

Our Ref:  
Date: September 2023  
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Dear Partner

We are writing to share our strategic commissioning direction for children, young people and families. It is important for our markets to understand what opportunities are coming up over the next couple of years and to plan their business accordingly.

Our financial position is such that we will have to make difficult decisions, but we wish to work closely with the provider market, to deliver services that meet the best outcomes for children and families.

Please note that this letter is without commitment or prejudice to any tender process or commissioning decisions.

Thank you for your continued commitment and support. We welcome our strong and productive relationships between our commissioners and valued providers – we wish to work closely and honestly in designing services, and, where we can, have the difficult conversations about efficiency improvement, risk sharing and commercial models to get the best outcomes for Suffolk children and young people.

We would also like to expand our strategic partnership work with the Voluntary Community Faith and Social Enterprise sector.

We look forward to working with you to meet the challenges we all face together.

Yours sincerely



**Suzy Joyner**  
Executive Director of Children's Services

## **Our Strategic Direction**

Our vision is that all children and families in Suffolk have the right to: be kept safe, the best education, physical and emotional health, and successful preparation for adulthood and employment.

Too many children do not have these opportunities and we are committed to changing this.

Our CYP service delivery priorities are:

- Help and protection for disadvantaged and vulnerable children.
- Being the best corporate parent.
- Improve the outcomes and experience of children with SEND.
- Education, learning and skills for children and young people to succeed.
- Best start in life and integrated working with children's health services

## **Working with VCfSE Strategic Partners**

Given the current financial position for us all, and the need to think differently across the system for children and young people, we are keen to work with the Voluntary, Community, Faith & Social Enterprise Sector (VCfSE) to form strategic partnerships to be in the best position to bring resources into Suffolk to address gaps in service delivery across the system. We invite VCfSE partners to contact us to discuss opportunities and ways we can work together. Please register your interest at [VCfSEpartnership@suffolk.gov.uk](mailto:VCfSEpartnership@suffolk.gov.uk).

## **Our Commissioning Intentions and Potential Opportunities 2023-25**

Please note that the following are the headline commissioning intentions only, linked to our priorities.

## Help and Protection for Disadvantaged and Vulnerable Children

- We will commission social care community support for children in residential and family type settings.
- We will commission a number of providers to ensure court directed contact support for families is delivered in a timely way.
- We continue to commission safe accommodation, in the form of staffed communal refuge and independent accommodation across the county, for those fleeing domestic abuse along with their children. Whilst within our safe accommodation children have access to services such as play workers and specialist Domestic Abuse child workers in the children and family service offer along with access to specialist support including play therapy and counselling to support any children who have fled domestic abuse.
- We will roll out Family Hubs in Suffolk – our vision is *to provide local help, information, advice for all families, children, and young people in our community.*

We will achieve this by:

- Delivering help and advice to support every child with the best start in life and receive the right support, at the right time to help them thrive.
- Helping all families get access to early, coordinated help to prevent problems escalating.
- Support joined up working between local government, health, education, and community services to reduce duplication and improve outcomes for families.

We will work with community partners to align local early intervention support for families to improve the way they navigate support. (Warm handover, social prescribing etc)

We will explore options to increase the range of parent supporting offers across the county, specifically to support mental well-being and families with children with SEND.

We will work with partners to align developments to develop a Best Start to Life offer as part of the Family Hub development offer.

- We anticipate extending the Appropriate Adult Contract for a further 24 months until 30<sup>th</sup> November 2025. In Suffolk, this service covers both children and vulnerable adults. In England and Wales, an appropriate adult must be called by the police whenever they

detain or interview a child and must be present for a range of police processes, including interviews, intimate searches and identification procedures, as detailed in the [Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984](#) (PACE) Codes of Practice.

## Being the Best Corporate Parent

- Our **Sufficiency Strategy for Children in Care and Care Leavers 2022-26** is a dynamic document, which is under constant review. It sets out how we will meet sufficiency of placements for children in care, develop services to support them, and prevent children coming into care. The full strategy can be viewed at [Corporate Parenting - Suffolk County Council](#)
- We wish to make the best placements for children in Suffolk. If you wish to develop services in the Suffolk area for young people in care, with a history of trauma and complex needs, we would like to hear from you. Please contact [commissioningcicmarket@suffolk.gov.uk](mailto:commissioningcicmarket@suffolk.gov.uk)
- We wish to further increase the number of children in care that live in a family setting. We will develop a Fostering Strategy for Suffolk.
- Our independent fostering agency rolling select list will review opportunities for new entrants annually. The contract is due to end March 2024 and work to re-commission will begin Autumn 2023.
- We will be assessing the impact of the new supported accommodation regulations, and, if required, we will be seeking to commission children's homes for adolescents.
- We will work with housing providers to ensure there is suitable provision for care leavers 18+, including shared accommodation and specialist provision. We are keen to engage with accommodation providers, particularly those interested in providing accommodation for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC). Please contact [commissioningcicmarket@suffolk.gov.uk](mailto:commissioningcicmarket@suffolk.gov.uk) for further information.
- We will commission solo residential children's homes for children with complex and challenging behaviour.
- We will commission dual residential provision for children aged 7-12 years old.

- We will recommission accommodation for dual placement children's homes in the Ipswich area in 2025.
- We would like to speak with any providers that would like to develop children's homes in Suffolk. Please contact us on [commissioningcicmarket@suffolk.gov.uk](mailto:commissioningcicmarket@suffolk.gov.uk)
- We will review our services for disabled children and young people and are seeking to contract for residential accommodation for disabled children and young people in Suffolk. We particularly will be looking at provision for children with complex LD/ASD.
- Staying Close provides an offer for our young people moving on from residential homes to cohabit in semi-independent accommodation, receiving continued support from the home, in a property where they can settle. Staying Close is keen to engage with providers of accommodation. Please contact [stayingclose@suffolk.gov.uk](mailto:stayingclose@suffolk.gov.uk) for further information.
- We will further develop our specialist emotional wellbeing service for children in care and care leavers. We will seek to work with providers that can support purposeful activities for young people like access to horse-riding, animal care, sport, and other activities that support wellbeing. We would particularly like to hear from VCfSE providers at [VCfSEpartnership@suffolk.gov.uk](mailto:VCfSEpartnership@suffolk.gov.uk).

## Improve the outcomes and experience of children with SEND

- The **SEND Sufficiency Plan** is a strategic plan that sets out how Suffolk County Council (SCC) will develop future services for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) to ensure enough provision is available to meet future need. The Sufficiency Plan will cover specialist service development for education for children with SEND aged 0-25 years. The full strategy can be viewed at <https://infolink.suffolk.gov.uk/kb5/suffolk/infolink/advice.page?id=NFHCINP2aEI>. [This strategy will be updated from the Autumn Term 2023.](#)
- The data tells us that in recent years there has been rapid growth in the demand for specialist education placements and despite the ongoing work undertaken as part of the SEND Capital Programme (Phase 1 and 2) Suffolk will still not have enough provision to meet need.
- Suffolk continues to rely heavily on independent, non-maintained special schools (INMSS), these settings are usually far from a child's home and extremely costly.

- The demand projections indicate that by 2025 Suffolk could need at least 550 new specialist education places for school-aged children. The demand for new places is particularly strong for children with autism, severe learning difficulties, moderate learning difficulties, SEMH and speech, language, and communication needs.
- We will continue to develop and deliver the SEND Capital Programme. For Phase 3 we will create 8 new units for Social Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) in KS2,3 and 4 split across Suffolk.
- We will also create 2 new R/KS1 specialist units. There is currently a R/KS1 specialist unit with expertise in Communication and Interaction in Ipswich. It is recommended that this is duplicated in both the West and the North.
- In addition, we have received approval for a DFE Free Special School for children with severe learning difficulties (SLD) offering 117 places. The school will be located between Ipswich and Lowestoft.
- We have recommissioned the Key Stage 1 and 2 Alternative Education contract until August 2026.
- We have implemented a rolling select list for Bespoke Alternative Education providers to be available for supplier registration from July 2023 for placements from September 2023. Further information can be accessed via Suffolk Sourcing. Bids to join the rolling select list are evaluated on a termly basis.
- Alongside the new specialist provision, we will increase the capacity within SEND services by continuing to commission additional non-educational services. We will commission contracts for Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plan writing services and Educational Psychology Education, Health and Care Needs Assessment (EP EHCNAs) for contracts to start from January 2024.
- We will commission a SEND Mediation Service to start from September 2024.
- There has been a review of the whole short break service. New systems are in place to enable us to reach more families requesting personal budgets and we have recommissioned the residential Short Break Service until March 2026.
- Every year in November we host a panel process for the Short Breaks Activities Unlimited Grants which are awarded by March and run for a year.

- We will review the current Young Carers service and recommission the service(s) for April 2025.

## Education, learning and skills for children and young people to succeed

- The Suffolk County Council Skills Team works to achieve skills and employment outcomes that benefit all people, places, and the economy in Suffolk. Our ambition is to support a skills system that meets our future economic needs, raises individuals' achievement and aspiration, grows talent, and helps people get into work and progress.
- To support these objectives the skills team will commission a variety of research and activity that complements the ongoing delivery of the 'Developing Suffolk Talent' programme of work. The specific range of undertakings to be commissioned varies from year to year based on opportunity and need but includes the commissioning of activity to support people into education and employment, support for employment sectors and the skills development to support economic growth and the Adult Learning Service.
- The Suffolk Adult Learning Service is led by Suffolk County Council, which holds an annual £2.7m contract with the Education and Skills Funding Agency to provide Adult and Community Learning within the County. The Council provides the central management of the service including strategic direction, commissioning, Ofsted Nominee, safeguarding, management information, and quality assurance.
- All learning programmes are delivered through a network of local organisations that form a group of subcontracted learning providers. This model enables a very flexible and accessible offer to meet the needs of residents and communities who find it difficult to access other adult learning programmes. The strategic aim is to provide high quality learning opportunities for those adults in Suffolk, over 19 years old, who face the greatest barriers to securing employment or playing a full part in society, so that they can make progress in securing a better future for themselves, their families, and their community.
- Locally based organisations and providers can apply for funding in the following two ways.
  1. Community Learning Funded lots are available every 12 months and are procured via our Adult and Community Learning Dynamic Purchasing System. This makes up around 10% of the overall funding.

2. A 3-year block contract (+1+1-year extensions) to deliver adult skills and community learning funded courses was procured through Suffolk Sourcing. This makes up the remaining 90% of funding. Due to the unforeseen nature, unknown requirements and complexities of adult education budget (AEB) Devolution, the Block contract has been extended by 1 additional year. This allows commissioning for the Adult Learning Service to run in conjunction with all other AEB provision under Devolution and limit the risk to the Service with the next funding opportunity to be promoted and procured during 2024-2025 with delivery contracted to commence in academic year 2025-2026.

### Best start in life and integrated working with children's Health Services

- Children's services draw on a complex support system across health, social care, community, and education. We will achieve the best outcomes for children within a framework of services that work together to put children and their families first.
- The Children and Young People's Committee, which includes both Health and Suffolk County Council representatives, will be focusing on the re-design and implementation of new models of care and support in relation to the following priorities:
  1. **Speech, Language and Communication** – delivery of the new integrated model of Speech, Language and Communication support
  2. **Childrens Emotional Health and Wellbeing** – implementing the priorities in the Suffolk Childrens Emotional Wellbeing Plan, and review and redesign of Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services as part of the implementation of the two mental health strategies developed for Suffolk.
    - We wish to provide support for children, young people (CYP) in crisis within a hospital or community setting who may require Tier 4 admission or social care placement.
    - The CYP Peripatetic Procurement is now open via the ICB framework.
    - If you may be interest in bidding for this then you can log in to Intend and look for – [CYP Crisis Peripatetic Proposals](#) on the current tenders page



3. **Neurodevelopment support for ASD and ADHD** – completing the redesign of services which meet neurodevelopment needs, specifically around Autism and ADHD and any subsequent commissioning needed to implement the new model.
4. **Children and Young Peoples Community Health Services.** Delivery and implementation of revised services with a focus on therapies within the Integrated Community Paediatric Services.
5. **Core 20 plus 5 Pathways.** Understanding the changes required as part of the Core 20 plus 5 around Asthma, Epilepsy and diabetes.

**The Early Years and Childcare Service** work with existing and new childcare providers to help them in offering quality and flexible childcare for parents and carers. For more information, please contact [childcare.planning@suffolk.gov.uk](mailto:childcare.planning@suffolk.gov.uk)

**Workforce Development** supports CYP service delivery priorities by providing training and professional development (T&PD) activities for CYP staff. The T&PD offer is a combination of in-house and commissioned learning activities, qualifications and apprenticeships. Key areas include Safeguarding, SEND, Behavior Safety, Residential Children's Homes qualifications and apprenticeships. New tenders are issued via Suffolk Sourcing

## Procurement Opportunities 2023 – 2025: Services for Children & Young People

Please register on [Suffolk Sourcing](#) for details of existing contracts and to receive notification of new tenders.

For further information on the below tenders please contact:

- Katrina Browning, Senior Commercial Business Partner  
[katrina.browning@suffolk.gov.uk](mailto:katrina.browning@suffolk.gov.uk) or the Lead Commissioner

| Service   | Current End Date of Contract / Grant   | Lead Commissioner  |
|---|--|--|
| Foster Carer Rolling Select List – Suffolk  | Opportunity for new entrants on an annual basis<br>Contract to be recommissioned for April 2024.       | <a href="#">Debbie Green</a>                                 |
| Adult Learning Service<br>Dynamic Purchasing System (DPS)                           | Open for new entrants  | <a href="#">Andrew Mawby</a>                                 |
| Home to School Transport for pupils in Suffolk DPS                                  | Opportunity for new entrants<br>Please see Suffolk Sourcing  | <a href="#">Kirsty Marjoram</a>                              |
| DCYP Residential Services for Children and young people with MLD/autism             | Services spot purchased are currently being reviewed.  | <a href="#">Chris Jacobs</a>                                 |
| Tier 3 Supported Housing for people aged 18+  | Framework contract to 2022, access to new applicants reviewed annually                                 | <a href="#">Julia Vernon</a> or <a href="#">David Riches</a> |
| Workforce Development Training  | Various – advertised on Suffolk Sourcing   | <a href="#">Loretta Greenacre</a>                            |
| Supported Accommodation for 16/17-year-olds, including UASC                         | Please contact for further information.  | <a href="#">Stacy Herbert</a>                                |
| Commissioning of solo residential children's homes                                  | Please contact for further information.  | <a href="#">Rachel Rowe</a>                                  |
| Commissioning of dual placement residential for 7–12-year-olds                      | Please contact for further information   | <a href="#">Rachel Rowe</a>                                  |
| Social care community support for children in residential and family type settings  | Provision is currently under review with intent to commission a community support select list in 2024. | <a href="#">Rachel Rowe</a>                                  |
| Recommissioning of a dual placement Childrens home for children with complex needs. | New contract will be recommissioned to start July 2026.  | <a href="#">Debbie Green</a>                                 |
| EHC Plan Writing Service  | New contract in place for January 2024   | <a href="#">Francesca Alexander</a>                          |

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|--|---|----------------------------------|
| Educational Psychology ECHNA Service                   | New contracts in place for January 2024   | <a href="#">Claire Darwin</a>    |
| SEND Mediation   | New contract will be recommissioned for August 2024.  | <a href="#">Gemma Morgan</a>     |
| Key Stage 1 and 2 Independent Alternative Education    | Currently due to end August 2026.   | <a href="#">Penny Shenfield</a>  |
| Phase 3 of the SEND Capital Programme                  | Applications for new units available from May 2023 and opening September 2025.  | <a href="#">Gemma Morgan</a>     |
| Special Educational Needs (SEN) Independent Placements | Currently Spot purchased. It is our intention to put in place a Dynamic Purchasing System (DPS) in 2024/25.   | <a href="#">Gemma Morgan</a>     |
| Bespoke Alternative Education                          | A Rolling Approved Supplier List has been developed – please see Suffolk Sourcing for further information. Open access bids are reviewed on a termly basis. | <a href="#">Penny Shenfield</a>  |
| Young Carers   | Current service is being reviewed, to be recommissioned for April 2025.   | <a href="#">Paula Benneworth</a> |
| Residential Short Break Service                        | Currently due to end March 2026.  | <a href="#">Paula Benneworth</a> |
| Short Breaks Activities Unlimited                      | Annual Grant Process – advertised Sept/Oct each year on Info Link.  | <a href="#">Paula Benneworth</a> |
| CYP Crisis Peripatetic Service                         | Please contact for further information  | <a href="#">Peter Broughton</a>  |