

# Islington Commissioning Framework



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## Introduction

**Islington Council is on a mission over the next decade to create a more equal borough**, where everyone has a chance to thrive. We are determined to address inequalities in Islington head on and to reimagine our shared future together. **High quality, effective, and collaborative commissioning will play a key role in this.**

**As a Council we commission services across a range of areas**, including:

- Adult Social Care;
- Children's Services;
- Homes and Neighbourhoods;
- Public Health; and
- Community services – such as the Leisure offer

Our commissioning framework and the principles within it apply to both services procured externally and services delivered by the council.

**This Commissioning Framework sets out key principles and the approach to commissioning at a strategic level in Islington.** It will be used going forward to support development of consistent, high quality commissioning practice and associated improvements in outcomes for our residents and communities.

**This document does not seek to dictate every step taken in commissioning**, given the wide scope of commissioning across the council. **Rather, it is a compass to guide our work and decision-making, intended to empower commissioners** – recognising the professional expertise and vital system leadership commissioners provide in **driving change.**

**We will only be able to fully meet our ambitions by collaborative commissioning in partnership** – with external local and regional providers and partners, with our residents and with colleagues from across the Council, and from health colleagues and other wider

partners supporting public services. **This framework sets out a shared set of principles and practical guidance for actions, responsibilities, and expectations and expectations for commissioning.**

**This framework does not sit in isolation** and should be read and enacted in conjunction with the Council's wider strategies, including but not exclusively:

- The Islington Strategic Plan 2021;
- The Islington Progressive Procurement Strategy 2020-2027;
- Vision 2030: Building a Net Zero Carbon Islington by 2030; and
- The Islington Challenging Inequalities Strategy.

**Taken together, these strategies and frameworks will provide a toolkit for change and will support us to realise our aspirations that Islington is the greatest place for children and young people to grow up; a place where people are proud to live, with a decent home, fulfilling jobs, and healthy lives; and a place where older people live healthier, happier, longer, and more independent lives.**

## Framework

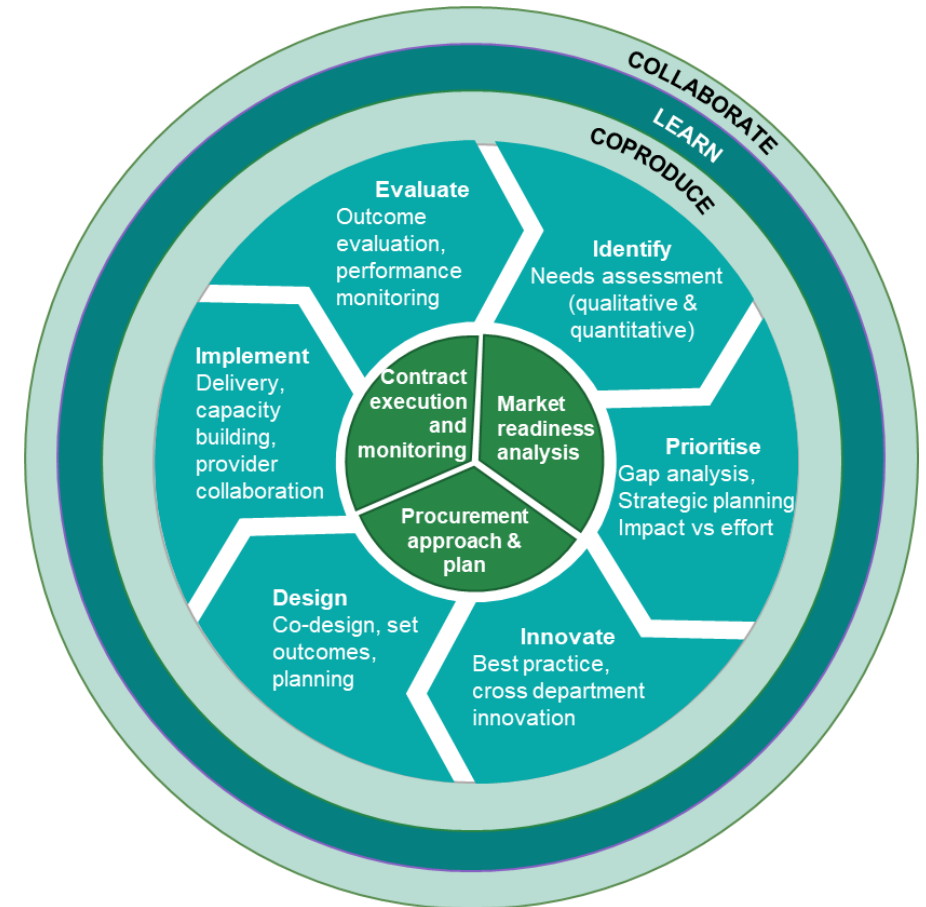
**This framework has been developed by officers in Islington, to reflect local needs, priorities, and aspirations.**

The framework captures two fundamental elements of strategic commissioning:

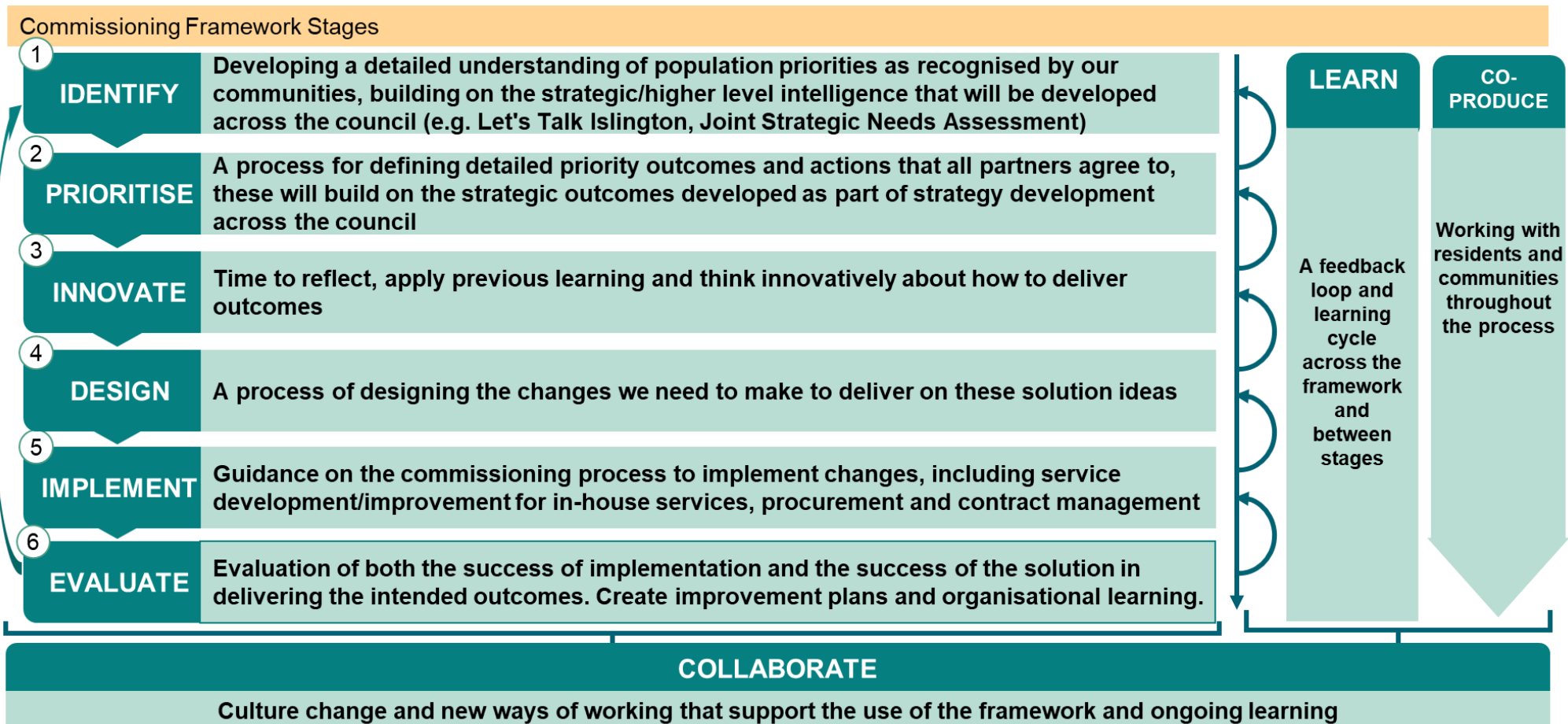
1. The key stages of commissioning that teams should consider to achieve the best outcomes for residents and communities
2. The key principles that staff involved in commissioning should follow, guiding how we work together to achieve best results

The framework is not introducing brand new concepts for the council. It has been developed with the understanding that across both the principles and the stages of commissioning Islington has a strong history of working in this way and delivering outcomes for residents. Instead, it recognises that the council is operating under a rapidly changing environment, with considerable challenges to both the council and the people and communities it supports. This Framework will be a key tool in consistently delivering outcomes, by supporting staff to learn from collective experience and to share innovative solutions to tackle current and future challenges.

**The following diagram and the subsequent sections outlines ‘what good looks like’ across these key elements.**



When considering each element we will need to be **pragmatic** and **proportionate** in how we work. We must ensure that we align effort and impact, to focus the limited resources we have. We also know that we will face challenges and the approach we take must adapt to meet these.



# Principles in focus

## Collaborate

**Being collaborative is a core Islington Council value** which should underpin the work of all officers in the borough. It is the first of the four values of the Council: Collaborative, Ambitious, Resourceful and Empowering (CARE). It also is at the core of what effective, high-quality relational commissioning is about. People don't live siloed lives that correlate neatly to individual services; rather our residents live in diverse communities with multiple needs and desires. Without the cooperation of them and other professionals and agencies, we will not be able to provide the kind of support to reach their ambitions.

**Relational and collaborative commissioning is a powerful driver for change, and working together is a crucial enabler to securing the best outcomes for all our residents** – drawing on all partners' strengths, insights, and resources through collaborative working, with strategic commissioning acting as a driver.

**Collaborative commissioning in practice means commissioners working closely, positively, and meaningfully throughout the commissioning cycle with:**

- Residents, their loved ones, and carers;
- Community groups and leaders;
- Providers;
- Other commissioners;
- Health colleagues;
- Colleagues from other Council departments, including Procurement, Finance, and Legal;
- Colleagues from neighbouring Councils; and
- Elected members



Collaboration across Islington is key to ensure that everyone's strengths and resources can be used effectively



It means approaching challenges with an open mind, proactively seeking feedback and fresh perspectives, and working through tough decisions together to chart courses of action which will most benefit residents and make the best use of our collective resources.

There are strong foundations for this in Islington. We have an excellent track record of effective partnership working and strong relationships with a range of partners. However, we are ambitious to build on this, with Commissioning as an engine working to break down siloes, effectively meet needs, support system working, and to realise cross-cutting goals. We will further develop our existing partnerships and seek to develop new relationships too. The development of this framework was underpinned by a collaborative approach, and we will continue working together and with partners to make this framework and its ambitions real.

## Learn

High-quality commissioning at its heart aims to address complex issues – driving improvement, development, and positive change. It is therefore crucial that commissioning is underpinned by continuous learning, reflection, and professional curiosity.

In practice, this means:

- Recognising each stage of the commissioning cycle presents opportunities for learning and feedback – capturing lessons learnt, applying them, and consolidating this into best practice;
- Celebrating successes and sharing best practice across partners;
- Creating an environment where we can share and learn from when things don't go to plan and from when issues arise, and actively sharing these with others in the system;



- Engaging in critical self-reflection and drawing on system thinking to identify and eliminate biases and structural issues which may be affecting delivery of outcomes;
- Embracing complexity, diversity and intersectionality as part of reflective practice;
- Supporting staff's professional development;
- Establishing effective communities of practice supported by an engaging and evolving library of learning and best practice;
- Using qualitative and quantitative information to focus on achievement of outcomes, aid problem solving, and inform actions; and
- Taking a long-term view of progress in key areas.

We will harness and grow our collective knowledge of best practice and understanding of the communities we serve to commission services that are fit for purpose and sector leading. We will continue to challenge ourselves to do and be even better.

This will require effective feedback loops and learning initiatives between each stage of the cycle but also between cycles. We should have flexibility in the progress and decisions made at each stage so we can adapt as we learn more throughout the cycle. We will share the learning from each commissioning cycle widely and systematically so that experiences from across the council drives the collective view of best practice and future innovation. These feedback loops should take place across not just commissioners, but with front-line staff, partners and providers of services.

## Co-produce

Alongside being Collaborative, being Empowering is one of the Council's core CARE values and this underpins our commitment to meaningful Co-Production with residents, carers, and community groups throughout the Commissioning Cycle. Effective Co-Production offers an opportunity to bring residents into the design, planning, management, and improvement of services— ensuring that:

- Our offer is fit for purpose, for all our residents;
- Services meet the needs and aspirations of those we serve, and by extension are providing good value for money;

- We are aware of gaps in support and can act accordingly – making best use of available resources; and
- Residents trust us and trust that services are acting in their best interests.

We have a good track record with many examples of positive Co-Production in commissioning and a range of policies and procedures in place to support this, but we know we must do better to embed Co-Production more consistently into all commissioning by default.

We recognise and value the unique expertise, experience, and views our residents contribute and will work closely with them as part of a mutually beneficial learning and reflective strategic commissioning process. Working with and empowering our communities and residents as equal partners and co-creators of sustainable change is a central tenant of our Strategic Plan and ambitions to address inequalities.

In practice, for commissioners, this will mean:

- Developing and building on Co-Production skills, knowledge, and capability via training
- Building on the existing links we have with residents and communities to strengthen existing Co-Production partnerships;
- Being reflective about gaps in Co-Production networks and taking proactive steps to address these;
- Forming new relationships, particularly with the most marginalised communities in the borough and with groups who support them;
- Engaging with residents and community groups throughout the commissioning cycle and developing processes to support this;
- Co-ordinating Co-Production planning and activities to make the best use of residents' time; and
- Dedicating time and focus to work through implications of what residents have told us.



We will work with our residents and community groups as co-creators of positive and sustainable change

# Commissioning Cycle in focus

## Identify

### Overview

As a Council, and together with our partners, we have a wealth of rich insights into our communities, services, and the aspirations of both our members and the residents they represent. Drawing and continually building on this knowledge base is crucial to effective commissioning and is a key part of the 'Identify' stage of the commissioning cycle, which involves identification of:

- Local needs – based on demographic, socioeconomic, and qualitative insights about our communities – including consideration of hyper-local and culturally-specific needs;
- Local assets – taking a strengths-based view, rooted in communities and neighbourhoods;
- Local priorities – based on the political direction set by our members, and in line with feedback from our residents and partners;
- Policy and statutory requirements – based on national statute, legal guidance, and sector-body guidance;
- Best, emerging, and comparable practice – within the borough and further afield – underpinned by research, engagement, and benchmarking;
- Financial and human resources – including workforce, existing capital and revenue funding, and identification of any investment or external funding opportunities;
- Existing provision – whether commissioned, in-house, or provided entirely independently of the Council. Review if there are any overlaps in the system;



- Gaps in provision – both in current service models and offers, and in potential future innovative models identified in best practice both inside and outside of Islington Council;
- Opportunities for development – accounting for all of the above.

Identifying these things effectively will involve working with residents, staff, and partners, as well as drawing on the Council’s strategic intelligence resources (for example, the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment), and insights from North Central London Integrated Care System and beyond. We will take a holistic approach to using our intelligence, work creatively to address gaps, and work to develop insights and intelligence aligned with, and to inform, our strategic priorities.

#### What this will mean in practice

<b>For residents</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Council will seek opportunities to engage with residents from the start of the commissioning cycle to identify what works well, issues, priorities, and to co-develop solutions.</li> <li>• Residents’ lived experience and aspirations will be reflected in the Council’s needs assessments.</li> </ul>
<b>For commissioners</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Commissioners will take a lead in the ‘Identify’ process:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Working with other stakeholders to map out and gather the relevant information;</li> <li>○ Analysing findings (and getting support with analysis from other stakeholders as needed); and</li> <li>○ Working with relevant senior leaders and governance forums to draw conclusions to determine prioritisation.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Commissioners will work on ‘identification’ at service and portfolio level – ensuring that intelligence gathered reads across into all commissioning activities.</li> </ul>
<b>For providers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Council will seek to work with providers (both existing and prospective) at the earliest point of the commissioning cycle to:</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Learn more about best and emerging practice elsewhere;</li><li>○ Draw on insights from frontline professionals and senior leaders to frame needs assessments;</li><li>○ Identify local assets;</li><li>○ Identify local needs and gaps in provision;</li><li>○ Understand costings linked to services; and</li><li>○ Gauge market interest in developmental opportunities and to shape opportunities.</li></ul>
<b>For procurement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Procurement will support the development of a strategic picture of the current market using a 'category management' approach; this will provide an understanding of current provision based on specific categories of demand/resident needs.</li><li>● Procurement will identify any challenges or barriers that exist or could exist in commissioning external provision across each category.</li></ul>

## Prioritise

### Overview

Once we have identified needs, requirements, resources, and opportunities we will take a strategic approach to prioritisation to ensure our commissioning efforts have the most impact in line with our aims.

Strategic prioritisation will entail:

- Developing and agreeing defined, detailed priority outcomes that we agree with partners and residents, which build on and align to the Council's wider strategies and goals;
- Agreeing specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound (SMART) actions and making decisions about use of resources in accordance with this outcome framework;
- Agreeing aspects of work to de-prioritise where defined scope is greater than the resources available;
- Aligning plans and timescales across the system, so that there are no unforeseen dependency delays; and
- Ensuring that the learning from the prioritisation phase refreshes our understanding developed in the 'Identity' stage and is aligned to and refreshes wider council strategies.

Prioritisation ensures that the resources that the council, and wider system as applicable, has available are used to deliver the biggest positive impact for residents as possible. It ensures that priorities are driven by what matters to communities, including having honest conversations with those communities about best use of resources.





We will work with local partners, elected members, and residents to develop a shared understanding and ownership of priorities, in areas that will make the most positive difference.

What this will mean in practice

<b>For residents</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Council will seek opportunities to co-develop our outcome frameworks and to develop our strategic plans.</li> <li>• Residents will recognise their priorities in the strategic plans and outcome framework.</li> </ul>
<b>For commissioners</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Commissioners will lead the development of strategic plans, outcomes, associated metrics and setting of SMART actions to deliver the strategic plan –             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Working with senior leaders and other stakeholders to ensure plans are actions are aligned with desired outcomes and deliver maximum value.</li> </ul> <p>Working with operational leaders and providers in the development of the plans to ensure they will be impactful.</p> </li> </ul>
<b>For providers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Council will work with providers (both existing and prospective), as core partners, in the development of its outcome framework and associated strategic planning.</li> <li>• Providers will be asked to report on relevant metrics for their services, associated with the outcome framework.</li> </ul>
<b>For procurement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Procurement will develop knowledge on the readiness of the market organised by categories informing effective prioritisation by ensuring feasibility and risk of delivery are considered.</li> <li>• Procurement will help to ensure that current provision across different markets and suppliers are understood, and that interdependencies and risks are managed effectively within each category.</li> </ul>

## Innovate

### Overview

The world we are working in is rapidly changing, as is our residents' experience of it. The Council, our partners, and our communities are facing, and will continue to face, an array of challenges – environmental, economic, workforce, social, and financial. We need to keep pace with and provide leadership in tackling these challenges, innovation will be crucial to this.

Starting with the lessons from Islington's approach to date, innovation means looking upward and outward to neighbours, current and prospective providers, as well as national and international best and emerging practice, to identify different ways of tackling challenges and making the most of opportunities. This might be by:

- Reviewing alternative delivery models other Councils are putting into practice;
- Looking for examples of community-led problem solving in Islington or elsewhere;
- Seeking technological solutions to pressing problems;
- Reimagining the staffing structures and roles that underpin services;
- Considering opportunities to future-proof services, spaces, and contracts;
- Re-examining assumptions service design and delivery is premised on to ensure services are culturally appropriate and inclusive;
- Undertaking procurement in new ways;
- Developing opportunities to commission smaller scale contracts and/or pilots with small providers to test new offers; or
- Seeking inspiration to develop new services that don't currently exist in the borough but do elsewhere.



Investing time in innovation is a key part of the move toward outcome-focused commissioning, and to be successful, will require us to think and act differently. This presents exciting opportunities for commissioners, residents, and partners to think creatively about tackling really complex issues.

## What this will mean in practice

<b>For residents</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Council will seek opportunities to engage residents in Strategic Innovation – for example, working with residents to identify good practice community responses in the borough, come up with ideas for new ways of working and sense check proposed innovations.</li> <li>• Residents will see services which suit their needs better.</li> </ul>
<b>For commissioners</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Commissioners will lead on the Strategic Innovation process which will involve:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Carving out time and space for research on innovative practice;</li> <li>○ Developing relationships with leaders in and outside of Islington to understand current innovative practice;</li> <li>○ Working with residents, operational teams, and providers to sense check and test ideas; and</li> <li>○ Sharing findings with other commissioners across portfolio areas.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>For providers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Council will work with providers (both existing and prospective) to co-develop innovative responses to the challenges of the borough, trial and pilot innovations and learn from where innovative responses have been trialled elsewhere.</li> </ul>
<b>For procurement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Procurement will develop contractual approaches that empower providers to be innovate while still ensuring adherence to procurement policy and regulation. The category management approach will ensure that the value from our contracts is maximised by minimising duplication across contracts, and ensuring performance criteria is tailored to a whole family approach.</li> </ul>

## Design

### Overview

Once the range of potential delivery models have been identified from the Innovation phase, the Design phase is focused on selecting the approach that best meets local needs and putting plans in place for the changes needed to bring concepts to life. This will entail:

- Reviewing delivery options and deciding on the way forward via Options Appraisal;
- Identifying and agreeing service budgets and funding;
- Exploring opportunities for In-House delivery wherever possible;
- Co-developing service specifications and performance frameworks, including Key Performance Indicators;
- Co-developing staffing structures for In-House services; and
- Drafting accompanying contracts and/or Service Level Agreements

Getting these fundamentals right provides a strong foundation for changes, from which services can thrive. The support and input of enablers like Finance and Legal advice is crucial during the Design phase and will enable commissioners to make new approaches real.

The design phase must take us from understanding what could work, to agreeing what will work. There is no one hundred percent guarantee that a solution will deliver exactly what we expect, therefore it is essential that the design phase takes an evidence-based approach. Therefore, clearly linking the chosen solution to the outcomes it is targeting, and stress testing the feasibility of the solution as part of the process is crucial.



## What this will mean in practice

<b>For residents</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Council will co-design with residents and community groups the design of services – for example when developing service specifications.</li> </ul>
<b>For commissioners</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Commissioners will lead the Design phase:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Developing detailed options appraisals;</li> <li>○ Working with relevant In-House teams to scope options for Council delivery;</li> <li>○ Securing governance sign off on the way forward and funding for this;</li> <li>○ Working with residents, community groups, providers, and professionals to co-design services; and</li> <li>○ Working with Finance, Legal, and Procurement to ensure contracts are robust.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>For providers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Council will seek to work with Providers on market testing and service design to ensure services are deliverable and high quality.</li> </ul>
<b>For procurement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Procurement will provide detailed information on the potential approaches, mechanisms, and costs of procuring services as required by emerging design propositions.</li> <li>• Procurement will advise on the risk of procuring services, based on previous procurement exercises and the current market environment.</li> </ul>

## Implement

### Overview

Implementation is about making a vision real, therefore improving the outcomes for our residents. Delivering a high-quality offer that meets local needs, priorities, and ambitions – and ensuring consistently high quality throughout a services' lifetime.

This will entail:

- Procurement and contracting – whether from external provision or through development of service level agreements for in-house provision;
- Change management – to ensure that plans are delivered, and that the plans themselves will realise the identified benefits
- Service development and improvement – supporting good services to become outstanding, and addressing poor performance at the earliest opportunity;
- Operational management of provision – whether by in-house teams or commissioned providers – to deliver on agreed specifications and outcomes;
- Contract management – to ensure all parties are meeting their obligations under contract; and
- System leadership – working with partners to resolve tricky issues and support improvement for services, their staff, and most importantly residents they support.



Continuous improvement, flexibility, and innovation will underpin the implementation phase to support identification of better ways of working. Moreover, where improvements are identified, this will feed into the wider commissioning cycle and commissioning for other areas as lessons learnt and exemplars of good practice.

We recognise that shifting outcomes and realising benefits of new models of working takes time and commitment.

### What this will mean in practice

<b>For residents</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Council will include residents in procurement of new services, provider partners together who can meet residents’ needs and aspirations.</li> <li>• The Council and providers of services will proactively seek opportunities to work with residents who are engaged in services, and their loved ones, to understand what is working well, what areas require improvement, and to seek ideas for improvement and delivery.</li> <li>• Residents will benefit from a high-quality support offer.</li> </ul>
<b>For commissioners</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Commissioners will lead on the implementation phase of the commissioning cycle –             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Providing direction to and leading delivery of procurement;</li> <li>○ Setting the strategic direction to services within their portfolio;</li> <li>○ Setting quality expectations for services in their portfolio and holding services to account;</li> <li>○ Working with operational teams to monitor quality and identify development opportunities</li> <li>○ Providing system leadership to support problem solving and continuous improvement.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>For providers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Council will work with current and prospective providers to stimulate innovative procurement opportunities and to support market sufficiency and sustainability.</li> <li>• Providers will be responsible for delivery of high-quality services and for working proactively with the Council and partners to support continuous improvement and innovation.</li> </ul>
<b>For procurement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Procurement will provide strategic oversight of procurement categories and advise on contract adaptations and/or action in response to performance challenges or issues.</li> </ul>

## Evaluate

### Overview

Evaluation will not be a tick box exercise, it will be an essential part of becoming a learning organisation, directly influencing future approaches. We will not just evaluate and measure process and compliance but also ensure we are measuring outcomes and impacts. We will recognise that occasional or partial failure is an inevitable part of being an innovative council and ensure that each failure becomes a valuable lesson to support the next commissioning activity, as well as improving existing commissioning activities.

The evaluation stage will also ensure that our successes deliver a broad impact through a clear understanding of what created success and to strengthen relationships through celebration of these successes.

Through evaluation we will consider:

- To what extent the service offer has realised the outcomes it set out to achieve in line with the commissioning strategy;
- Feedback and lessons learnt – what has worked well and what could have been improved;
- Changes in the operating landscape – whether linked to changed needs, demographics, pressures, or new priorities; and
- How all of this can be applied in future commissioning to ensure an offer fit for the future.

Evaluation will build on ongoing learning throughout the wider commissioning cycle and taking lessons from our neighbours and equivalents further afield.

Through evaluation we will seek to marry up qualitative insights with the rich dataset at our disposal.





## What this will mean in practice

<b>For residents</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Council will engage residents who have experienced services in their evaluation and will ensure residents' voices and experiences are at the heart of lessons learnt.</li> <li>• The evaluation stage will ensure an effective feedback loop to our residents and communities, ensuring that residents see the council acknowledging challenges and respond to them, while also celebrating successes with communities and residents</li> </ul>
<b>For commissioners</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Commissioners will lead on the evaluation phase of the commissioning cycle –             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Reviewing outcomes of services – including analysing data;</li> <li>○ Seeking and reviewing feedback on services – from residents, professionals, and providers; and</li> <li>○ Considering how changes in the operating landscape may have affected the service.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Commissioners will be responsible for using these insights in future commissioning and sharing feedback with peers and colleagues.</li> </ul>
<b>For providers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Council will involve providers in evaluation of services, as active partners. This will include seeking reflections from frontline and operational staff, as well as more strategic leaders.</li> <li>• The Council may seek provider support in engaging residents in evaluation.</li> </ul>
<b>For procurement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Procurement will ensure that learning influences procurement practice both strategically and in future procurement of services.</li> <li>• Procurement will use insight from the evaluation process to support strategic market management and development, organised by the procurement categories.</li> </ul>

How we will make this  
happen

## Resourcing

To deliver on the objectives of this framework and meeting inspection regimes of Care Quality Commissioning and Ofsted, we need teams across the Council to be working together to deliver all elements of the commissioning cycle and ensure that this works hand in glove with other Council functions. To do this we are committed to two key resourcing fundamentals:


1. Ensuring that we have the right roles in place to deliver on our commissioning framework; and
2. Ensuring that all staff have the skills they need to deliver on these roles and associated responsibilities, and that we create a supportive and learning environment to continue to develop those skills.
3. Ensure that we are collaborating and working across functions to embed Quality Assurance Frameworks and to enable brokerage of care packages to support individual needs and support plans.

While the commissioning framework is relevant to all staff across the Council in some way, the framework will require key roles from the following groups:



**Commissioners:** the framework will be fundamental blueprint for how we take forward commissioning in Islington. The framework is not intended to be a prescriptive Standard Operating Procedure but instead a set of principles and guide to support commissioners to take a consistent approach that is tailored to the work they are delivering. The framework should be applied by all commissioners across the organisation.

- **Procurement:** This framework sets out commissioning and procurement are connected yet distinct features throughout the commissioning cycle. Distinguishing between these functions is important in setting the roles and responsibilities of council officers, and in understanding the unique functions of each. This will ensure that the intelligence and expertise procurement teams have is fed in to how we assess what is important, and to ensure that we innovate and design solutions that can be implemented.
- **Front-line staff:** as described in this framework, key practitioners need to be involved at each stage, to share their knowledge and understanding of the population and their needs, to design future service offers, to implement changes to practice, and to inform brokerage functions, triangulated safeguarding and quality assurance mechanisms, as well as strategic evaluations of services.
- **Brokerage staff:** a key function of implementing demand led contracts is the brokerage function which is emmeshed with needs and outcomes as described in support plans, the call off against Framework and other contracts, and the real-time understanding of provider capacity, competency, changing financial dynamics and quality of providers. Supporting commissioners and others to review contracts, consider unmet needs, budget pressures and put quality improvement mechanisms in place.



Our commissioning framework will help maximise the collective efforts of our teams towards our shared goals

- **Finance and Legal:** the framework draws on expertise from Finance and Legal teams throughout the commissioning cycle. This will require a pro-active approach to drawing in this input, in line with the commissioning framework.

**Key Action:** We will work with teams across the Council to understand the capacity needed from each stage, identify any gaps or challenges, and agree a sustainable approach to ensuring we have the right people involved at each stage.

**Key Action:** We will look at how we build this approach explicitly in to roles across the council and ensure that staff are supported to have the skills and knowledge to be effective through a 'network of learning'.

## Governance


Our commissioning framework does not presume a specific governance model but has been developed to work dynamically and adapt to current and future governance arrangements. However, it is acknowledged that a Commissioning Governance model for the Council is required, to develop and improve commissioning practice across the organisation, to ensure commissioning intentions take account of divergent needs and create opportunities to improve equality, improve integration between services both commissioned and those provided by the Council, and to drive innovation and new models of delivery.

It recognises the importance of working in partnership with the health system and with the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS), both in setting shared visions, objectives, strategies, and plans, as well as supporting joint commissioning opportunities. The new NHS arrangements under the Integrated Care Systems means this continues to be fluid, and the framework has been designed to take this in to account.



While the model is flexible there are a number of key principles and enablers that council and system governance need to deliver:

- **Creating safe spaces** for leaders to be innovative and to constructively challenge each other, and for staff across the organisation to implement innovative and ambitious solutions in a safe but unrestricted way.
- **Effective decision making** is achieved through the governance model, and there is clarity on which decisions will be made where. This must not just focus on top-down decision making but will also support distributed decision making, empowering staff to make the right decisions for residents
- **System accountability** that creates clear and collective visions and strategies; an equitable management of risk and benefit; supports collaboration, not conflict or competition; and ensures quality and performance.



Governance will help to create a safe and agile environment for innovative

**Key Action:** We will work closely with the ongoing developments of council and system governance to ensure that the future governance approach delivers on these principles and enables the delivery of our commissioning framework.

## Implementation

The commissioning framework is not designed as a conceptual model, but a key tool in implementing the Council's strategic priorities and plans. To do this in a collaborative way there is a need to develop and refresh key strategies to deliver service improvements and better outcomes for residents.

**Key action:** we will convene a range of strategic priority workshops, which will be an opportunity for different teams across the council, together with other stakeholders, to share their priorities and co-develop with our residents strategic plans.

The development of strategies ensures that teams have an ongoing understanding of the Council's and wider systems work, and creates an opportunity to share ideas and learn from each other. This process should not just include commissioners but also colleagues from Operational Teams, Procurement, Contract Management, Brokerage, Quality, Legal, VCS and residents to build a holistic picture of the Councils work and future direction.

This process must challenge expectations, ensuring that the collective priorities are deliverable, clarify roles and responsibilities, establish meaningful and deliverable targets and create a clear ask of resources (including from wider non-commissioning teams.) This will ensure that our strategies and priorities will deliver the most impact for our residents with the resources we have.



Implementation of the framework will focus on people and culture not policy



Communication will be key in successfully implementing the framework. We will create greater communication between different teams as part of operating to this shared framework. We will also encourage and create the environment for greater capturing and sharing of localised knowledge and do so in a way that is easy to understand.

**Key Action:** We will create an action-focussed communication plan that will support a long-term approach to creating stronger cross-cutting relationships and support the council to become a learning organisation in relation to commissioning.

## Team and staff development

Working to this framework will require us to embrace a 'growth mindset' and we will support staff in this journey of continuous improvement and development.

We will not allow 'traditional' definitions of council roles to prevent staff from developing skills and expertise that will benefit the work they do. But we will also recognise the need to develop specific skills and expertise, to describe roles and responsibilities and ensure that the right competencies and capacity is in place to deliver. We will work with staff to understand what these skills are and agree an approach and plan to develop these so that critical capabilities are developed in a way that is equitable and proportionate.

The approach to developing critical expertise and experience will look wider than the Strategic Commissioning and Investment Team and consider all staff delivering a commissioning function. There is likely to be a need to review staff requirements and role functions to ensure that competence and expertise can be developed in roles, and reduce the dispersal of commissioning function across staff, which can jeopardise consistency and prioritisation of all elements of the commissioning cycle. Developing a robust commissioning function throughout all Children's Services will be a key priority.



How we work together is as important as the capabilities and capacity we have in our teams. The implementation of this framework is an opportunity to strengthen collaborative working. The framework is not a tool restricted to the Strategic Commissioning and Investment Team but is a tool and set of principles for all teams and departments involved in commissioning and associated behaviours. The actions we take to develop collaboration will involve all parts of the council.

Key aligned and emmeshed functions of Quality Assurance, contract management and monitoring, as well as brokerage needs to work hand in glove with commissioning to ensure there is excellent triangulation of data with regard to safety, quality, finances and unmet need and development opportunities. We will support staff to collaborate to work to integrated Quality Assurance Frameworks between commissioners, contract staff, brokerage and operational staff.

Through embedded co-production through out all elements of the commissioning cycle we will also develop stronger and deeper connections with the residents and communities that we support.

Implementation of the framework will be a continuous process and what this looks like in practice will continue to develop as the environment in which commissioning takes place continues to change. This will require an approach to organisational and staff development that will support staff consistently in the long term.



**Key Action:** Develop an Organisational Development plan, that supports staff to think about what the framework means for them, and to make the changes to the way they work to deliver on the framework's objectives and principles.

**Key Action:** Develop a knowledge and learning approach that creates effective connections across teams and sharing of knowledge and insight. This should include practical tools to support cross team communities of practice.