

Integrated Commissioning and Children's Trusts: Opportunities and Threats for the Voluntary Youth Sector

**Report of a workshop organised by the West Midlands
Voluntary Youth Services Forum and financed by the
Government Office of the West Midlands**

June 2006



GOVERNMENT OFFICE
FOR THE WEST MIDLANDS

ChangeUp



West Midlands Voluntary **YOUTH** Sector Forum

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1. Introduction

The workshop, held in Birmingham on May 17, 2006, was one of two events designed to explore how the voluntary and community sector (VCS) can best help meet the needs of children and young people by engaging with the national policy agenda. The first event explored the role that the voluntary sector could play in developing and delivering Local Area Agreements (LAAs). The second workshop focused on the role that the voluntary sector can play in integrating commissioning and children's trusts and the opportunities and threats posed by their engagement with extended schools. To maintain a sharp focus on each of these two topics they have each been made the subject of separate reports. This report summarises the presentations and the outcomes of the group work focused on integrated commissioning and children's trusts.

Both workshops are organised by the West Midlands Voluntary Youth Sector Forum, facilitated by the Office for Public Management (OPM) and funded by the Government Office of the West Midlands 'Change Up' monies. The second workshop was attended by members from the voluntary youth and community sector in the West Midlands (see Appendix 1).

2. The workshop

The workshop focused, in the morning, on integrated commissioning and children's trusts and, in the afternoon, extended schools (see Appendix 2). The main stages of the integrated commissioning and children's trust part of the workshop were:

- Presentations by Clive Miller (OPM) on the policy and practice developments and by Douglas Nicholls, General Secretary of the Community & Youth Workers' Union (CYWU), on the role of youth work within the children services agenda
- An exercise to enable participants to identify how different types of commissioning could be used to tackle key issues of concern to young people.

3. The role of VCS in commissioning and children's trusts

This section summarises the presentations by Clive Miller and Doug Nicholls and the outcomes of the group work.

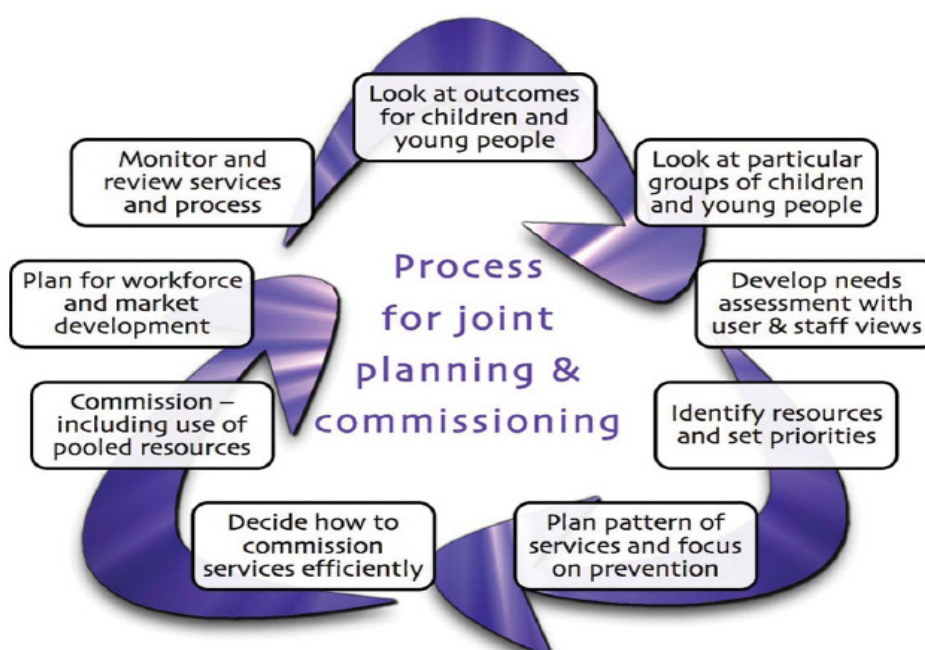
3.1 Children's trust arrangements and strategic commissioning (Clive Miller)

The DfES has now issued guidance on the development of joint planning and commissioning. Joint planning and commissioning, also referred to commonly as either integrated or strategic commissioning, is defined by the new guidance as:

'.. a tool for children's trusts to build services around the needs of children and young people – and to deliver their outcomes most efficiently and effectively'.

Source: 'Joint planning and commissioning framework for children, young people and maternity services', DfES, March 2006 - www.everychildmatters.gov.uk

Figure 1: DfES guidance description of the process of joint planning and commissioning



The DfES guidance, describes joint planning and commissioning as a cycle (Figure 1) that:

- Focuses on outcomes
- Assesses needs and resources

- Identifies priorities and how to change the pattern of services to meet them
- Commissions changes in services and associated changes in the profile and the skills and knowledge required by the workforce
- Monitors and reviews progress and the impact on outcomes

It is important that young people are involved in the planning and commissioning process and that organisations are able to evidence consultation of young people in identifying the priorities. This is one of the requirements that is taken into account in the Annual Performance Assessment of Children's services and the three yearly Joint Area Reviews. The big challenge is to demonstrate not only that young people's views have been sought but also that they are directly reflected in the joint commissioning priorities.

Joint commissioning in practice

Commissioning is often equated with contracting. This is a mistake. Contracting is one of a number of levers that is used to reallocate resources and enable change in the pattern of services. Examples of the levers available include:

- **Influencing** – for example, using partners' sign up to the children and young people's plan as a lever for gaining their involvement in discussions on service reconfiguration around the plan's key priorities
- **Re allocating** – directly reallocating resources between different services within a sector, for example, in the case of the police from traffic to beat policing.
- **Incentivising** – providing incentives to otherwise, often independent parties, to change their services in line with the plan. Examples are the use of the school standards fund to entice schools into changing practice.
- **Contracting** – with external or internal providers to provide a service to a pre set specification
- **Purchasing** – purchasing already existing services from an external provider

Joint commissioning can sometimes require the pooling of budgets across sectors. This may take the form of a common financial budget or the partner sectors each contributing different resources, also known as an 'aligned budget'. However most of the resources used in joint commissioning will not be pooled. Instead partners will realign the resources in their own sectors so that together they produce the new pattern of services that are required. Hence joint commissioning to deliver any one children and young people's plan priority may comprise a mixture of three forms of commissioning:

- **Single partner changes** – where changes in one sector will not undermine, or do not require, complementary change in another sector's services, single partners are free to make these changes to their own services to bring them in line with the jointly agreed priorities
- **Mutual reconfiguration** – is used where complementary changes are required in the services of two or more sectors to deliver on a common priority.
- **Common infrastructure and use of pooled budgets to align funding** – will be required where common infrastructure such as shared ICT, new cross sector, multi-disciplinary teams or joint development posts are created

An example of the use of the three forms of commissioning to tackle the joint priority of reducing obesity in children is:

- **Single partner action** – schools changing their lunchtime menus.
- **Mutual service reconfiguration** – mutual changes to the roles of:
 - school nurses, primary care and teachers with a pastoral or special educational needs role to enable the identification and support of particular children who are overweight.
- **Shared infrastructure, joint teams and roles** – investment in common assessment and information sharing to enable:
 - the early identification of children who are overweight
 - support integrated action between those staff working with these children and their families.

Children's trusts

The governance of the joint planning and commissioning process lies with local children's trusts. The language that DfES uses to describe children's trusts swings between describing children's trusts as partnership structures and as 'children's trust arrangements' that refers to the alignment of practice, management and governance with the five outcomes in a local area (see Figure 2).

Figure 2: Working as a children's trust



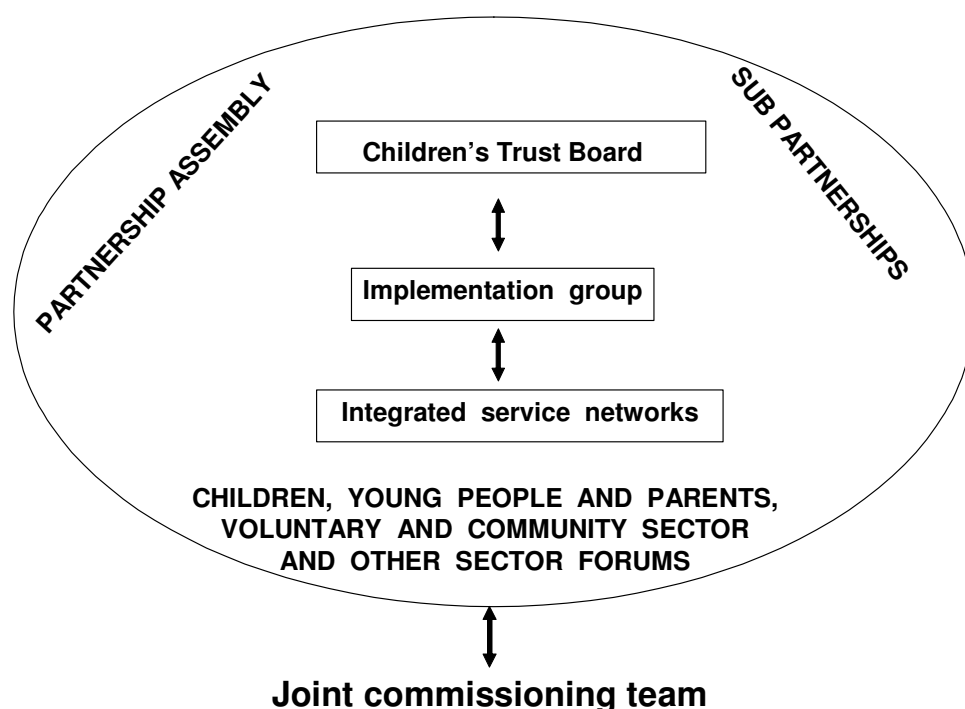
Source: DfES

The DfES joint planning and commissioning guidance sees children's trusts as structural entities that should be capable of enabling commissioning at four levels:

- **Regional** – for example, where a small number of children or young people living in neighbouring authorities require specialist services that could be best jointly commissioned between these authorities.
- **Local** – commissioning new or reconfigured services for the local authority area as a whole
- **Community** – devolving commissioning to localities within the local authority's area. This is happening in some places where cross sector, locality based integrated service networks are being established to co-ordinate services.
- **Individual** – using information sharing, common assessment and the role of the lead professional to deliver integrated services to individual children, young people and their families.

Apart from having to have a powerful executive commissioning board and a joint commissioning team the guidance allows the structural form that children's trusts take to be locally determined. In most cases this is taking the form of a restructuring of the existing partnership arrangements to ensure that they are able to focus on the new, broader, children's services agenda. Whilst there is no uniformity in the structures being developed it is possible to identify a set of choices that are commonly being considered (see Figure 3).

Figure 3: Elements of a children's trust Structure



Typical structural elements are:

- **Children's trust board** – comprising the major commissioning partners. The board has the role of ensuring an effective joint planning and commissioning process is in place that includes children, young people, their families and all of the partner agencies such as health, local authorities, police and the voluntary sector.
- **Sub partnerships** – play a central role in the overall development and performance management of the delivery of the children and young people's plan. The sub partnerships are often tasked to focus on the five outcomes, or the needs of broad groups of children and young people, or a mixture of both. Whilst any one sub partnership will be small, each has the remit to ensure widespread involvement in the planning and performance management process.
- **Implementation group** – a senior management group drawn from the commissioning partners whose role it is to progress the implementation of the children and young people's plan on behalf of the children's trust
- **Integrated service networks** – locality based, often preventative focused, service networks that both work with the implementation group on the implementation of the overall priorities and have the devolved power to reshape services locally and to ensure integrated services are delivered to individual children and young people.

- **Joint commissioning group** – a cross sector group of commissioning staff that enables the partner sectors to collaborate at a regional, area, community and individual level.
- **Children, young people and parents, voluntary and other sector forums** – support is required for some of the partners to enable them to engage effectively in joint planning and commissioning. Children's trusts recognise this by funding forums that enable these groups to both focus on business that is of concern to one another and be able to participate in the overall joint planning and commissioning processes.
- **Partnership assembly** – not usually a structure but more of a 'whole system' event that can take place once or twice year to both celebrate success, showcase new developments and identify new issues and developments that require further attention.

3.2 Why youth work is critical to the Every Child Matters agenda (Doug Nicholls)

Youth work is rooted in the voluntary sector. During the late 1950's, youth work developed a distinctive process of intervention. This was consolidated into a profession and was considered by some commentators to contribute to the development of young people on a par with formal education in schools and social work.

What is Youth work?

Youth work provides a unique contribution to social education that is underpinned by values and intervention processes that are not offered by other agencies. Youth work provides insights into the welfare of, and affords protection against the difficulties faced by, a broader group of young people than those serviced by the protectionist services such as social work and the police. Youth work also does so in a way that respects the values and views of young people.

Youth work is an informal dialogue created between the youth worker and the young person that enables social education. It tends not to focus on the plans, strategies and the tangible outcomes that are demanded of government led services. This has its drawbacks. It is sometimes difficult to measure the impact of the personal outcome on individual young people. Such outcomes are "*the triumph of good youth work.*"

Challenges of Youth Work

The evolving political terrain requires the role and remit of youth work to adapt. Doug considered some of the challenges to youth work that have been identified in recent years.

Youth services should respond to the current and emerging policy agenda by considering the structural implications that would result in the retention of youth services.

"We need a strong value base, to develop a structure and the funding to retain services. It is an acute situation at the moment".

There has been a depletion in the number of youth workers since 1961, when there was one youth worker for every 300 young people. The current target aims to ensure that there

is one nationally qualified youth and community worker for every 400 young people aged 13 – 19 years. Currently there are no plans to ensure this target is met. However, we now have the highest numbers of people currently in training to qualify as youth and community workers.

Other challenges to the provision of youth services include:

- There is a need for training courses that are endorsed by a recognised body. This recognition would ensure that the contribution of youth work is acknowledged as being as important as that of teachers in formal education. This would have the effect of increasing the national bargaining power of those involved in youth work.
- The commitment to the profession through the creation of an infrastructure for youth work that is recognised by agencies involved in the provision of services for children and young people.
- Youth services should be provided by both the statutory and the voluntary and community sectors. The youth service is primarily a partnership between the local authority and the VCS.

International comparisons suggest that, outside of England, there is a greater engagement by statutory bodies in supporting youth services.

- **England:** 'Youth Matters' Green paper – insufficient emphasis is placed on the role of youth services and youth work.
- **Ireland:** recognises the value base of youth work and there is a statutory duty to fund the VCS.
- **Northern Ireland:** is seeking to put in place a central government department to support the voluntary sector.
- **Wales:** the Welsh Assembly provides infrastructure for youth services.

Next steps

It is essential that youth services continue to be central to the provision of services to children and young people within the current national policy agenda.

Professionalisation of youth services

The policy drive towards the provision of more integrated services will require greater use of partnerships between teachers, social workers and youth workers. Being involved in this partnership will ensure that youth service provision is central to delivery of children services. Professionalisation, including a commitment to mandatory training, would allow youth workers to negotiate and enter into dialogue with partners with an equal or similar status. A strongly defined professional status requires:

- A council with code of ethics and regulation.
- Increasing unionisation of youth workers
- Greater number of youth workers in training and development.

Youth workers should *"Professionalise now or sink."*

Training

There is no national labour market plan currently in place to remedy the shortage of youth workers. A workshop participant who identified a number of counties that did not provide basic youth work training confirmed this lack of planning. The numbers of youth workers in training is largely driven by demand. Whilst some higher education institutions were developing new vocational qualifications there was generally considered to be a paucity of training on offer. Much of the training being provided focuses on working with children and young people in general rather than the skills and approaches required for youth work. Lifelong learning along with higher education institutions needs to have a plan for youth work training.

There is a need to creatively establish more apprenticeship schemes to enable a greater number of people to have JNC training in their area. However increasing professionalisation will eventually result in setting a minimum standard of a full time degree in youth work for those employed within the sector.

The changing political environment

CYWU have responded to the 14-19 Education and Skills White Paper and considered the impact of workforce development reform on the children's services agenda. In particular considerable concern has been expressed about the lack of a focus on youth services within the white paper.

Accessing the funding streams

The national funding streams have shifted and diverted their focus to developments such as the children's centres. It is a more competitive environment when applying for funding from children's trusts. There is a:

"a reduction in capacity within the context of an increased level of increased expectancy on the VCS who have come to rely upon the funding."

Participant

Voluntary and community sector organisations should identify funding streams early on and ensure that they have the capacity to put forward an application.

4. Outcomes from the group work

The DfES guidance on joint planning and commissioning illustrates the type of processes that should be developed locally. The group work was designed to give participants an experience of what outcome focused joint commissioning is likely to involve thus enabling them to contribute more effectively to the development of both local and regional approaches. Three groups were formed and each asked to focus on a priority that young people had contributed to a children and young people's plan. The three priorities were:

1. **Community safety:** young people are, or feel, less safe on the streets and are joining gangs. This is counter productive as whilst membership increases their feeling of safety it both decreases the safety of themselves and others.
2. **Health:** some young people don't take health needs seriously; others have had bad experiences of using health services and don't feel that they are taken seriously by health professionals.
3. **Employment:** whilst there are employment opportunities available in a rural area they are not local so young people have to commute. Transport is expensive and time consuming and as a result some young people have to move home.

The task set for each group was to:

- Identify desired outcomes for their priority
- Decide which of the following commissioning levers it would be appropriate to use and how: single partner; mutual service reconfiguration; and the development of a common infrastructure

The results of the group work are reported in Appendix 3.

Next steps

Following the group work the plenary session reported the outcomes of the group work and briefly explored the partnership implications.

- **The role of the voluntary and community sector**

The voluntary and community sector should be involved in the new joint planning and commissioning processes in four ways:

- **Enabling the engagement of young people** – the sector is directly involved with a wide range of young people and has the relationships that enable it to broker and support the involvement of young people in the planning and commissioning process. This should go wider than involvement in consultations and include:
 - continuing engagement through mechanisms such as young people being appointed as school governors
 - informal links with young people through grass roots community organisations
 - the use of technologies such as the internet and text messaging
- **Speaking for young people** – as well as enabling the direct engagement of young people the VCS should also have the role of ensuring the expressed views

of young people are actively taken into account in the joint planning and commissioning process.

- **Influencing planning and commissioning** – the VCS has useful information to contribute through its direct contact with young people and its role as a service provider. The VCS should therefore be involved in all stages of the joint planning and commissioning process from needs assessment and priority setting, through identifying the services that are required to deliver the priorities and monitoring the outcomes. The VCS is also able to lobby politicians, publicise issues and use the media in a way that statutory partners cannot.
- **Voluntary and community sector as providers** – the VCS has a major role to play in the commissioning process as providers. However the demand for service integration and the expanded role expected of the sector may put contracts beyond the reach of many of the smaller or more specialist organisations. These organisations may also not have the experience and the infrastructure to engage in this type of contracting. One way forward is the development of consortia.

- **Development of effective joint planning and commissioning processes**

The process of joint planning and commissioning across the five national outcomes, for all children and young people, requires a step change improvement on previous practice. The process will be new to all and requires that everyone is given an opportunity to learn about the process, influence the design and governance and develop the skills and knowledge to be involved. For the VCS this will also raise questions about how it can ensure the voice that is has on partnership boards is representative of the sector as a whole. NCVYS and Community Matters have produced a step by step guide to involving the voluntary sector in children's trusts, for use by local authorities ('Talking Trusts, NCVYS and Community Matters, 2006 **insert web reference**)

- **Resourcing the involvement of the voluntary and community sector**

Involvement in joint planning and commissioning is an essential part of the role of the VCS and hence needs to be properly funded. This should include resources to:

- Enable the sector to support the engagement of young people in the joint planning and commissioning process.
- Recover the full costs of the time the VCS will now be investing in participating in the joint planning and commissioning process
- Investment in the infrastructure of the VCS so that it can it can support the development of smaller organisations and collectively identify and represent the sector in partnership forums

Each of the above will require pooled funding. This therefore raises a series of questions:

- Who initiates it?
- Who's agenda?
- Who holds the purse strings?
- How will the voice of young people be heard?
- What are the outcomes?

- **Regional action**

The ability to commission effective local services is often constrained by central government requirements. Where these constraints exist it is essential that they are identified and raised both directly with the appropriate central government department and through the Government Office for the West Midlands. An example is formula funding that underpins the local authority block grant that needs to be changed to recognise the access problems faced by young people in rural areas.

Appendix 1: Workshop participants

Name	Organisation	Contact
Arkle Bell	Methodist Church	Arklebell.methodist@tiscali.co.uk
Ronni Brown	YWCA England and Wales	Ronni.Brown@ywca.org.uk
Mike Davies	Pathfinders Community Mentoring	Pathfinder@ukonline.co.uk
Mart Bull	Pathfinders Community Mentoring	None given
Lisa Waring	Centre Point	L.Waring@centrepoin.org
William Edwards	Herefordshire CVYS	hfyfc@btconnect.com
Steve Martin	Worcester Diocese	smartin@cofe-worcester.org.uk
Sophie Watson	SOVA	swilson@sova.org.uk
Barry Halls	Staffs CVYS	barry.halls@stffordshire.gov.uk
Christina Kendrick	Spurgeons	ckendrick@spurgeons.org
Judy Ellis	VOYSIS	judy@bitterley.prestol.co.uk
John Parr	BAYC	None given
June Hill	Barnardos	june.hill@barnardos.org.uk
Stephanie Winter	Sutton Coldfield YMCA	steph_winter@btconnect.com
Amanda Price	Fairbridge	amanda.price@fairbridge.org.uk
Pat Agar	YWCA	None given

Appendix 2: Workshop programme

West Midlands Voluntary Youth Services Forum

Extended Schools and Children's Trusts: Opportunities and Threats for the Voluntary Youth Sector

A Change Up Programme Workshop

*Priory Rooms, Bull Street, Birmingham, May 17, 2006
Facilitators' Programme*

- 9.30 **Arrival, registration and coffee**
- 10.00 **Welcome and overview of the workshop**
- 10.10 **Part 1: Children's Trusts**
Children's trust arrangements and strategic commissioning (Clive Miller, OPM)
Presentation and discussion
- 11.00 **Coffee**
- 11.10 **Why youth work is critical to the Every Child Matters agenda (Doug Nicholls, Community and Youth Workers Union)**
Presentation and discussion
- 12.00 **Group work**
- 12.40 **Plenary**
- 12.55 **Lunch**
- 1.45 **Part 2: Extended Schools**
The place of informal education and youth in extended schools (Nick Jeffrey, YMCA – England)
Presentation and discussion
- 2.30 **Group work**
- 3.30 **Plenary**
- 4.00 **Close**

Appendix 3: Outcome focussed commissioning

Below are the outcomes that each of the three groups identified and the examples of the different types of commissioning that would be required to deliver them.

A. Employment

Priority issue

Whilst employment opportunities are available in rural areas they are often not local so young people have to commute. Transport is expensive and time consuming and as a result some young people have to move home.

Outcome

Need to take into account: the wages available in an area; the availability and affordability of transport and accommodation; and the need to create career structures and developmental pathways.

Commissioning

- **Single partner action**
 - Connexions – drugs counselling/ drop in counselling (addressing barriers)
- **Mutual service reconfiguration**
 - Housing Project with the Voluntary and Community Sector – Foyer project that also includes childcare and training
 - FE College, Learning and Skills Council and the private sector – enabling the development of modern apprenticeships
- **Development of common infrastructure**
 - Market Towns Initiative – the creation of a pooled budget to enable facilitated meetings

B. Safer Communities

Priority issue

Young people are, or feel, less safe on the streets and are joining gangs. This is counter productive as whilst membership increases their feeling of safety it both decreases the safety of themselves and others.

Outcome

The reduction of gang membership through increasing the safety of young people and enabling them to understand the consequences of gang membership

Commissioning

- **Single partner action**
 - Schools - introduce work on community safety and gangs into curriculum
 - Community Police – drop in centres; develop relationships with young people in the community
 - Detached youth workers - talk to young people about gangs, drugs and issues related to crime
 - Families – raising the awareness of young people
- **Mutual service reconfiguration**
 - Connexions Partnerships and youth services working collaboratively (e.g. PAYP)
 - Schools linking in with youth workers (e.g. through after-school clubs with youth worker input)
- **Development of common infrastructure**
 - Youth Forums – being consulted on the YOT's work plan

C. Health

Priority issue

Some young people don't take health needs seriously; others have had bad experiences of using health services and don't feel that they are taken seriously by health professionals.

Outcomes

The first step in delivering on the health priority should be to engage young people in identifying their health needs.

Commissioning

- **Single partner**
 - Ensuring that the appropriate agencies are providing information, for example the PCT on teenage pregnancy rates.
 - Ensure that the appropriate agencies are putting resources into ensuring that the relevant information is available.
- **Mutual service reconfiguration**
 - Reconfiguring the services to adapt to the identified needs.

- **Development of common infrastructure**
 - Undertaking a needs audit of housing estates and residential areas
 - Ensure that the joint commissioning objectives are informed by the audit, clearly identify priorities and are focussed on delivering tangible outcomes that.

The agencies involved should include:

- GP
- Schools
- Lunch time supervisors
- Peer educators
- Health promotion worker