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institute of  
public care

# The principles of arranging and managing adoption support services and therapies

**OBU Course Code: WFPC4001**

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Namaste مرحبا Bem Vindo Selamat Datang  
Willkommen  
Bienvenidos Bienvenue Croeso Welcome Bienvenidos أهلا وسهلا  
Benvenuti Welkom Bienvenue Bem Vindo  
Welcome  
Bienvenidos مرحبا Welcome Welkom Croeso  
Selamat Datang أهلا وسهلا Namaste  
Welcome Bienvenue Bem Vindo  
Willkommen  
добре дошъл Benvenuti Willkommen  
Καλώς ήλθατε Benvenuti

# Sessions 1 and 2

## Session 1 – Introduction & Assessing needs (1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> July)

- What is individual commissioning, and how is this linked with arranging adoption support services?
- Consideration of the current national and local context for adoption support services
- Assessing needs
- Arranging outcome-based adoption support
- Optional accreditation

## Session 2 – Planning and intervening (16<sup>th</sup> & 17<sup>th</sup> July)

- Understanding the local therapies offer / provider market
- Negotiating the cost / offer of adoption support services
- Working with Providers of therapy and support
- Introduction to commissioning frameworks and procurement rules for adoption support and therapies

# Session 3

## Session 3 – Reviewing and personalisation (22<sup>nd</sup> & 23<sup>rd</sup> July)

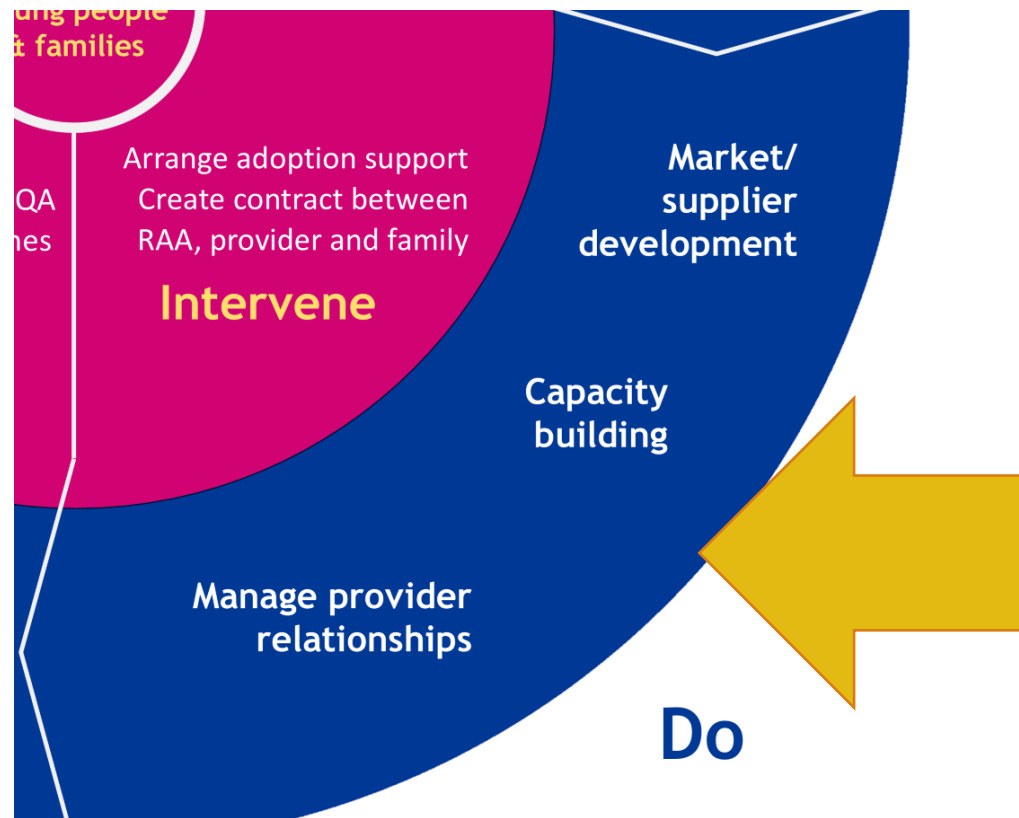
- Outcomes Based & Performance Monitoring
- Contract Management
- Working with children and families to keep them at the centre of adoption support arrangements

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# Working with providers of therapy and support



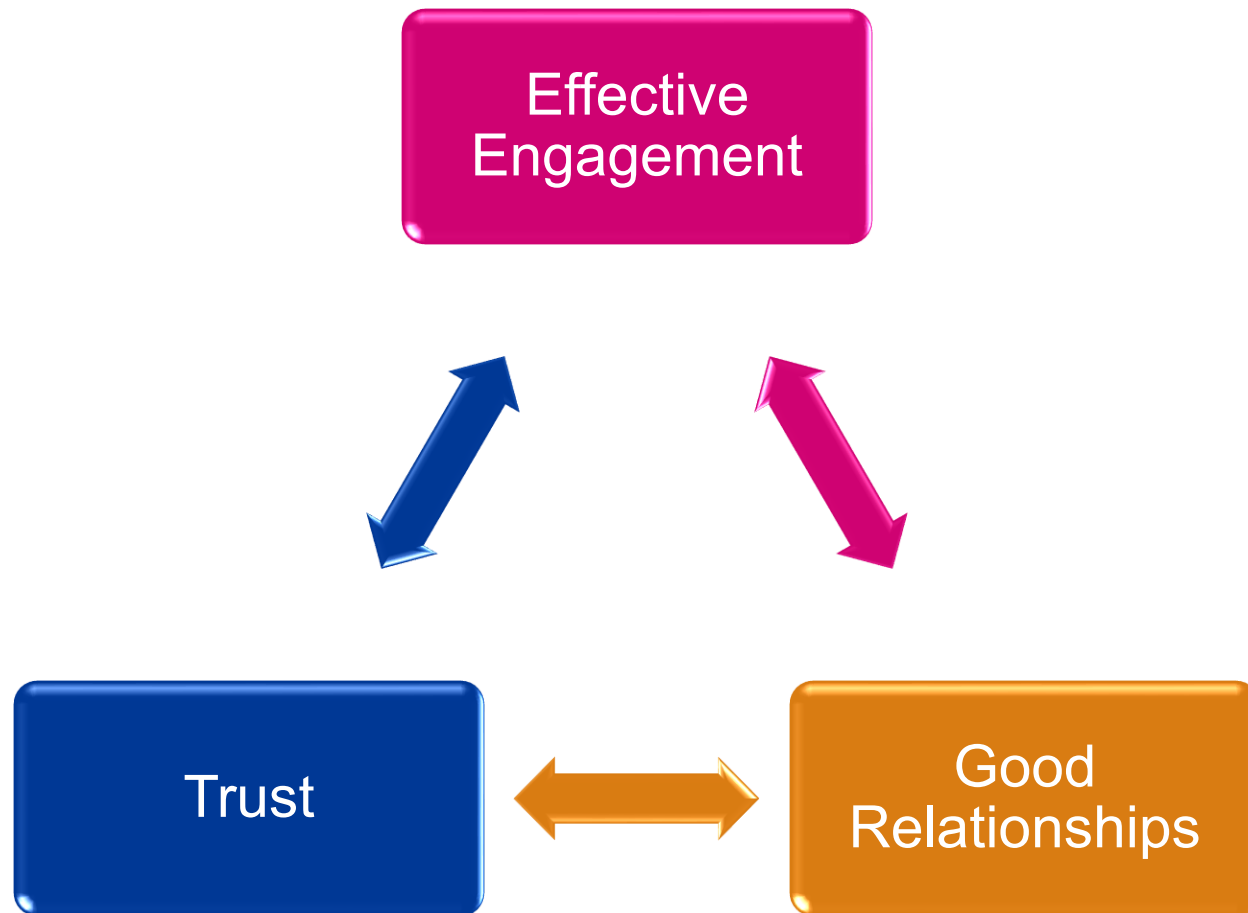


# What promotes effective relationships

- **Early engagement** with suppliers/providers – in development of new services / emerging needs etc.
- **Flexibility** about appropriate means of meeting agreed outcomes
- Open channels of **communication**
- Clarity about **expectations**
- **Commercial awareness**
- **Transparency** of decision making
- **Fair and proportionate** specifications and contracts

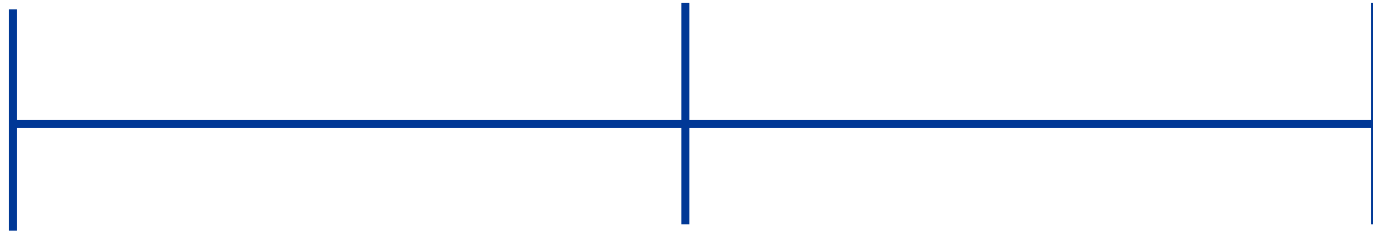


# Engagement, Relationships, Trust





# What are your relationships like with providers you work with?



## **Adversarial:**

- Low trust
- Transactional / legalistic
- Closed / one sided communication
- No collaboration
- Blame culture
- Customer / supplier culture

## **Constructive:**

- Mutual trust
- Partnership working
- Consultation and consensus building
- Open communication
- Joint problem solving and risk sharing
- Expectations of the roles and responsibilities of each party are clear and understood

## **Passive:**

- Too familiar or cosy
- Little challenge
- Roles and expectations of each party is unclear or not fulfilled
- Fear of upsetting each other

# Breakout Discussions

**In your breakout rooms,  
suggest:**

- Ideas for what helps to promote effective relationships (and why)
- Share how you currently outline the roles and responsibilities of providers, family and child when arranging therapy / support
- Any actions or improvements could be made



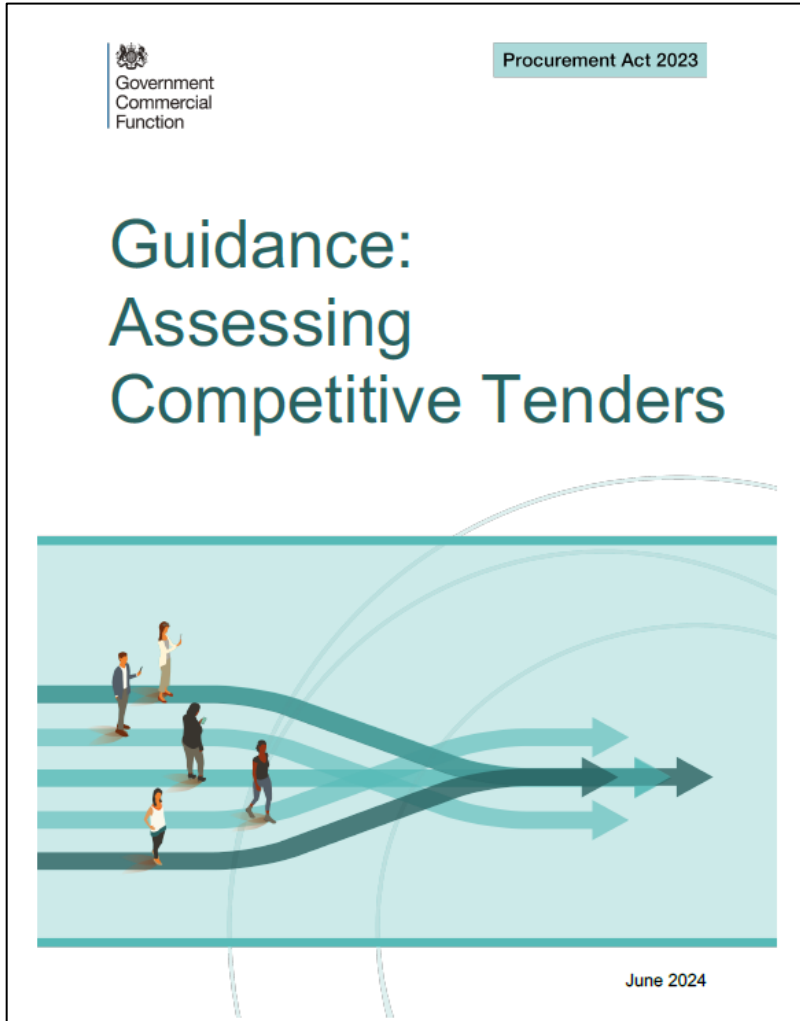
# Dealing with providers & purchasing

- Agree what you need - desired specifications, any specific conditions
- Agree evaluation criteria e.g. specialism, price, quality, location, timescales
- Agree stakeholder involvement in evaluation process
- Publish a request –mini-competition/Approved Provider List
- Provider/s submit bids/ proposals outlining how they can meet the needs including pricing, method statement
- Commissioner evaluates bids against criteria and selects the most suitable provider
- The goal is to secure the best value for money by encouraging competition selecting the most suitable provider based on specified needs

# Due Diligence

- Organisational/ sole trader company checks
- Regulatory body registration
- DBS
- Insurance
- Qualifications
- References
- Data protection/ security
- Other RAA / LA experiences
- Costs

# Provider evaluation



Provider evaluation involves assessing the “fitness” of the provider to undertake the job you want them to do (your specification or assessment of need)

In assessing “fitness” you may consider

- capability
- reliability
- risks
- and costs

# Provider Selection Criteria – things to consider

Capability	Reliability	Risks	Costs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Qualifications</li><li>• Experience</li><li>• Registration</li><li>• Safeguarding</li><li>• Staffing/ supervision</li><li>• Training</li><li>• Innovation</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Capacity</li><li>• Delivery methods</li><li>• Location</li><li>• Geography/ travel</li><li>• Record keeping</li><li>• Reporting &amp; monitoring</li><li>• Response times</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Regulatory compliance</li><li>• DBS</li><li>• Data protection/ IT security</li><li>• Insurances</li><li>• Staff turnover</li><li>• Financial sustainability</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Direct work</li><li>• Non-direct work</li><li>• Travel</li><li>• Venues</li><li>• Management overheads</li><li>• Report writing</li></ul>

NB: these are examples – not a definitive list

# Evaluation model

Define criteria - it must be

- Objective, proportionate and relevant to contract objectives and value
- Clear and unambiguous
- Must not be based on price alone: Quality, Cost & Social Value

Define Scoring Systems – e.g

- Numerical scores
- Weighted scores according to importance of the criteria (most commonly used)
- Multi-assessor scores (Averaged)
- Scenario test to check it works as expected



Transparency, fairness, clarity about “what good looks like”



# Simple worked example

Priority	Criteria	Weight	Allocated score	Weighted score
Quality (60%) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Capability</li> <li>• Reliability</li> <li>• Risk management</li> </ul>	Criteria 1	20%		
	Criteria 2	20%		
	Criteria 3	20%		
Price (30%)	Range/ Cap			
Social Value (10%)	Criteria 4	5%		
	Criteria 5	5%		
		Total		

# Contract of engagement

**A formal agreement will support you to be clear on expectations on the provider, and how you will work together, and accountability for outcomes:**

- Therapy offered, what is it, what does it involve, how will it be carried out, who will be delivering the therapy
- Have clear roles and responsibilities for social worker, provider and family
- Set dates for therapy reviews with social worker, provider and family
- Itemised breakdown of what will be delivered, e.g. number of sessions, hourly rates,
- Breakdown of provider costs, to be shared with families included hidden costs e.g. charges for cancellations
- How you will review and monitor the needs, goals and outcomes outlined in the adoption support plan
- Steps that will be taken if outcomes are not being met

# Benefits of a contract

- **Clarity and Transparency:** Ensures that all parties involved understand their rights and responsibilities.
- **Protection of Rights:** Provides a framework for protecting the rights of the child, the adoptive parents, and the therapist.
- **Reduced Risk of Disputes:** Minimizes the likelihood of misunderstandings and disagreements.
- **Quality Assurance:** Contributes to the quality and effectiveness of adoption support services.



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# Procurement and Purchasing

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# Procurement is...

**Procurement** is the process of acquiring goods, works or services from (usually) external providers/suppliers and managing these through to the end of contract.

Procurement or purchasing usually refers to the process of finding and deciding on a provider and buying a service.

Involves the selection, negotiation and agreement with the provider of what service is to be supplied.



# The legal procurement framework (UK)



# Transforming Public Procurement

## **The Procurement Act (2023) – went live on 24<sup>th</sup> February 2025**

Legal principles of public procurement: delivering value for money, maximising the public good, transparency, acting with integrity, & treating suppliers with fairness

- Duty to ‘have regard’ to – must follow these principles unless there is a good reason not to
- Open procedure for simpler, ‘off the shelf’ competitions
- A limited tendering procedure that buyers can use in certain circumstances, such as in crisis or extreme urgency

# Transforming Public Procurement

## Key features

1. Simplified Procedures	2. Increased Transparency	3. Value for Money
4. Social Value & Sustainability	5. Streamlined Challenge Process	6. Centralised Procurement Review Unit
7. Debarment of “Unfit” Suppliers	8. Innovation and SMEs	9. Digital Transformation

# Competitive procurement routes

## – Procurement Act 2023

- Only two competitive tendering procedures:
  - An open procedure
  - A competitive flexible procedure
- Minister direct award
- ‘More dynamic’ DPS’s

“The 2023 reforms highlight the flexibility to embrace new forms of procurement and innovative ideas. But to be transformational, legislation must be understood as an enabler and not an inhibitor of innovative behaviour.”

(The Art of the Possible in Public Procurement, 2024)

# Provider Selection Regime (01/01/24)

The Provider Selection Regime aims to replace the existing procurement rules for healthcare services. The aim of the Provider Selection Regime is to make it easier to integrate services and enhance collaboration, and to remove the rigidity associated with the current procurement rules, and the related bureaucracy and cost.

For:

- NHS and Public Health Services
- ICBS
- LAs who arrange healthcare services as part of Public Health or Section 75 arrangements

# Procurement approaches

How services are procured can have a big impact:

- Framework Agreement or DPS
- Block contracts
- Grant arrangement
- Spot purchasing
- In-house provision



Each impacts differently upon providers and how you will source / manage adoption support with families

# Frameworks

## Pros

- Families have option to choose pre-approved providers
- Providers on a framework signed up to your T&Cs including price already
- Supports a fair market, including for SMEs or sole traders

## Cons

- Families can only select from the providers on the framework, limiting choice
- It can be resource intensive to join a framework & hard for some providers to navigate the process. This may impact smaller organisations / sole traders
- Do not guarantee work so does not provide financial security for providers
- Ongoing monitoring and use of the framework requires LA/RAA resource and training



# Block contracts

## Pros

- Normally arranged via a competitive tendering process and so ensures compliance with procurement regs
- Can provide value for money via economies of scale
- Meaningful and effective collaboration between the RAA and provider is likely – supports continuous service development
- Can be quicker to arrange therapies

## Cons

- Families may be offered a more generic 'off the shelf' service, rather than person centered and individualised care
- Choice is very limited for families
- Needs long term, stable funding arrangements –which may not be possible with the ASGSF

# Grant arrangements

## Pros

- Offers more scope for providers to use their expertise to deliver the objectives of adoption support services
- Less RAA resource needed to monitor
- Some contractual agreement via a service level agreement or basic T&Cs

## Cons

- RAAs/ LAs have less control on how grant funding is spent by a provider
- Providers must meet grant conditions or they are at risk of having their funding terminated
- Competitive process for a grant arrangement may still be required and therefore can be resource intensive
- Tend to be short term arrangements

# Spot purchasing

## Pros

- Families have flexibility to choose a provider that they think best meets their needs
- Can be helpful if a bespoke or tailor-made service is needed
- Can be arranged quickly

## Cons

- T&Cs tend to be much more light touch, resulting in less contract management power of the RAA/LA
- Over-reliance on this method reduces competition, can stifle market growth, reduces the buying power of a RAA/LA and fuels a market driven service offer
- Risk of legal challenge to RAAs/LA as reliance on this practice is not fair or transparent

# In-house provision

## Pros

- Families may work with one adoption support practitioner in the RAA – from assessment through to delivery
- Job satisfaction for RAA practitioners, and greater staff retention
- More control and responsibility on the timeliness and quality of the provision

## Cons

- Needs sufficient resource so long waiting lists do not occur
- Could negatively impact the external provider market, reducing the offer here
- Little choice for families

# What are purchasing and procurement arrangements for adoption support services?

- Spot purchasing especially for scarce or specialist provision.
- Sometimes purchasing is achieved through an arrangement that meets public contract regulations e.g. a framework or Dynamic Purchasing System and has pre-agreed price structures and contract terms.
- Alternative partnership arrangements might include volume discounts, preferred provider lists, block contracts ('hard' and 'soft'), use of social impact bonds, personal health budgets.

# Activity

- In small groups discuss the different arrangements in place in your RAAs for securing adoption support services? e.g. regional / pan regional frameworks, contracts, in-house provision?
- Identify what works well / what is more problematic and be ready to feedback 3 key points to the whole group.

# Contact us



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