity.	Organisational design function can provide support and guidance to develop the strategy and implementation where required.
		Value for money	Consideration of overall benefits and costs associated with commissioning activity, accessing quality and effectiveness of goods and services in relation to resources invested; maximising benefits achieved for the Council.	Work in partnership with CCPS and Finance to demonstrate and ensure VfM is being achieved, where relevant.
		Evaluate the Impact	Conduct evaluation of the impact that the commissioned good or service will have on varying components of the organisation e.g this can include impact on people (TUPE), sustainability (carbon), and GDPR/Information Governance etc.	To fully assess the impact may require input from many different functions including CCPS, IG officers, HR etc
		Service design	Planning the structure of the solution (people, process and technology) to meet the need(s) identified. Activities could include: mapping service user journeys, service touchpoints, resident interactions and defining the overarching offering.	Implementation of any changes to service design need to be conducted with the end users involved in providing feedback. This could involve many functions from across the organisation depending on the change being proposed.
		Specification	A detailed overview of requirements, expectations and quality standards detailing the goods / services a provider is expected to supply to the Council. Specifications should include a comprehensive outline of desired outcomes, performance indicators, quality criteria and any specific contractual or regulatory requirements. Good specifications are clear, understandable by all stakeholders, specific and measurable. The Council have received feedback from Suppliers and the VCSE community that sometimes more time spent engaging with them in the development of the specifications would benefit improved outcomes. Ensure there is adequate time to prepare and obtain stakeholder feedback on the specification. It is recommended that the specification content is signed off within the service area leadership before going out to tender.	Specification approach and layout can differ and the CCPS team can advise on what they suggest is appropriate and share relevant good practice examples, if deemed to be helpful. Legal may be required to review specifications in terms of the type of contract and how they interact with T&Cs etc, but CCPS will generally advise on when this is required.
		Business case	Consolidated analysis of preferred commissioning option. The level of detail required may vary, but most business cases should include well-developed costings, timescale estimates, clear benefits, risks and consideration of most suitable procurement route. Government guidance ' Green book ' indicates a business case should include the following 5 core elements: management case, strategic case, economic case, commercial case and financial case. The initial business case would be approved at the 'plan' stage and should be updated and approved again in the 'secure services' stage too (see stage gates).	Stakeholders engaged through the workshops raised a concern for the lack of prioritisation of projects to manage capacity and capability. A cross-organisation review and sign off of the business case should ensure that this concern is addressed. This is one of the processes included in the action plan to develop.

Key Activities within Plan phase of the Council's Commissioning Cycle

PLAN	Procurement Activities	Activity	Definition
		Market warming	Early and proactive engagement with potential providers prior to the commencement of a formal procurement process to share key information, gauge interest and foster dialogue to generate interest and innovation relating to upcoming commissioning opportunities. Market warming activities could include: hosting industry events and conducting supplier engagement days, to stimulate competition and begin developing a robust provider market.
		Route to market	Identifying and agreeing the most appropriate route to market e.g. open tender, framework agreements, direct award. Route to market discussions should be open and transparent, promoting fairness while ensuring desired outcomes are met within an appropriate timeframe. Early notification to CCPS allows time for the best route to market to be selected to drive the best outcomes and value for money.

Stage gate 2	Other function involvement
A Procurement Request Form (PRF) is required to be completed to enable the CPSS team to commit resource to the project. The procurement request forms notify procurement of the key information such as an overview of the requirements, budget holder approval, initial anticipated ask of the CPSS team and timelines for the project. The CPSS team will respond to a PRF within one week to indicate next steps.	The service area or commissioners will complete the PRF, CCPS should be contacted if any guidance is required to support its completion.

Stage gate 3	Other function involvement
<p>Ideally a document would be prepared (like an Outline Business Case or OBC) which provides the business justification for undertaking a project based on the outlined costs of development and the anticipated benefits/outcomes to be gained given any associated risks and resource required to deliver. It is used to secure senior management and stakeholder commitment at the end of project initiation (Analyse phase), prior to commencing further use of resource (e.g. to develop tender documents).</p> <p>There is government guidance called the 'Green Book' which can be used as a reference and provides template examples.</p>	The service areas and commissioners lead on the documents for stage gate 1, with CCPS and Finance potentially providing input where relevant.

Case study: The impact of strong market development on improving Alternative Education provision

Overview

The Council created a Dynamic Purchasing System (DPS) to support the development of an Alternative Education provision framework for excluded students of statutory school age that require alternative education provision to meet their education entitlement. This solution is important in creating capacity as the Council has a statutory duty to provide an education placement within six days of a permanent exclusion taking place. The number of children requiring placements has increased as well as additional pressures on the market landscape due to DfE requirements. The framework ensures appropriate oversight of unregistered provision and is structured flexibly to respond to the DfE launching a call for evidence into understanding the use of unregistered alternative provision and the drive towards increased use of registered provision. This is coupled with an increase in both permanent exclusions and fixed term exclusions/suspensions following the impact of Covid. The DPS creates a flexible solution providing the Council with improved access to suppliers in order to meet market demands.

Outcomes

The Alternative Education DPS is the result of more than six years of building close working relationships with providers to continuously innovate and improve the way the offering is contracted and to future proof it. CCPS and Legal colleagues were involved from day one, meaning we had time to work together to develop a procurement strategy based on the lessons learnt and feedback acquired through the existing contracts and the various providers. The procurement team supported a soft market test exercise, and this helped to provide some feedback on the price framing. A provider engagement event allowed us the opportunity to introduce the DPS to the market and ensure that this new approach did not deter providers from working with us. It allowed us to communicate our governance approach and contract management approach which includes a joint monitoring approach through annual visits with the commissioning team and school improvement and termly contract meetings and regular provider network events held by the operational team.

The result was a DPS which was designed with six Lots to enable the future proofing of service with various different types of alternative education provision, allowing the Council to be more effective in ensuring pupils receive a good education regardless of their circumstances and the setting in which they find themselves. In addition, providers have been known to exit the market so having a DPS in place to allow new providers to enter and provide some resilience and flexibility has been really helpful.

Lessons learnt

Allowing enough time to engage with internal stakeholders (such as CCPS, Legal, Health and Safety, Commissioners) to develop the right procurement route and strategy to contract with providers in a meaningful way was critical. Then allowing time to **test those ideas with the providers through market engagement** to introduce new approaches and expectations with providers and obtain their feedback was critical to the success of the service we now have.



**Case study estimated
timescale for quadrant
activities:**
3-6 months



Case study – Lung Health Clinic: Forming partnerships to design services tailored to resident needs

Overview

Smoking rates among people who are problematic drug and/or alcohol users are abnormally high – as many as 88% of people accessing treatment in Northumberland for drug / alcohol addiction are also smokers, compared to 9.6% in the local adult population. Drug and alcohol users will often not access mainstream services for wider health issues (such as COPD) and can experience early mortality as a result. However, provision of dedicated lung health clinics is not included (or funded) as part of the treatment service contract and would require separate development. Therefore, using funding (via the NHS Integrated Care System) designed to address health inequalities, the Council developed a partnership between our treatment provider and Northumbria NHS Trust to provide a bespoke lung health clinic within the drug and alcohol service.

Outcomes

The service was evaluated in 2023. Initial findings demonstrated that the service was instrumental in the identification and referral to treatment of smoking related illness, undoubtedly preventing early mortality. Out of 52 new patients, 57.7% (30 patients) had a new diagnosis and 80.8% (42 patients) either received a new diagnosis of lung disease or had intervention for an existing condition: this confirms the unmet need and really reinforces the value of locating the clinic within the drug and alcohol service. The evaluation also included qualitative feedback from service users, which demonstrated a high level of satisfaction.

Lessons learnt

Following a compliant procurement process, the Council resulted in commissioning this service from an incumbent, this did streamline the process considerably – especially where there was already **good working relationships** in place and innovative practice and partnership working. A high level of knowledge about the capability of commissioned services meant informed decisions could also be made to rapidly develop the new clinic and make it a success. A **focus on shared goals and success** created a more open dialogue between the Council and providers, ensuring issues and challenges were identified, and addressed early.



**Case study estimated
timescale for quadrant
activities:
7 months**



Case study – Evaluate the Impact - The Integrated Impact Assessment: A tool to standardise impact assessment

Overview

Conducting a thorough impact assessment is vital to many commissioning activities across the Council. Impact assessments ensure equality and equity considerations are placed at the heart of everything the Council does and help ensure that strategies, policies, services and functions do what they intend. To help standardise the impact assessment process and aid future decision making, the Council has developed an Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) which combines the Carbon Impact Assessment, Equality Impact Assessment and adds a greater focus on inequalities. This new tool seeks to assess the potential impacts of an activity on reducing or widening inequalities' and of determining if, or what, action could be taken to mitigate or reduce the negative impact or to enhance a positive impact. Not every commissioning activity will require a full in depth Impact Assessment, and hence a screening tool was also developed to determine if proposed activity requires the more in-depth assessment.



Outcomes

It will be exciting to see the impact that this tool brings when it is launched later this year. It is anticipated that these integrated processes will increase the awareness, standardisation and overall quality of the impact assessments. By using this form each officer should start thinking about inequalities at the beginning of the commissioning cycle and not wait to be told to consider the impact further down the line. The IIA team will consolidate and harmonise each respective section's training improving the experience for end users.

Lessons learnt

A key lesson learnt to date has been; not to underestimate the importance of change management and engaging with the right stakeholders in the right way early on the process. It is important going forward to consider the change management required to fully implement and embed successfully the new IIA. Specifically, also ensuring that there is an opportunity for end user feedback and continuous improvement processes developed before launch.

Making sure that assessments are proportionate to the ask/need, this feedback has been addressed through an IIA screening tool which indicates where a full IIA form is needed, as not every commissioned activity will require a full IIA.





SECURE SERVICES

Securing and implementing planned services, goods and works to deliver the identified priorities and outcomes.

The secure services quadrant of the cycle involves implementing the commissioning plan, including procuring services (where applicable), mobilisation, monitoring delivery and change management. It focuses on ensuring services are delivered as planned in a way that aligns with priorities and targets set out during the plan stage.

The process of managing contracts should begin during the tender process, with the Council preparing and sharing the draft contract and then answering any bid clarification questions, then as the contract is awarded the contract manager should work with the provider to ensure smooth mobilisation and delivery in accordance with agreed terms of the contract. Colleagues should not engage in direct conversation with a prospective provider about the upcoming or live tender throughout the process, unless it is part of a structured market engagement. This is important as with the new procurement regulations coming into place in Q4 2024, the Council have an obligation to issue market engagement notices prior to the event, and if market engagement is conducted, even informally, without a notice issued, we have to explain and publish in the tender why we did not issue a notice. This is to ensure fair and transparent processes and should not prevent engagement. It is important good relationships are established early with providers as these will enable early identification of any emergency problems and foster an environment of joint problem solving. Contract managers should consider risk during all activities in this phase, putting in place relevant mitigations where applicable.

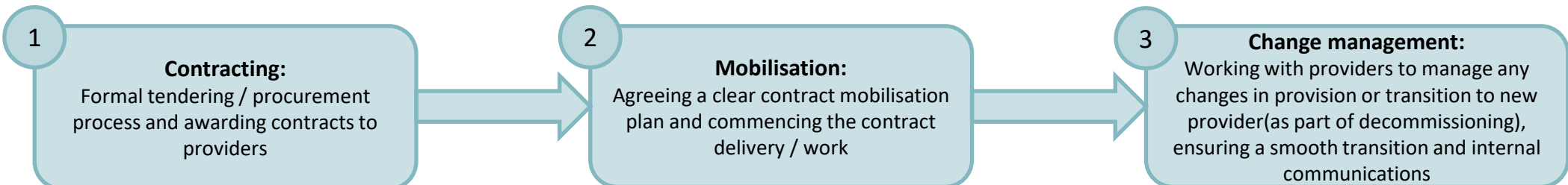
Some key questions to consider, during the secure services phase could include:

1. Has there been enough market engagement about the current commission specifically? Are any other activities required to stimulate strong competition?
2. Have procurement regulations been reviewed for this commission?
3. Has TUPE been considered?
4. Are we clear on obligations of all parties in any new contracts / ways of working and any associated key milestones?
5. Are we clear how the service is going to be mobilised (and potentially transitioned from the incumbent)?
6. For change management or contract variations, have all relevant stakeholders been engaged, e.g. CCPS, Legal and Finance?

Stage gate 4:

Ideally a document would be prepared (like a Full Business Case or FBC), providing a detailed analysis of the full lifecycle costs, benefits and risks associated to the project and approved by a cross section of leadership representatives across the organisation before committing contractually to the spend and/or obligations.

See [the process flow](#) for chronology in the appendix.



Key Activities within Secure Services phase of the Council's Commissioning Cycle

SECURE SERVICES	Commissioning Activities	Activity	Definition	Other function involvement
		Mobilisation	Developing a clear contract mobilisation plan that outlines activities that should be carried out by supplier / provider prior to commencing work and initiating internal activities that must be carried out after contract award and before the commencement of contract e.g. establishing governance structures, adding contract to contracts register, setting up details for payment in the finance system.	
		Change management	<p>Managing a change in a delivery without going through the full commissioning cycle again. Changes in contracts are called 'contract variations' and usually take place part way through the life of a contract. CCPS should be notified of any contract variations to ensure that procurement regulations are being suitably followed, to ensure that the respective compulsory transparency requirements are adhered to and provide commercial advice e.g. if a negotiation of scope and price is required as part of the contract variation.</p> <p>Changes in contracts can be caused by a number of reasons, such as legislation change, supply issues, decommissioning services, unforeseen change in requirement due to health and safety and so on.</p>	<p>Prior to any contract variations or extensions being triggered in a contract, services must approach CCPS team, who will provide advice and engage with Legal as required. Legal may be needed to assess and review changes to contracts, T&Cs etc.</p> <p>Finance to support any budget changes or contract variances / renewals.</p>

SECURE SERVICES	Procurement Activities	Activity	Definition	Other function involvement
		Tendering / procurement process	The process of inviting other parties to submit bids to provide the Council with goods / services and evaluating submissions against set criteria.	CCPS will request Legal input on specific queries, as they currently do. Generally, Legal will be included where there is high risk inc. reputational damage, high value (>£500k), special T&Cs or procurement routes being followed that are not frequently used.
		Contract award	Formally notifying suppliers / providers of the outcome of the 'tendering / procurement process'. The contract award process should include finalisation of terms and conditions and signing of documentation by both suppliers and Council.	CCPS to award contract and communicate outcome to services.
		Handover to contract management	Transitioning responsibility for managing and overseeing the contract from the procurement team to the service / department that commissioned the work for ongoing management and monitoring of quality / KPIs.	

Stage gate 4				Other function involvement
Ideally a document would be prepared (like a Full Business Case or FBC), providing a detailed analysis of the full lifecycle costs, benefits and risks associated to the project and approved by a cross section of leadership representatives across the organisation before committing contractually to the spend and/or obligations (usually at contract award stage when conducting a procurement).				The service areas and commissioners lead on the documents for stage gate 4, with CCPS and Finance potentially providing input where relevant.

Overview

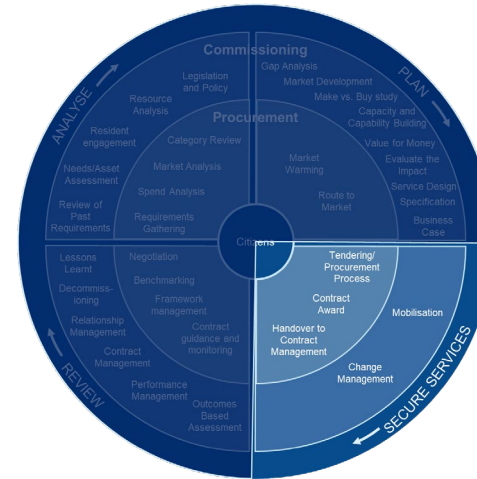
Following a review of the Leisure Service in 2022, the Council identified the need to seek a leisure management partner to operate and manage ten leisure facilities (asset portfolio worth £120m) and play a crucial role in delivering the Northumberland Physical Activity Strategy 2020-2028. The value of the contract is circa £250m (based on turnover).

Outcomes

- 10 Year contract with option to extend for a further 5 years.
- A Partnership Philosophy has been adopted between the Council and the Operator.
- Traditional leisure service provision transformed to a cost-effective community-based Service which helps tackle inequalities in health and increasing physical activity for all.
- Operator will facilitate community-led and community-based activity within the local areas surrounding the centers, to increase access and support for people within the Community.
- Fit for purpose, modernised leisure and wellbeing service based on evidence-based research, best practice and data.
- Appropriate balance of risk between the Operator and the Council.
- Clear performance standards underpinned by a performance management framework and formation of a Strategic Partnership Board chaired by the Council and attended by the elected member, Portfolio Holder for Healthy Lives.

Lessons Learned

A structured debrief was conducted across all key stakeholders to enable the Council to critically review the strategic, operational and tactical approach to the review, procurement and mobilisation of the transformed leisure offer in Northumberland.



Timings

- Market engagement questionnaire published 18/01/23
- Leisure Transformation Programme Board formalised 01/02/23
- Procurement Strategy agreed 10/02/23
- Initial Tender published 18/04/23
- Supplier day held 10/05/23
- Webinar 14/06/23
- Final Tender published on 18/09/23
- Final Tenders evaluated 13/11/23 to 14/11/23
- Tenderers notified of result/standstill period ended 30/11/23
- Mobilisation team assembled
- Contract Performance Management Workshop held 18/03/24
- New Contract commenced 01/04/24



REVIEW

Review the performance and impact of the services, goods and works secured to ensure they are delivering contractual and legal obligations, as well as assessing their effectiveness and how well they are meeting needs to inform future planning.

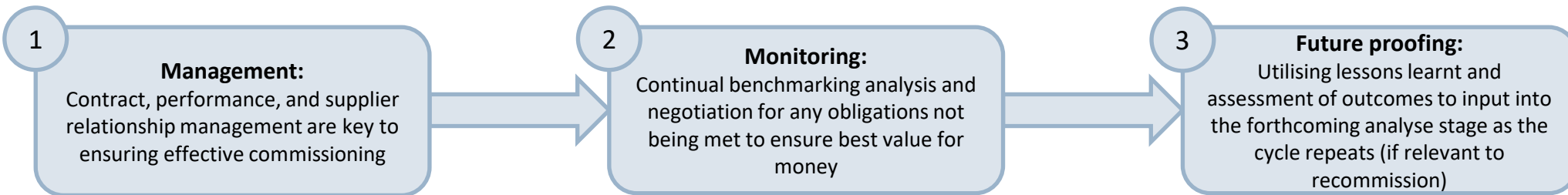
Through a cycle of review and refinement, a service can be continuously reviewed and improved thereby running as effectively as possible both in terms of costs and delivering the best outcomes for the population and staff. It also guarantees that the corporate plan is upheld, and the core commissioning principles are at the forefront of all commissioning activities.

The review quadrant of the cycle involves evaluating the impact of commissioned activities, assessing outcomes and making informed decisions about what future activity should look like. It is important to objectively reflect on how well a strategy, approach or provider is fairing in terms of meeting desired outcomes. To support this process it may be necessary to collect and analyse data and feedback on the current service comparing outcomes to those set during the analyse phase. It is important to gather lessons learnt and share these internally and externally with relevant suppliers, opening up a dialogue which focuses on how to improve going forward.

The review stage also encompasses continuous contract management, exploring how well the commission is performing, identifying any key issues and putting in place a plan with key actions to improve. Some key factors that should be monitored on a regular basis include: price / costs, capacity, quality, competition / new entrants, delays and delivery of social value commitments.

Some key questions to consider, during the review phase could include:

1. Are residents/users receiving the support and services they need? Has the Council delivered expected outcomes?
2. What impact is the commission having on meeting the needs set out during the analyse phase? Is the commission having its intended impact? Are there any unexpected outcomes?
3. Has value for money been achieved through this commission?
4. Is the Council receiving all goods / services set out in the contract obligations?
5. Are we actively engaging with strategic supplier(s)/provider(s) to manage their performance and understand any issues early on?
6. Are we effectively capturing the lessons learnt throughout the entire process to inform future commissioning activities? Is there anything that could improve the commission of that service/good going forward?



The following slides outline all the activities included within this stage of the commissioning cycle alongside key definitions explaining what each the mean and what is expected under each activity, ownership of each activity and any touchpoints with other services / departments.

Key Activities within Review phase of the Council's Commissioning Cycle

REVIEW Commissioning Activities	Activity	Definition	Other function involvement	
	Outcomes based assessment	Reviewing services / goods delivered against expected outcomes, evaluating effectiveness, efficiency, and overall impact. Where possible, evidence should be used to demonstrate the outcomes which can be qualitative and quantitative. The outcomes based assessment should be used to inform lessons learnt.		
	Contract management	The ongoing process of overseeing and administering the contractual relationship through its lifecycle, between the Council and it's providers / suppliers. Contract management includes: monitoring performance, ensuring compliance with contractual obligations e.g. is the contract delivering what it was set out to do, meeting established KPI's, social value commitments etc , addressing disputes and managing any changes or variations throughout the course of the contract. Contract management is primarily to ensure all parties involved fulfil their obligations in a contract and achieve the desired outcomes in a timely and compliant manner. Contract management helps to mitigate risks, ensure compliance, optimise relationships and maximise the value and outcomes derived from contracts.	CCPS can support with guidance, training and templates throughout the contract management lifecycle. Services to regularly engage with Finance early as part of budget monitoring activities, identifying and flagging any discrepancies early.	
	Performance management	Continuous process of monitoring and improving the performance of providers and suppliers who are delivering commissioned activities to ensure they are meeting desired outcomes and delivering best value for money for the Council. Performance management could include setting KPIs, collecting and analysing performance data, conducting regular reviews, seeking input from end users and providing feedback to suppliers / providers.	CCPS can support with guidance, training and templates.	
	Relationship management	Taking a proactive approach to engagement with the eco-system of stakeholders across commissioned services from VCSE, suppliers, collaborative organisations such as other Council's or NHS trusts, members, residents, private sector organisations, those stakeholders that are relevant to potentially identify opportunities for innovation and improved delivery of outcomes. Throughout the commissioning cycle there should be consideration to the wider network of stakeholders and how they will be engaged and in the review stage consideration of the impact delivered through that relationship management activity and any lessons learnt to take forward.	CCPS to support with guidance, training and templates.	
	Lessons learnt	Capturing, analysing and applying insights and knowledge gained from past commissioning activities to inform future decision-making and encourage continued improvement and best practice sharing across the Council. Lessons learnt should be captured in a log that is accessible across teams to optimise future delivery throughout the commissioned activity.		
	Decommissioning	The withdrawal from, closure, or phasing out of commissioned work that is no longer required, deemed inefficient or contractually expiring. Decommissioning is most likely to occur at the end of the agreed contract period but could occur during the contract term due to unforeseen circumstances. Ending obsolete services and recommissioning others where appropriate is part of the continuous cycle of commissioning.	Legal and unions to provide advice on decommissioning where required.	

There is an interdependency between contract, performance and relationship management. When there is one supplier and one contract then often the engagement is consolidated into one. There may be more of a difference when there is a supplier with multiple contracts engaging with different parts of the Council, so each contract would be managed individually as well as ideally having someone managing the supplier holistically across those contracts too.

Key Activities within Review phase of the Council's Commissioning Cycle

REVIEW	Procurement Activities	Activity	Definition	Other function involvement
		Framework management	Ongoing oversight of the framework itself, ensuring it remains relevant, effective and is aligned to the Council's corporate strategy and commissioning principles. Managing suppliers on and off framework, ensuring spend does not exceed threshold limits set out in the contract.	
		Benchmarking	Measuring commissioned products, services etc. against external standards, best practice and similar organisations to help the Council understand areas of strength, improvement and help access whether the Council is achieving best value for money and the most effective solutions to deliver the outcomes required.	The service area/commissioners will have relationships that can help to provide input into this benchmarking exercise as well.
		Contract guidance and monitoring	CCPS are developing (in 2024) content to share to provide further guidance, training and best practice examples across the Council to develop contract management capabilities. For high value, high risk or contracts of strategic importance; the CCPS team will support ongoing contract management and monitoring alongside services, requesting inputs from contract managers. This will include targeted relationship management activities and effective KPI monitoring. The new procurement regulations expected to come into force in 2024 has heightened transparency requirements, that the CCPS will facilitate in collating and publishing the relevant information. Social Value commitments are also part of the contract and the CCPS are developing a social value framework and guidance to support the development of commitments and their ongoing monitoring.	The service area/commissioners will be required to provide inputs to the CCPS team who will be consolidating contract monitoring holistically across the Council. The service area are responsible for the individual contract management of all contracts.
		Negotiation	The process of reaching a mutually acceptable agreement between the Council and its suppliers / providers in relation to terms, conditions and scope of commissioned activity. For example, a new legislation comes into place changing the obligations of Council's to adapt the way that a current service is delivered. A negotiation with the incumbent provider and an assessment of how the rest of the market place is responding to the change would be conducted. If it was a minor change and it was deemed that value for money was still achieved through remaining with the incumbent provider then the negotiation would be concluded to agree the adjusted obligations under the contract including scope and pricing and a contract variation signed.	

Overview

A further example of Social Value in practice is demonstrated in the contract for 'Northumberland Skills Welding and Fabrication Training Centre', located in Blyth Northumberland. The contract involved upgrade of the existing facility for specific engineering training purposes. The award of the contract went to Compass Developments (NE) Ltd., a Cramlington based company, whose work force is predominantly local employees. Compass submitted a variety of commitments to social value over the project which included maintaining a local workforce, supporting apprenticeships for the construction industry, ensuring their supply chain is engaged in ethical processes and reducing waste by recycling as much of the site-based materials as possible.

Outcomes

Compass supported three apprentices through their training which increased their workforce to 32 local employees, ensuring that the Northumberland pound (money spent through the public services) stays within the community. Using their local based supply-chain they were able to recycle materials from site by 80%. All suppliers were within a 40-mile radius of the project which gave an added bonus of reducing CO2 emissions. They further engaged directly with the local community and delivered Academic Seminars to Blyth Academy to promote engineering opportunities and inspire the local community. Compass have also donated to North Shields and Wansbeck Food Banks and supported local football and golfing teams in Cramlington.

Lessons learnt

- Ongoing engagement enforces the development of joined up thinking between the residents, the Council and local suppliers covering all sectors within Northumberland and developing more impact through social value commitments in the Council's contracts.



Case study: Contract Management – Alternative Education

Note: This case study builds on the previous mentioned Alternative Education case study in the Analyse section which provided an overview of the market development conducted.

Overview

The Council created a Dynamic Purchasing System (DPS) to support the development of an Alternative Education provision framework for excluded students of statutory school age that require alternative education provision to meet their education entitlement.

Outcomes

In addition to the outcomes regarding market development in the Analyse section of this document, another area of best practice is the collaborative approach that is taken to contract management and ongoing provider engagement between the Education and Skills Service and the Commissioning Team for the Directorate. This consists of:

- Annual contract compliance visits that are undertaken by;
 - the Commissioning Team to monitor against a Quality Framework.
 - a School Improvement Partner to monitor the standard of education delivered.

These visits and engagement result in an Action Plan which the provider works to going forward, in order to drive up quality of provision and performance. This is then monitored through:

- Termly strategic reviews with each service provider to look at performance and business development to ensure providers are aware of the Council demands moving forward and to ensure it is built into their planning. This allows for the Council to monitor the framework and its capacity to meet increasing demands.
- Regular provider network meetings to discuss areas of development and good practice.

Lessons learnt

Value leakage can occur if a contract is not closely managed and this can lead to the anticipated outcomes of the contract not being delivered, to enable this to happen the scope of work and expectations in delivery needs to be clearly defined in the work order/contract.

This case study is a demonstration of by having clearly defined obligations and expectations how effective regular monitoring of performance from a quality and a contractual requirements point of view has been so effective and now the relationship has moved on where the Council work with the providers to manage risks openly together and become more strategic in its focus.



Overview

Highways and Transport have several major contracts running consecutively across the department. These cover up to, and over, 150 users within the department.

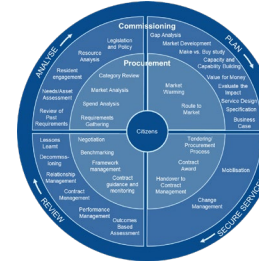
One of the major contracts, which has a value of circa £20M over the contract term, is material supply for the Highways department. This is for all of the department's aggregates, bituminous materials (tarmac) and concretes, needed in order to maintain the Highways network across Northumberland. This contract is split across multiple lots, across four areas and with multiple key suppliers. The significance of the contract can have consequences to the department when delivering up to, or over, a £50M yearly capital programme across the Council.

Outcomes

- The Council engaged with the end users of the contract in order to obtain essential feedback. This feedback was then considered when the new contract was developed. Due to the bespoke nature of the contract, there was no other contract type available or applicable in the Council. Therefore, Highways, CCPS, and Legal developed a new specification and legal terms.
- Highways and CCPS engaged with all previous main suppliers and potential suppliers across Northumberland through various online workshops. The upcoming procurement processes were explained to all suppliers who could potentially tender for the contract, ensuring that they were given the same consistent message. From this, taking all feedback from meetings into consideration, the Council developed the final tender specification with Key Performance Indicators to manage the contract.

Lessons learnt

- Ensure efficient engagement with all contracts or suppliers who may be involved in the tender.
- Ensure Legal have adequate lead time.
- Simplify the contract terms and specification for end users. Specifically, KPI and contract non conformances.
- Monitor, Manage and Maintain throughout the contract term.



This case study provides an overview of how contract management is a thread considered throughout the entire commissioning cycle.



DECOMMISSIONING

Decommissioning is defined as the withdrawal from or closure of a service by ceasing funding or ending a contract or service level agreement.

Decommissioning is an integral part of the commissioning cycle and should be undertaken proactively to ensure the Council continues to make best use of the resources available to deliver the most effective services. It is most likely to occur at the end of the agreed contract period but could occur during the contract term due to unforeseen circumstances. Ending obsolete services and recommissioning others where appropriate is part of the continuous cycle of commissioning.

Factors leading to decommissioning may include:

- The needs of users have changed (based on a review of the needs of the population)
- Other/new approaches which better meet the needs and outcomes are available (e.g. techniques and technology)
- The Council's economic circumstances have changed
- National policy or legislation changes
- The current service is not delivering the desired outcomes (i.e. not delivering good value for money)
- The current service no longer meets quality and/or statutory requirements
- The current service has unresolvable performance management issues
- The current service does not meet criteria such as equality, modern slavery, sustainability, health and safety, safeguarding
- The current service no longer operates in accordance with other Council policies
- The current service is no longer considered to offer a level of risk appropriate to the Council
- Where services have been procured on a block contract with an agreed volume of service, it may be necessary to decommission some volume if the number of users falls permanently
- The current service is unable to adapt to changing circumstances
- The current provider undergoes change which affects their ability to deliver the service
- Decommissioning can also be the natural end to a contract where the provider has not won the new contract.



Decommissioning should be considered at the start, before commissioning a service / goods, as there can be high exit costs associated with certain choices that should be factored into analysis prior to committing to any new contracts/commissions. **Before entering a contract, the buyer should have a clear understanding on how they will exit the contract.**



Decommissioning should be evidence-led (e.g. documented understanding of user needs and the market supply) and there should be clear rationale for undertaking the service change, with a strong focus on delivering outcomes. The financial implications and contractual restrictions must also be considered.



There must be **an appropriate level of consultation and engagement with stakeholders**. Good communication is essential during decommissioning as open and regular communication with service users and providers can help alleviate fear and mistrust that might arise between the Council, providers and users.

Key Themes Summary



As a result of the stakeholder engagement during the development of the commissioning framework, there are a few key takeaways which are key to the success of the framework going forward. These are highlighted below.



The **passion and engagement** across the Council in developing the Commissioning Framework was fantastic, in a period when time pressures are really felt across the Council in terms of individual's capacity. This demonstrates the commitment that exists to **continuously improve** the Council's Commissioning journey to drive the value for money and the best outcomes for our residents.



There are some activities within the Commissioning Cycle where there is a **spectrum of capability across the Council**, targeting those areas to **share good practice examples from the pockets of good practice and provide guidance** would help to create more consistent approaches e.g contract management.



Collaboration and early engagement: Engaging enabling functions like CCPS, Finance and Legal in a timely way is critical. Often, they are engaged too late which leaves that team in an awkward position of either:

- having to condense timelines of required activities which can compromise either the value for money, quality of the outcomes, or increases the Council's risk unnecessarily; or
 - alternatively the teams must unfortunately stop a commission, which causes unplanned delays, whilst the team follow the due process properly.
- Improved forward planning in a collaborative way will yield value to the organisation and additional opportunity to consider strategic commercial opportunities.



Ensuring activities are proportionate: Not all of the activities in the Commissioning Cycle are relevant to be undertaken every time a good(s) or service(s) are commissioned; however at the start of every commission, those stakeholders involved should review the activities and decide what is relevant given the proportionate value, risk and timelines associated to the commission. Allowing sufficient time for planning upfront is important.



Changes to procurement regulations: The Procurement Act 2023 means it is even more critical that stakeholders engage with CCPS early on to understand if there are additional steps or slightly different processes that could be followed and allowing CCPS adequate time to reflect on sourcing strategies, as they become more familiar and fully embed the new regulations.

Thank you to all the Suppliers, VCSE representatives, and Council colleagues who have provided input and time to develop this new framework. Council colleagues who have been engaged in the process have included:

- Corporate Commissioning and Procurement Service (CCPS)
- Children's Social Care, Education and Public Health
- Adults, Ageing and Wellbeing Commissioning
- Environment and Transport
- Public Health
- IT
- Audit
- Finance
- Legal
- Communications and Engagement
- Communities First
- Performance
- Organisational Development
- BEST ambassadors



Thank you in advance to the Council colleagues for your efforts in implementing and through your ambassador roles embedding the improvements and action plan that has been co-developed consequently.

Appendix

The commissioning framework is not a stand-alone document below are links to helpful useful resources to help with navigating to further information:

Further commissioning and procurement guidance material and toolkits are available on the Council's intranet on CCPS section of The Beat

The Council Constitution is available at
www.northumberland.gov.uk

External links for guidance and information

- [NEPO](#) – North East collaborative procurement organisation to drive regional strategies, procurement efficiencies and economies of scale. NEPO have a number of frameworks that the Council utilise.
- [Thriving together](#) – bringing the voluntary, community and social enterprise sector together within Northumberland.

Government guidance

- [The Green Book: Templates and support material](#) – helpful for the development of business cases
- [Transforming Public Procurement](#) – site that contains links to the new procurement bill, guidance, e-learning and knowledge drops
- [The Sourcing Playbook](#) – key policies and guidance for making sourcing decisions for the delivery of public services such as bid evaluation, benefits measurement, market management etc.
- [Government Functional Standard GovS 008:Commercial and Commercial Continuous Improvement Assessment Framework](#) – helping to drive continuous improvement across commercial activity.

Example of High Risk situations requiring CCPS engagement regardless of contract value:

- strategic contracts (business critical in the short and long term; service provision impacted if they fail);
- has significant public/customer or market visibility or critical effect on other key services or work programmes;
- could result in loss of business or regulatory control;
- supports or is a statutory service or involves the capture or storage of personal data or sensitive information;
- could have significant negative reputational or political impact;
- could result in a loss of critical functions/systems for more than 2 days;
- creates a high level of commercial dependency (>30% of a contractor's business or vice versa);
- will require an interface with or connection to Government IT systems or networks;
- supplier performance or financial concerns with either an incumbent supplier or any prospective supplier(s);
- susceptible to medium/high likelihood of legal challenge;
- unplanned extension;
- the supply market for this requirement suffers from limited competition and/or severe capacity constraints and/or the Government is the only customer.

Example

Commissioning Cycle – High level Process Flows



Analyse

Key

Start

= Start of the process flow

Process name

= Process steps

= Activities can occur concurrently

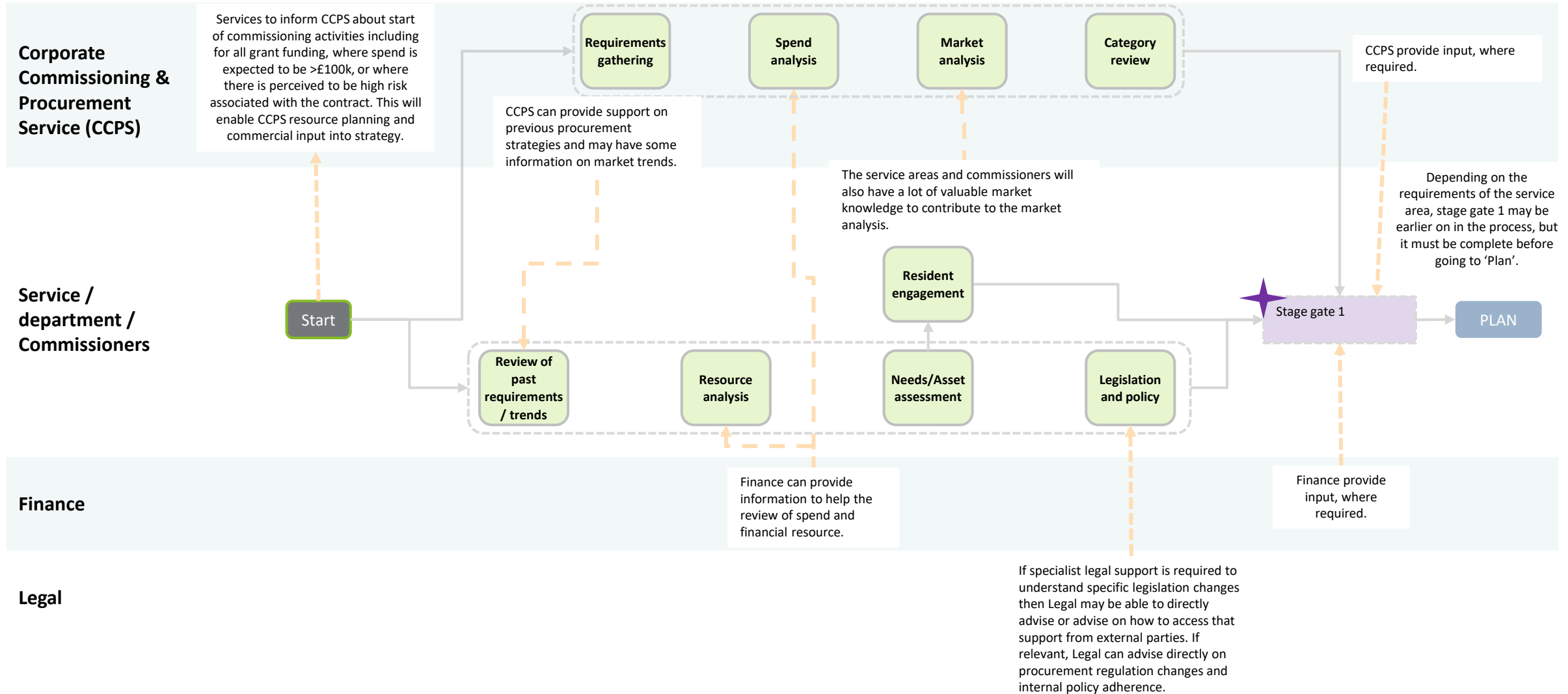
= Direction of process flow

= Additional info or touchpoints

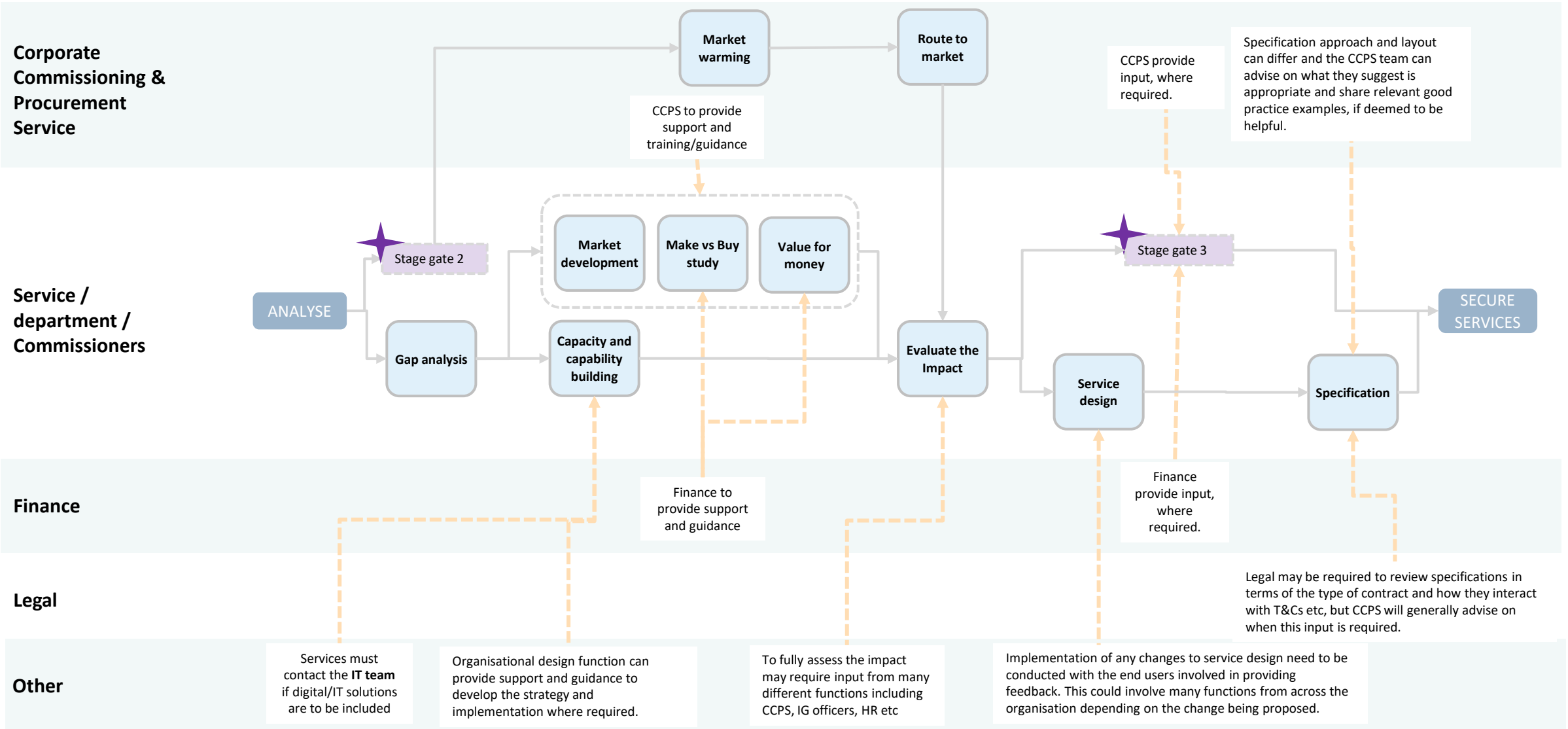
Document

= Key project documents

= Peer review or approval required



Please note that these are high level process maps to give indicative view of who is the owner for each activity and general flow of activities and stage gates. For example, there may be service specific approval processes and governance that add additional steps to the process. Service areas should take responsibility to ensure stage gate approval and delegated authority should be clear and abided by. There will also additional processes in place following implementation of the Procurement Act 2023.

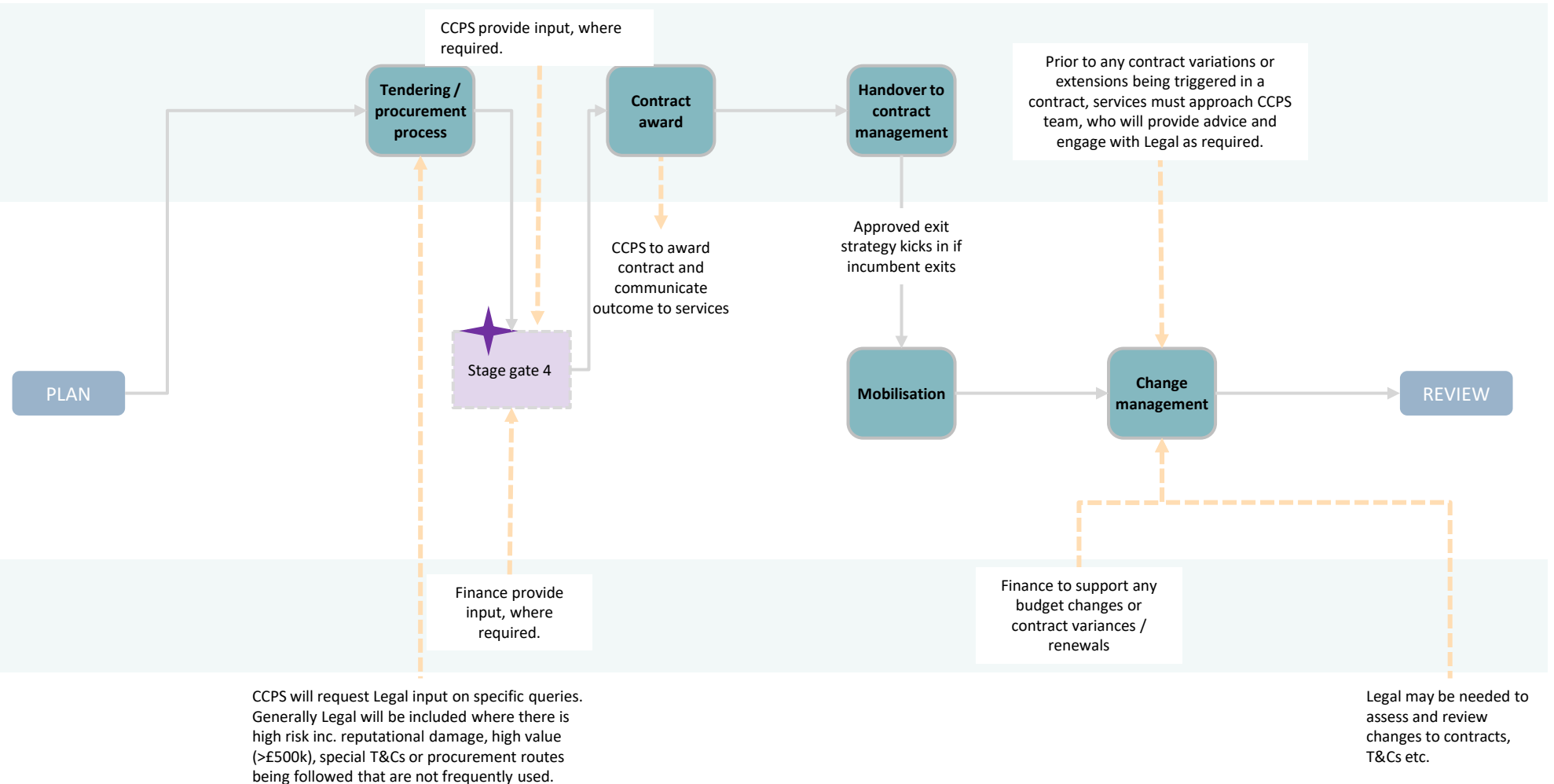


Corporate Commissioning & Procurement Service

Service / department / Commissioners

Finance

Legal



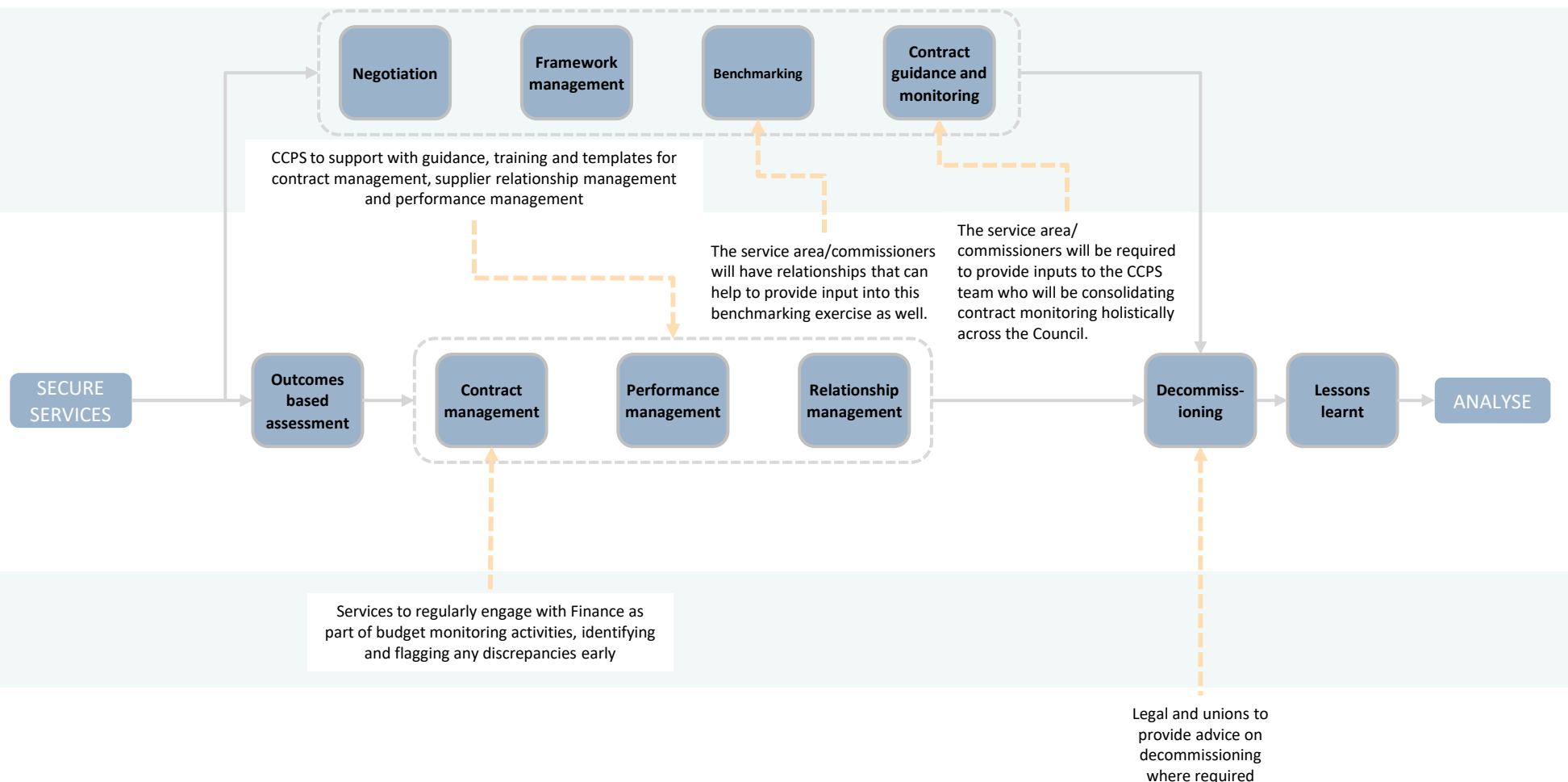
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Corporate Commissioning & Procurement Service

Service / department / Commissioners

Finance

Legal



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