



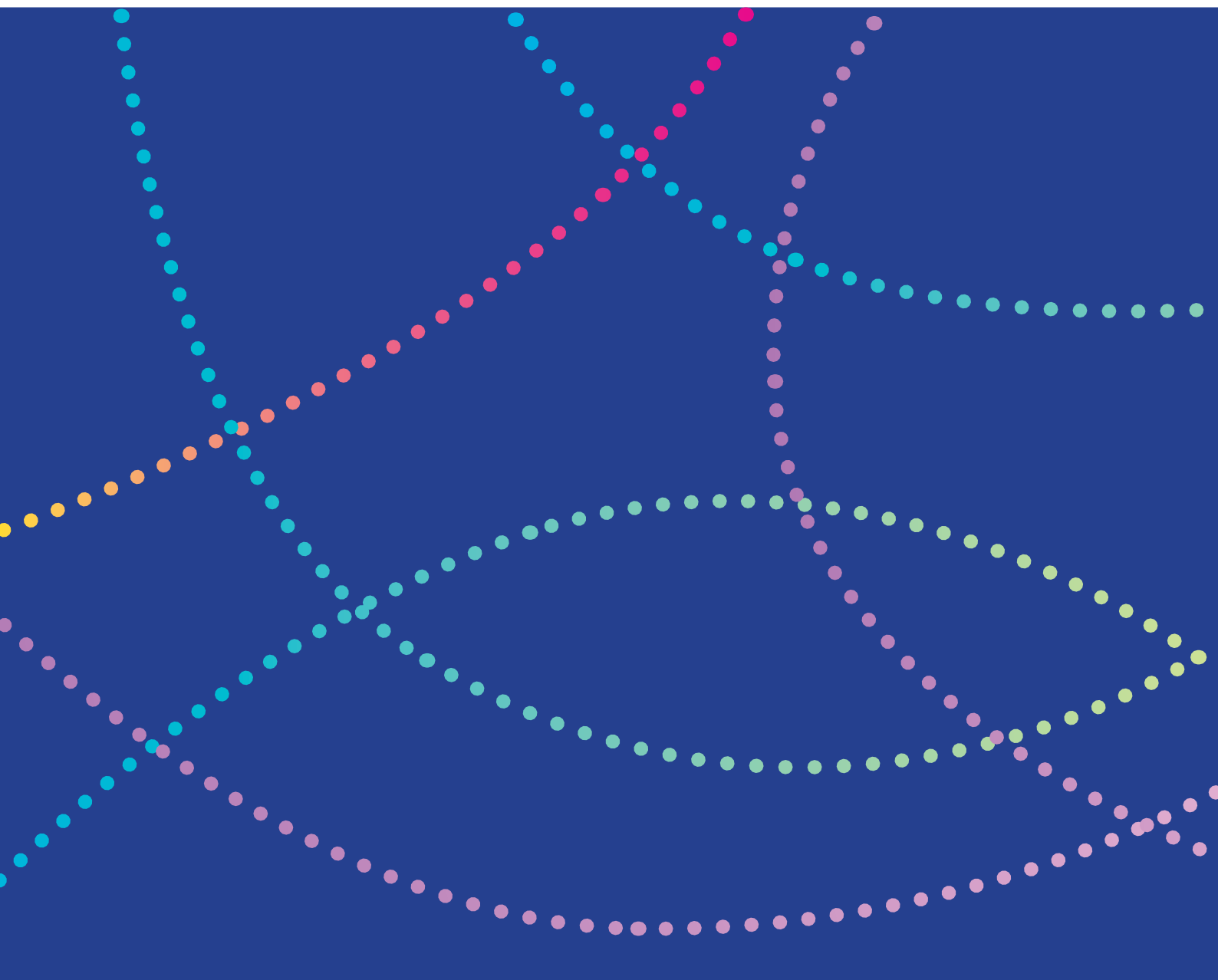
Department
of Health

Commissioning Academy

directors of
adass
adult social services



Department for
Communities and
Local Government



Commissioning case study

Commissioning for better outcomes: developing
national standards

co-production # adult social care # commissioning standards # Care Act # peer challenge

The headlines

- Commissioning has direct implications for the quality of care delivered. Improving commissioning practices in adult social care has been a priority for the Minister for Care and Support.
- The Department of Health and the Association of Directors of Adult Social Services have worked with a range of partners to produce a framework of standards that will support a dynamic local process of continuous improvement and challenge commissioners and their partners to achieve improved outcomes for adults using social care, their carers and communities.
- The standards have been created through genuine co-production, not just stakeholder involvement or consultation, and involved a series of development events held across England.
- Co-production as a genuine shared endeavour requires an appropriate investment of time and resources and for the commissioning organisation to feel comfortable moving from a position of instructing to a role of influencing and supporting.
- The Department of Health was a wave 4 participant in the Commissioning Academy.

What is the context?

The Care Act (2014), Better Care Fund, transfer of public health to local government and the comprehensive reorganisation of the health system has renewed the focus on the importance of effective commissioning as a way of improving the experience of social care users and their families. Effective commissioning plays a central role in driving up quality, facilitating integrated service delivery, and making the most effective use of the available resources.

The Minister of State for Care and Support recognised a need to improve poor commissioning practice that was arguably contributing to unacceptable outcomes including:

- inappropriate short home care visits;
- poor terms and conditions for care workers;
- a lack of focus on continuous improvement; and
- services that lacked a focus on the needs of social care users

In response, the Department of Health committed to delivering a programme of work that would provide local councils and their partners with a basis for improving commissioning practice and achieve better outcomes for people requiring social care, as outlined by the Adult Social Care Outcomes Framework and Making it Real. The President of the Association of Directors of Adult Social Services in England at the time, Sandie Keene, shared the Department's concern to make this a reality and a joint decision was made to produce a framework of standards that would support the implementation of the Care Act.

From April 2015 councils in England have new duties to shape their local markets so as to ensure that people who need care and support have a meaningful choice of appropriate services that will meet their needs and deliver the outcomes they want to achieve. Reviewing the way services are commissioned is a prime way for local councils to effectively shape their markets and directly affects services for those whose needs are met by the council.

The standards will provide a focus for sector-led improvement developed by the Local Government Association and supported by the Department through the Towards Excellence in Adult Social Care programme. They will support a dynamic local process of commissioning improvement, and through self-assessment and peer review, challenge commissioners, with their partners, to innovate and develop new ways of combining resources to support people with care and support needs. The intended result of using the standards will be a local development plan, against which progress can be evaluated, development needs identified, and actions planned.

What commissioning and delivery model has been adopted?

The Department of Health began the process of developing the work in August 2013. The Association of Directors of Adult Social Services and the Local Government Association were commissioned to take forward the development of the standards through a memorandum of understanding that emphasised development should be through co-production with the sector. At this stage a decision was taken to bring on board an expert academic partner. It was felt that this would not only support the development process, but would also afford academic credibility to the framework of standards and encourage greater take-up and use by commissioners as part of their professional development.

The framework of standards outlines the principles of best practice in commissioning, including the aim that commissioning should be inclusive, with services developed as a shared endeavour between commissioners and people who use services, their families and carers, as well as through engagement with service provider organisations. The focus of this shared endeavour is to ensure that people who have care and support needs have genuine choice and control over appropriate services.

Consistent with this approach the standards themselves were created through genuine co-production, not just stakeholder involvement or consultation, and involved a series of development events held across England. These sessions were led by the appointed academic partner, the Health Services Management Centre at the University of Birmingham, and embraced a wide range of stakeholders, including people who use care and support services, their families and carers ('experts by experience'). An initial literature review was undertaken to understand current thinking and best practice, followed by four development events that were held over June and July 2014 to engage the sector in identifying challenges and good practice in commissioning and to inform the design and further development of the standards. These events covered:

- prevention and social care;
- co-production and personalisation;
- market shaping;
- outcomes-based commissioning; and
- workforce

Who are the key partners?

The project has been led by the Health Services Management Centre in partnership with the Institute of Local Government Studies at the University of Birmingham. Oversight of the project was steered through Think Local Act Personal's National Market Development Forum. A project steering group was established with a wide range of stakeholders, including people with care and support needs themselves.

A task and finish group under the auspices of the forum provided oversight and the engagement of partners in the creation of the commissioning standards and appropriate statutory guidance. Members of the task and finish group were:

- Department of Health;
- Association of Directors of Adult Social Services (through representation by directors of adult social care from a number of authorities);
- Think Local Act Personal National Market Development Forum representatives and National Co-production Advisory Group;
- English Community Care Association (now Care England);
- United Kingdom Homecare Association; and
- University of Birmingham (Health Services Management Centre and Institute of Local Government Studies)

What has been the impact?

The main output from the work is a commissioning resource for councils and a self-assessment tool that encompasses council, commissioning partner, provider and citizen perspectives and covers all adults who are in receipt of adult social care services and support.

The prototype framework of standards was launched to wide acclaim at the National Children and Adult Services conference in October 2014. This prototype is being piloted by three councils – London Borough of Haringey, Nottinghamshire County Council and Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council – through the Local Government Association's existing sector-led improvement programme. The piloting was planned for completion by the end of March 2015, after which the standards would be refined and the peer-challenge programme rolled out from summer 2015.

Copies of the prototype framework have been sent to the director of adult social services in each council, accompanied by a letter from the Minister of State for Care and Support, and David Pearson, the President of ADASS, encouraging councils to trial it for self-assessment.

The framework of standards is expressly designed to facilitate local approaches to good practice in commissioning and a locally-led challenge and improvement process:

- the standards, grouped under four domains, are not overly detailed prescriptions – instead the principles allow individual councils the space to achieve good practice in commissioning in ways that best meet the needs of their local population;

- the tool facilitates both critical self-assessment and peer-challenge processes;
- councils need to draw on a wide range of evidence to demonstrate that they are meeting the standards. The framework makes suggestions about sources but councils are also encouraged to develop their own ongoing methods for collecting robust evidence that their commissioning practices are achieving the outcomes required by their local service users and populations; and
- the standards include an expectation that the principle of co-production should be incorporated into the local authorities' commissioning activities – that people with lived experience are directly involved in framing requirements and needs analyses, and that they are an equal partner throughout the entire commissioning cycle

What have been the key elements of success?

- ensuring that the framework was genuinely co-produced and subsequently 'owned' by sector partners and also built on the existing work on Making it Real outcomes, market shaping and protocols for good market relations, as well as more recent work on defining quality and sector responsibilities;
- working in partnership with the Think Local Act Personal National Market Development Forum ensured that the process had strong and credible links to the sector and facilitated engagement through the development events;
- commissioning an academic partner to support the development process and production of the framework of standards afforded the outputs valuable gravitas; and
- the design of the development events facilitated detailed discussion on key commissioning issues and ensured that the standards reflected the 'lived experience' of practitioners and people who use adult social care services and support services

What has been learnt?

The development process began with a literature review to identify existing material and guidance for commissioners. Academic review usually only deals with papers that have been formally peer reviewed. While the academic partner identified such literature, it became apparent that commissioners gain access to guidance through a broad range of sources including peer-reviewed publications, 'grey' literature and online blogs and forums. For example, they will seek evidence to support investment in preventative services to improve wellbeing and reduce needs. It is therefore important to recognise the broader range of material and varying standards of evidence that commissioners may draw on to inform and guide their commissioning process and options for service delivery.

Partners can have different interpretations of what constitutes co-production and it is important that everyone involved respects each other as equal partners, with a genuine recognition that it is a shared endeavour. Co-production as a genuine shared endeavour requires an appropriate investment of time and resources and for the commissioning organisation to lead and facilitate the process, but also to feel comfortable moving from a position of instructing or consulting to a role of influencing and supporting.

Who can I contact?

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Other useful information

The framework is available to download here: <http://www.adass.org.uk/policy-documents-commissioning-for-better-outcomes/>

Adult Social Care Outcomes Framework
<http://ascof.hscic.gov.uk/>

Making it Real <http://www.thinklocalactpersonal.org.uk/Browse/mir/aboutMIR/>