



Financial pressure prevents local authorities from focusing on children's services outcomes

86% of local authorities state that outcomes are the most important factor in commissioning children's services. However, due to the financial climate, 90% of authorities say that 40% or more of all placement decisions are made on the basis of cost.

This reveals the extent of the strain on both local authorities and service providers. To combat this pressure, it is crucial that a revitalised approach to partnership working is developed between commissioners and providers in order to deliver the best outcomes for children with complex needs.

This research from the Children's Services Development Group (CSDG) and the Local Government Information Unit (LGIU) forms the first phase of the most recent project in the *In it Together* series - *In it Together: in Practice*.

The *In it Together* projects have examined how working in partnership to deliver stable placements at the right time and intensity has the potential to save millions of pounds, ensuring that vulnerable young people grow into successful adulthood.

Now, as part of *In it Together: in Practice*, and based on the findings of the survey, CSDG are calling local authorities to engage with providers in working groups to debate practical solutions to how this can be achieved.

The full results and analysis of the launch survey will be announced at a joint fringe event between CSDG and the LGiU: *In It Together? Making partnership work for children with complex needs*, during next week's NCAS conference. The event will gather senior local authority representatives to discuss issues such as:

- Do local authorities really benefit from partnership working?
- Can we save money in the short and long term?
- Is strategic commissioning possible with front loaded cuts?
- What kinds of partnership models and approaches to commissioning will ensure best access to specialist services?

Ahead of the event, CSDG is offering local authorities the opportunity to submit questions to be answered during the session to ensure that a meaningful and productive debate takes place.

A spokesman for the group said: *"Our previous In it Together reports have shown that a creative approach to children's services can and does deliver safe and stable placements that dramatically increase each child's life chances.*

It is vital in the current economic environment that we do not shy away from innovation and that providers and local authorities work together to deliver solutions to difficult situations."

To submit your questions to CSDG ahead of the fringe event, please contact: info@csdg.org.uk

- For further information please contact Gemma Stockwood, Policy Adviser to the CSDG at gemma@westminsteradvisers.co.uk or on 020 7227 1640.
- This year's NCAS conference *Tough Times, Good Decisions* is taking place at the ExCeL Centre, London between the 19th & 21st October. The CSDG & LGiU fringe event will be taking place at 1.15pm on Wednesday 19th October, at Capital 1. For further information about the conference and fringe event please visit <http://blogs.idea.gov.uk/>
- CSDG is a policy coalition of eight leading providers of foster care, residential care and specialist education services. Its members: Acorn Care and Education, Cambian Group, Fostering Solutions, Hesley Group, National Fostering Agency, Options Group, SENAD Group and Young Foundations have national coverage and work with the vast majority of local authorities across the UK. Together the group campaign for a child-centred and needs focused approach to children's services. For more information please visit www.csdg.org.uk
- The LGiU is a think tank and membership organisation which aims to strengthen local democracy, providing practical policy advice and learning and development programmes to members and other organisations. Membership of the LGiU consists of councils across the UK and other organisations who work with local authorities to deliver public services. For further information please visit www.lgiu.org.uk