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Yorkshire and the Humber Joint Improvement Partnership

Decommissioning and reconfiguring services: a good practice guide for commissioners of adult social care

November 2010

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Yorkshire and the Humber Joint Improvement Partnership

Decommissioning and reconfiguring services

A good practice guide for commissioners of adult social care

1 Introduction

The Developing Intelligent Commissioning Programme is designed to develop the commissioning capability and capacity within Yorkshire and the Humber region to enable authorities to deliver the transforming adult social care agenda. The programme is funded by Yorkshire and the Humber Joint Improvement Partnership, working in collaboration with ADASS Yorkshire and Humberside; the programme is being delivered by the Institute of Public Care.

The programme includes activities designed to support commissioning intelligence and in particular the production of a series of papers on commissioning topics. This paper takes the form of a guide to the reconfiguration of services based on published good practice and brief telephone interviews with commissioning managers nationally. It describes the four key stages of service reconfiguration, and provides a checklist of the key activities needed to ensure the process is carried out as effectively as possible, as well as a decision flowchart.

2 Why is reconfiguration likely?

2.1 National Drivers

The current drive for efficiency saving places significant pressure on commissioners to ensure best value for money; a system which produces the best outcomes for people and is likely to be most efficient, has been described as one which gets "*the right people, at the right time into the right part of the system (ie offering the right service response).*"¹ An excellent authority will, amongst other activities, have developed a system "*focused on early intervention, prevention and reablement.*" Authorities have been challenged to develop:²

- Preventative measures that can defer or delay people needing longer-term services (the biggest single savings can be made from reducing use of residential care and creating better community-based services delivering better outcomes).
- More cost-effective interventions that achieve better outcomes at lower costs.

¹ Use of Resources in Adult Social Care: A guide for local authorities, 2009, Department of Health (DH)

² *ibid*

Equally significant as a driver is the potential impact of the personalisation agenda on the market as individuals are supported to make individual choices about the service they wish to receive. Councils are expected to re-engineer their assessment processes (introducing self assessment and a resource allocation system (RAS)) so individuals can have the option of commissioning and purchasing their own support and care arrangements. It is likely that demand for traditionally contracted services will change.

Discussions by the National Market Development Forum around the likely shape of the future "ideal" social care market included the following characteristics:³

- There will be a far more diverse property market of accommodation suitable for older people and into which health and care services can be delivered.
- There will be less use of 'traditional' residential care but what is provided will be more personalised, with better trained, better paid staff, and with a higher health focused component than at present.
- There will be fewer council commissioned block contracts for most services – while the Local Authority will maintain aggregate investments in some types of provision, the expansion of people with control over their own budgets, alongside self funders, and an increase in individual purchasing will see new models of contracting develop.
- There will be a much greater emphasis on combined preventative health and social care with more holistic care provision delivered by multi disciplined organisations capable of tackling a range of health and care issues.

2.2 The Market in Yorkshire and the Humber

The Programme's Market Analysis Report describes the current market within the region:⁴

- Commissioning activities for adult social care services happen within individual local authority areas with locally based providers, rather than across region.
- No single provider organisation dominates in the region. There are some providers that operate in up to 7 local authority areas within the region.
- The private sector holds over 70% of the market share in care home, care home with nursing and the domiciliary care.
- Only one authority area has totally outsourced all adult social care provision. All other local authority areas have adult social care services that are provided both in house and outside the authority provider organisations.
- There is a lower than average budget for social care as a percentage of overall local authority council spending. Only three authority areas were above the England average in 2008/09.

³ National Market Development Forum : The Future Social Care Market Discussion Paper 1, 2010

<http://www.puttingpeoplefirst.org.uk/Topics/Browse/Milestones/Localcommissioning/Providerdevelopment/?parent=7800&child=7959>

⁴ The State of the Adult Social Care Market in the Yorkshire and Humber Region: A Report for Commissioners (draft), 2010, IPC

- Over 50% of all local authority adult social care budgets from across Yorkshire and the Humber were spent on the older people's population in 2008/09.

In addition, the report highlights the following issues:

- This is the third lowest performing region in England in relation to the number of older people aged over 65 years supported in residential and nursing care. If the region wishes to improve their performance there needs to be a continuation of the drive to help people remain at home.
- There appears to be significant variation in budgets across authorities and spend by client group in the region on adult social care per local authorities.
- There is a correlation between local authorities spend on residential care and domiciliary care in 2008/09, that is, those authorities that are able to reduce levels of residential care were able to increase spend on domiciliary care.
- Direct payments make up 6% of the adult social care budget in the region.

Clearly it is likely that commissioners will be working with providers and service users to reconfigure services to ensure the best outcomes are achieved most efficiently, and to shift the current regional market to ensure it is fit for the future.

3 What is decommissioning?

As services are reviewed, reconfigured and potentially decommissioned, it is important to remember that decommissioning is only one of a number of options for commissioners to consider including maintaining and developing existing services, and negotiating changes in contracts to facilitate change.

Decommissioning itself can be defined as the process of planning and managing the elimination or reduction in services in line with commissioning objectives. It can be the result of a range of factors:

- Current economic circumstances are likely to require public sector organisations to review and change their service provision.
- A review of the needs of the population and recognition of the benefits of alternative service models indicating a need for services to be reconfigured.
- The personalisation of services, the introduction of individual budgets and self-directed care for service users will lead to changing demand. Commissioners will need to reduce the over-supply of some services and commission new services.
- Increasing costs may require local authorities to evaluate the value for money of the services they currently commission.
- The decision to decommission may arise from performance management issues that it has not been possible to resolve.
- Where services have been purchased on block contract with an agreed volume of service, the local authority may need to decommission if the number of people using the service falls and the authority remains liable for costs.

- Providers may initiate the need to change a service if, for example, they experience major financial difficulties, or their business plans require a change of focus (such as re-focusing on their core business).

A robust and detailed decommissioning model will help local authorities respond appropriately to changes in social care provision. A clear framework for ending services commissioned by local authorities will help to maintain and strengthen working relationships with third party providers. It is advisable, in line with good commissioning practice that private and voluntary and community service (VCS) providers should be engaged with the development of the model.

In all cases, addressing the immediate and long-term needs of service users should be paramount in any decision to decommission a service.

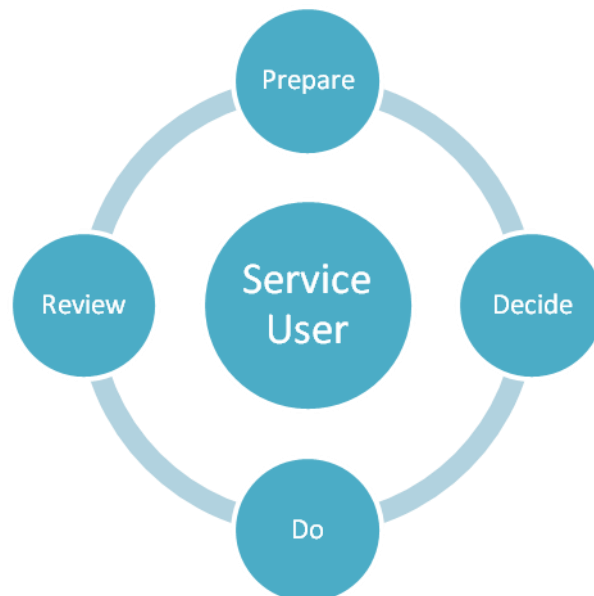
4 General principles for decommissioning

The following is a set of principles on which to base any decision to decommission. Many decisions will be significantly influenced by financial constraints but the interests of service users, staff and partners must be taken into account and prioritised during any decommissioning process.

- **Transparency and fairness:** there should be transparency in the decision making process, with fairness in the approach to all stakeholders. It should be absolutely clear why a decision has been taken to decommission a particular service, and this needs to be understood and shared by all stakeholders. Equally, there should be fairness in the way stakeholders are treated, whether this is between different providers, or different service users.
- **Users:** safeguarding the welfare of service users must be a key priority throughout any decommissioning process. Decommissioning a service should not remove essential or important provision from any existing user and the interests of service users should be protected throughout the decommissioning process, to ensure that ongoing support and care needs are addressed appropriately.
- **Staff:** Providers have a responsibility to ensure that the decommissioning process is transparent and that the welfare of staff involved in providing the service is protected through proper consultation between the service provider and the commissioning authority.
- **Value for money:** The purpose of decommissioning services will be to ensure that social care and other services most effectively meet the needs of vulnerable people, are of the best quality and offer value for money.
- **Risk management:** there should be clarity about the risks involved in the process, and the approach being taken to manage these risks.
- **Partnership:** the local authority should work with all stakeholders to achieve a smooth transition, with particular regard for service users and staff.
- **Communication:** a sound communications strategy will help to ensure that the process of decommissioning is ultimately successful through the full engagement of users, staff, elected members, providers and the media where appropriate.

5 The Stages of Decommissioning

There are four stages to decommissioning, all of which should have the service user and service user engagement as their focus. This is a cyclical process, and although there is the potential for blurring between the boundaries of each stage, it is important to understand the key elements of each stage.



Prepare – these are the activities that should be undertaken before a decision to decommission a specific service is taken and will contribute to the success of the process when it is needed. This is about ensuring there is the right environment for decommissioning, including the right policies and processes and the right levels of expertise.

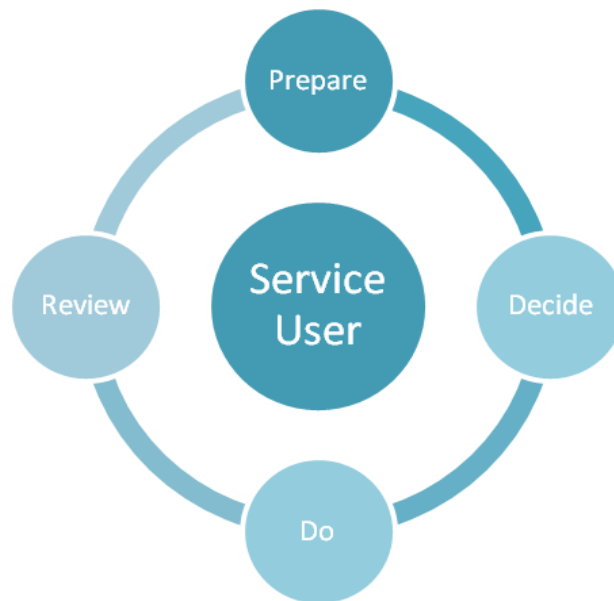
Decide – this is the approach to making a decision about a particular service, and will include consideration of what services are needed, what are the financial implications, and whether there are any contractual restrictions. There will need to be the appropriate level of consultation and engagement with stakeholders, particularly service users.

Do – this is the actual process of decommissioning a service, and includes the need to communicate effectively with the range of stakeholders, as well as ensuring smooth transitional arrangements.

Review – this ensures any lessons learnt can be applied to any future decommissioning and should particularly inform the preparation stages of the process.

The decommissioning of services should be undertaken against a background of ongoing performance management and the review of services; the need to decommission a particular service should not normally be unexpected. Equally, it is important to have developed a constructive relationship with providers. This will not only inform any decommissioning decision (given their knowledge of the service), but will also support the decommissioning process itself.

6 Preparing for Decommissioning



Preparation covers the activities that should be undertaken before a decision to decommission a specific service is taken and will contribute to the success of the process when it is needed. This is about ensuring there is the right environment for decommissioning, including the right policies and processes and the right levels of expertise.

6.1 An approach to decommissioning

"You need to spend time before you get to the decision making process preparing the ground. Although this is potentially time-consuming and takes resources, it could avoid unnecessary work further down the line, and sets the review up to deliver the efficiencies needed."

Adult Social Care commissioner

As with most areas of work the best outcomes arise from good planning and preparation. Local authorities will benefit greatly from having a clear, straightforward set of guidelines for decommissioning in place before any decision needs to be taken. This is likely to take the form of a decommissioning policy, which has both corporate and political ownership and support. This policy will include:

- Guidelines on the approach to decision making.
- Risk assessment and management.
- Project management approaches and structures.
- Communication plans.
- The support available to managers.

A key aspect of this preparation will be to ensure that managers are equipped to undertake the decommissioning of a service, ideally including knowledge of project management processes. Decommissioning can be a lengthy and complex

process, which requires a rigorous approach to project management whilst retaining the ability to be flexible as circumstances require.

6.2 Contracts and performance management

Initial discussions and contract negotiations with proposed service providers will offer an ideal opportunity to put in place clear specifications for the service and set out the mechanisms for managing any changes which are required. This process also offers an opportunity to formally agree criteria and a framework for possible future decommissioning. Building this in at an early stage may prevent difficulties later when services need to be reconfigured.

However, this is not sufficient in itself, as regular engagement with service providers will help to prepare the ground for the decommissioning of a particular service. If service providers are aware of, and have discussed, the policy direction of an authority they are more likely to be aware of, and plan for, its implications. For example, it is essential that providers are aware of, and have been involved in, the development of outcomes based commissioning and the personalisation agenda. This can be done in a number of ways, for example through provider forums, through one-off information exercises, through local authority websites, and through regular individual contact with providers.

"You need to involve providers in discussions before you get to the decision process, not only to ensure they are prepared, but also to tap into their knowledge of their service users and potential service users, and the implications of any reconfiguration/decommissioning."

"We needed to be explicit with the provider market about the strategic commissioning direction in this area, and hence the reason for the service reviews."

Older People housing with care commissioner

Although regular service reviews are essential to understand and develop the quality of a service, often a service provider will be aware of issues with a service before the commissioner. Regular communication with providers outside of the review process will also help to identify issues.

However, there may still be occasions when despite performance review and activities to improve services, urgent action is required to decommission a service because of service failure or financial difficulties for the provider. A service provider may also respond to the decision to decommission by withdrawing co-operation with the authority. In such eventualities the welfare of service users must remain the priority, and it would be expected that the contract would provide the framework for the response.

It may be necessary for the local authority to offer short term financial or administrative support to the provider to maintain a service for users. Other service providers may also need to be tasked to address gaps in service which may affect service users, typically on a short term basis.

The local authority may consider budgeting for the possibility of emergency service decommissioning as well establishing and maintaining records of local

service providers which may have spare capacity to accommodate short term emergency need.

6.3 Communication plans

"You need to carry out a full stakeholder analysis at the beginning, and ensure this considers internal stakeholders as well as external ones."

Older people commissioner

Any changes to service provision will affect service users, the local authority and service providers, including their staff. They will need to be kept informed and consulted throughout the process of decommissioning. Although there will be different stakeholders for different services, there are identifiable groups who will need to be communicated with:

- Providers (including their staff)
- Service users and carers
- Local authority (including care management and assessment)
- Commissioning partners (particularly health)
- Elected members, including portfolio holders, scrutiny committees and MPs
- The wider public and the media

There may well be existing consultation mechanisms in place, and it is important these are recognised and publicised to avoid duplication or wasted effort.

"We set up a generic email address which was well publicised and available for anyone to use to make comments on plans."

Older people commissioner

There are a number of key issues to be addressed in communication plans:

- When is communication to take place within the decommissioning process, and how does this link with project milestones and decision points.
- What form if the communication to take, and how does it take account of the needs of the different stakeholders. For example, does it recognise the communication needs of different population groups, or the ability of smaller voluntary groups to access electronic information as compared to larger providers?
- How is the use of language considered, so for example, have the connotations of the word "decommissioned" been considered, and whether this is the appropriate word if the monies released are to be ring-fenced for the same client group?

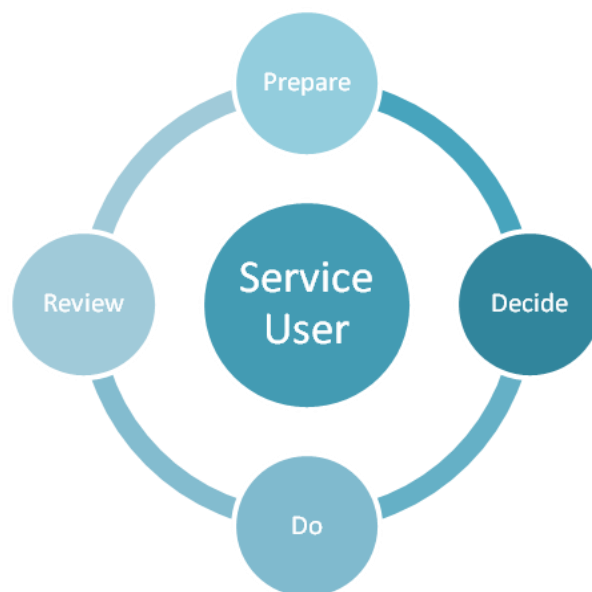
"Although there was political engagement in the process, and the political decision had been taken to close this particular day service, there were difficulties when the local members encountered local opposition.....it was important to maintain regular member briefings, particularly when it looked like the process could raise issues."

Older people commissioner

6.4 Risk Assessment and Management

There will be a number of risks associated with the review and reconfiguration of services, and as part of the preparation stage it would be helpful to have prepared a risk matrix with guidance for commissioners on how it is to be used, and reported on, during the process. For example, this could identify key risks such as the risk of safeguarding issues, of poor publicity, of financial failure, or the failure to have effective transitional arrangements; it would include suggested mitigating actions in each of these areas.

7 Deciding to decommission



This stage sets out the approach to making a decision about a particular service, and will include consideration of what services are needed, what are the financial implications, and whether there are any contractual restrictions. There will need to be the appropriate level of consultation and engagement with stakeholders, particularly service users.

7.1 The decommissioning decision

"It is important to ensure you consider the broader policy agenda when making decisions about decommissioning individual services to avoid wasting time and money working on service options which are not appropriate."

Older people commissioner

As has been described earlier in this guide, there are a number of reasons for reviewing a service and taking the decision to decommission it. These could include:

- A change in demand for the service resulting in an under-used resource.
- Significant quality issues which cannot be resolved through previous performance management and recovery activities.
- The withdrawal of funding from partner organisations.

- A new or updated commissioning strategy highlighting a change in emphasis or priorities for service delivery.

"There were a number of issues with the service:

- *It did not have enough funding to provide sufficient services to meet demand, and there were long waiting lists.*
- *It had moved from being a short term intervention to a longer term support service, which was not what was originally intended.*
- *It was not meeting the needs of one of the main target population groups."*

Substance Misuse commissioner

The details of the approach taken to making the decision to decommission will, in part, depend on the reason but there are a number of clear principles which are applicable in all cases. These are the need to:

- Be sure about your evidence for change, and be confident it is legitimate and robust.
- Understand what services are actually required to address the needs and expectations of current and future service users, and how the current service compares with this.
- Understand what resources are available, and whether any resources released through the decommissioning process can be recycled into any reconfigured services.
- Plan the decommissioning process and have a clear project management plan.
- Engage and communicate with all key stakeholders during the decision process.

7.2 Understanding what services are needed

"You need to know what other options are available for service users when the service closes, eg direct payments, alternative voluntary sector services, a newly commissioned service."

"Allow plenty of time to work through the process to ensure you can do any homework properly about service options and issues"

Older people commissioner

Decommissioning a service should be carried out in the context of a review of the nature and extent of service provision required to address the needs of service users. This review can be used to assess whether the services currently offered are appropriate, effective and affordable and whether they continue to fit in with the strategic priorities of the local authority service. The review will need to understand the individual needs of existing service users, and how these are currently being met through the service. It is important that all the alternative options for the service have been considered, and there is a clear rationale for the decision taken.

"It is important to have good reasons for the change, and to be clear about these reasons at the start of the process, and then to work at getting the buy-in of all stakeholders, both in-house and externally."

Homelessness services commissioner

One of the challenges for local authorities is the level of consultation about the decommissioning decision, particularly amongst existing service users. For some, it is helpful to differentiate between consultation on the decommissioning decision itself, and consultation on what individual service users want in the future.

"We separated the service user consultation from the decommissioning decision, and then focused on what support they wanted....there was service user representation on the joint commissioning group who were well briefed about commissioning issues, and fed into the consultation process. Once this group had made the decision to decommission the service, one to one discussions took place with individual service users to identify what is good about the service, describe the change needed, and discuss what this will mean for them."

Substance misuse commissioner

The important issue here it to be clear at the outset what decisions have been made and why, and what are the areas subject to consultation and change. This will help to avoid unrealistic expectations and disappointment.

7.3 Provider issues

"You cannot underestimate the importance of taking time to develop effective relationships with providers. This and the can-do approach among local authority staff enabled us to work through potentially difficult contractual issues."

"We were able to tap into a major contract review for this provider, which saved a considerable amount of time in changing the contract."

Older people commissioner

Government advice states that an authority should meet with representatives of the service provider first to seek to address any issues before a formal process of decommissioning commences.⁵ This will allow the potential decision to decommission to be explained and for other options to be explored fully. For example, it may well be that the service provider will be able to suggest alternative service models which will meet the aspirations of the commissioner and the needs of the population. It may be that adjustments can be made to the service which would be sufficient. However, in some cases, the decision to decommission is the only solution.

The first stage in any decommissioning process will be to look at the individual contract of the service provider. If this contract has been drafted with the option

⁵ Focus on the Future, 2007, Office of the Deputy Prime Minister

of change or decommissioning included, as mentioned above, the process should be straightforward and positive for both sides.

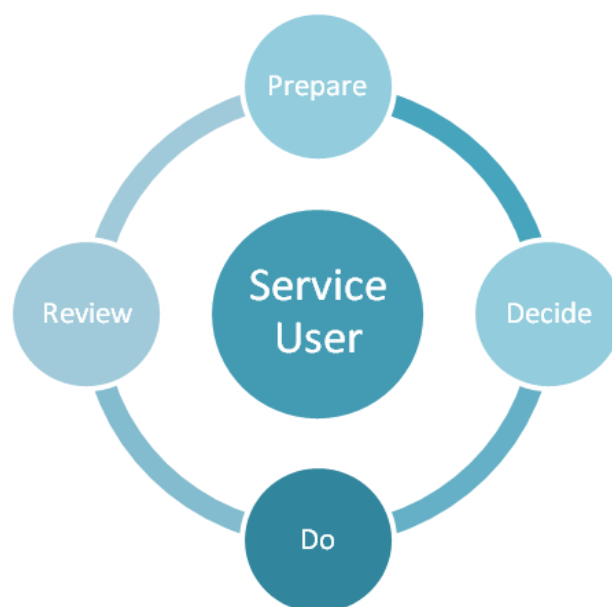
It may be possible to amend the contract in discussions with the service provider and this should be explored if change or decommissioning is not formally set out in the original agreement. This decision is likely to be based on the judgement of the staff member involved and their individual knowledge of the service provider.

A contract may be nearing its end so it may be appropriate to allow it to continue to its conclusion. If so, consideration will need to be given to transferring or transforming the service once the contract ends. Once again, the priority should be the needs of service users and the continuous provision of services to them.

Finally, it may be possible to terminate a contract if it can be demonstrated that a service has not been provided according to the contract terms. Such a process is likely to be disruptive to service users so it is not one to be entered into if a mutual transitional agreement with the service provider can be achieved.

In circumstances where a decommissioning protocol has not been agreed during the initial contract negotiations, it will be worth comparing the cost of decommissioning against the cost of continuing with the existing service. This assessment will have financial and non-financial elements but at this stage it is likely to be appropriate to consider the financial implications of decommissioning above others.

8 The process of decommissioning



The “do” stage covers the actual process of decommissioning a service, and includes the need to project plan carefully, communicate effectively with the range of stakeholders, as well as ensuring smooth transitional arrangements.

8.1 Project management

"Consider the complexity of the review programme, and its impact on project management, the clarity of messages, and its deliverability – don't be over ambitious!"

Older people commissioner

"Be ruthless about the project planning and management. Ensure there is a clear project brief agreed by all partners which covers the scope of the project (to prevent project creep), the reasons for the project and the main triggers for change."

Substance misuse commissioner

The complexity of the decommissioning process is such that it is critical to draw up a project plan as early as possible in the process, if only to highlight the areas needing further work and attention.

The project plan will need to include:

- The approach to understanding what existing service users and their carers need from future services.
- A communication plan for staff, service users, elected members and other stakeholders. This should include clarity about how consultation will be carried out, and where there is scope for influence and change.
- A financial plan which includes the costs associated with decommissioning, and how any resources released during the process will be re-used.
- A review of any contractual issues relating to the service itself, buildings and physical assets, and staff.
- Transitional arrangements for when the service is decommissioned, which include consideration of any safeguarding and data protection issues.
- A risk assessment for the process which highlights significant risks and the mitigating action to be taken to minimise them.
- An overview of the decision structures, project management arrangements, and key milestones.

"You need to be realistic about the resources needed to do it properly."

Older people commissioner

There are a number of key project management issues which need addressing if a potentially sensitive decommissioning process is to be completed successfully. These include:

- Clarity about the scope of the project, and if necessary breaking it down into smaller projects to ensure it is deliverable.
- The appointment of a lead officer or project manager with the required levels of responsibility and access to resources as needed. Given the complexity of the process having a single individual with responsibility for its management from start to finish is important in ensuring clarity and focus.

- Clear project planning with key milestones identified, but with realistic timescales and the scope for flexibility.
- Clarity about the legal requirements and how they impact on the process (for example if a contract is due to end on a fixed date then the decommissioning process needs to take that into account).
- Clarity about the communication needed and at which stages.
- Ownership of the project at a senior corporate and political level.

8.2 Impact Assessment

In addition to a risk assessment (as discussed above), commissioners should carry out an impact assessment. This should consider the impact of the decommissioning activity not only on service users and potential service users, but also carers, families and the wider population. It should consider more vulnerable groups within the population in particular. Care should be taken to ensure that a diversity impact assessment is incorporated into this process or carried out as a specific activity, depending on local practice.

The assessment should also consider the impact of the decommissioning activity on the provider market, particularly whether it will impact on the ability of the market to provide other services.

The results of this impact assessment will inform the project plan and how it is delivered to minimise negative impact.

8.3 Notification of the service provider

A key element throughout this process will be to keep the provider fully informed to ensure that the risk of a legal challenge is minimised.

If, after a meeting with the service provider the decision to decommission is confirmed, the provider should be notified in writing. This is likely to be required in any agreement and it will initiate the formal process of decommissioning. This notification will also reduce the risk of the provider learning of the decision through informal channels, potentially damaging their working relationship with the local authority and affecting the service provided to users.

Information to be included in the notification would usefully include:

- Advice of the formal decision to decommission the service.
- The proposed period of notice on the contract.
- Information about any appeal procedure and a formal statement that this appeal period has commenced.
- Details of other organisations and individuals to be informed.
- Advice on dealing with any new referrals to the service provider.
- The name and contact details for the officer responsible for the decommissioning process.

8.4 Agree transitional arrangements

Where a decommissioning process is likely to occur over an extended period it will be useful to agree a plan with the service provider to ensure a smooth

transition. This plan will be tailored to the individual contract but consideration should be given to the following elements:

- Continuation of agreed service standards, with particular regard to service users.
- The proposed timescale for the decommissioning process.
- Agreement to share and transfer full information with the local authority or new service providers. This is often difficult to achieve in practice and needs attention early in discussions with the provider to minimise disruption for service users.
- A review plan to schedule regular meetings between the authority and the service provider during the decommissioning process.
- Arrangements for staff involvement/redeployment as required, including TUPE considerations where appropriate.⁶
- A plan for both parties to respond to press and public enquiries.
- Confirmation of arrangements for financial settlement at the conclusion of the contract.

8.5 Ensure good communication

"You need to be absolutely and repeatedly clear about the rationale for reviewing the service with the service provider to ensure they understand what is happening and why – put it in writing too."

Substance misuse commissioner

Any process of change is assisted by communication. The earlier discussion of the need for communication plans set out the main groups and the key issues to be considered. It is critical to ensure that communication is regular, clear, planned and fits with key milestones within the project plan. It may be that there are other consultation exercises underway, and that these can be used to support communication about the decommissioning activity.

A key element of this will be advising all parties involved in the decommissioning process of alternative and subsequent services to ensure the minimum disruption to service users and staff in particular.

Messages should be carefully tailored to the audience to ensure they are relevant. This tailoring should consider the issues or agendas of the target audience, and how this will affect their reaction to messages about decommissioning.

"Don't talk to people who are not eligible for FACS services about reviewing FACS services as they won't think its relevant to them."

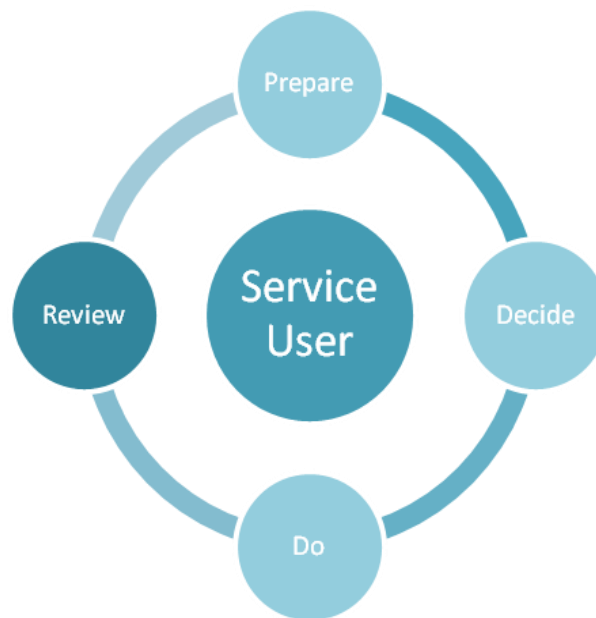
Older people commissioner

It may be appropriate for the local authority to assist the service provider with its communications with service users and staff to ensure that the decision can be

⁶ For further information see Employment Rights on the Transfer of an Undertaking: A guide to the 2006 TUPE Regulations for employees, employers and representatives, 2009, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills

explained fully, that concerns can be addressed and that disruption can be kept to a minimum.

9 Reviewing the commissioning process



9.1 Review of the process

Once the decommissioning process is complete it is important that time and resources are allowed for a review of its effectiveness and for any lessons learnt to be shared.

"We did insufficient work with some of the providers and this delayed the process. These issues would now be taken to the provider forum to ensure providers understand the strategic direction and can respond."

Older people commissioner

The review should ideally include the main stakeholders in the process, ie, service users and/or carers, representatives of the service provider, local authority staff, and elected members. It should be directed towards ensuring that the procedures in place for decommissioning are robust and effective.

"You need to be realistic about the timescales involved, particularly the time taken to communicate effectively and on an ongoing basis with stakeholders....but this needs to be balanced against the potential cost of long delays."

Older people commissioner

The review should consider key stages of the decommissioning process and ask the following questions:

- Was there sufficient preparation for the decommissioning activity, with the right policies and resources in place?
- Was the decision making process appropriate and effective?
- Was there the right level of communication at each stage of the process? Were any communication difficulties managed effectively?
- Was the project management of the process adequate, and were the right skills and expertise available as needed?
- Was there sufficient support for the process in terms of decision making, and resources?
- Did the service contract help or hinder the process?
- What were the key barriers to implementing the process effectively and on time?

9.2 Sharing learning

"We now plan to do an evaluation at the end of the project to share learning with other parts of the organisation."

Older people commissioner

Once the decommissioning process has been reviewed it is important that any learning from the process is shared and feeds into the planning of subsequent decommissioning exercises. Often there is decommissioning experience in one part of the local authority, but this has not been shared more widely, particularly about what works and what does not work. It may be that there is learning to be shared about internal communication with politicians, and what is most effective, or about which formal consultation mechanisms proved to work best.

10 Conclusion

The process of ending or changing a social care service is highly likely to cause disruption but it should be possible to achieve a successful outcome if resources are devoted to proper planning and preparation, and then ensuring the decommissioning process itself is carried out methodically and sensitively. It is critical to ensure the engagement of key stakeholders whether these are the service provider or their staff, the service users affected, or elected representatives. Equally, it is important to review the process to ensure any lessons learnt can be applied to any future decommissioning processes.

APPENDIX A

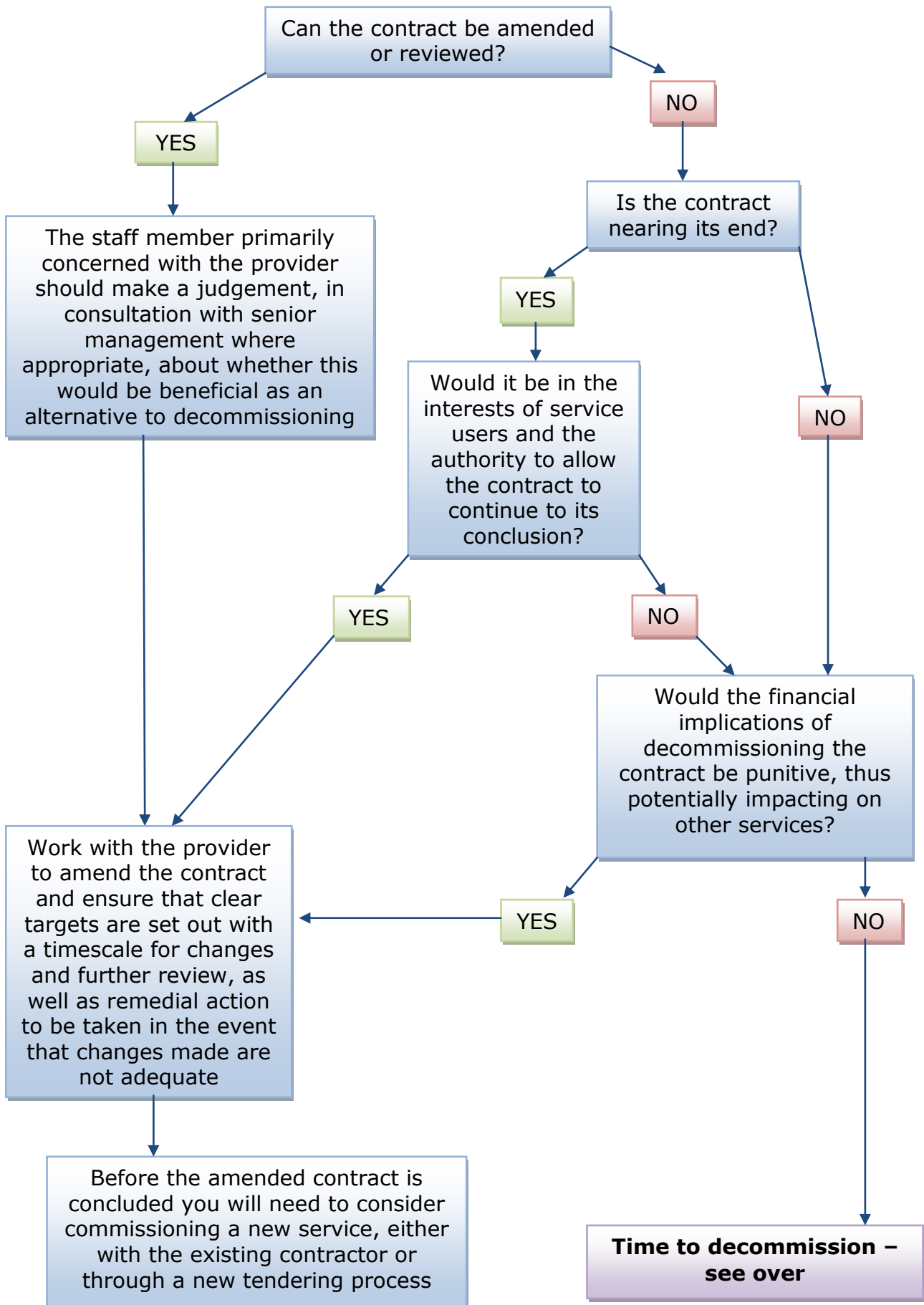
Decommissioning Checklist

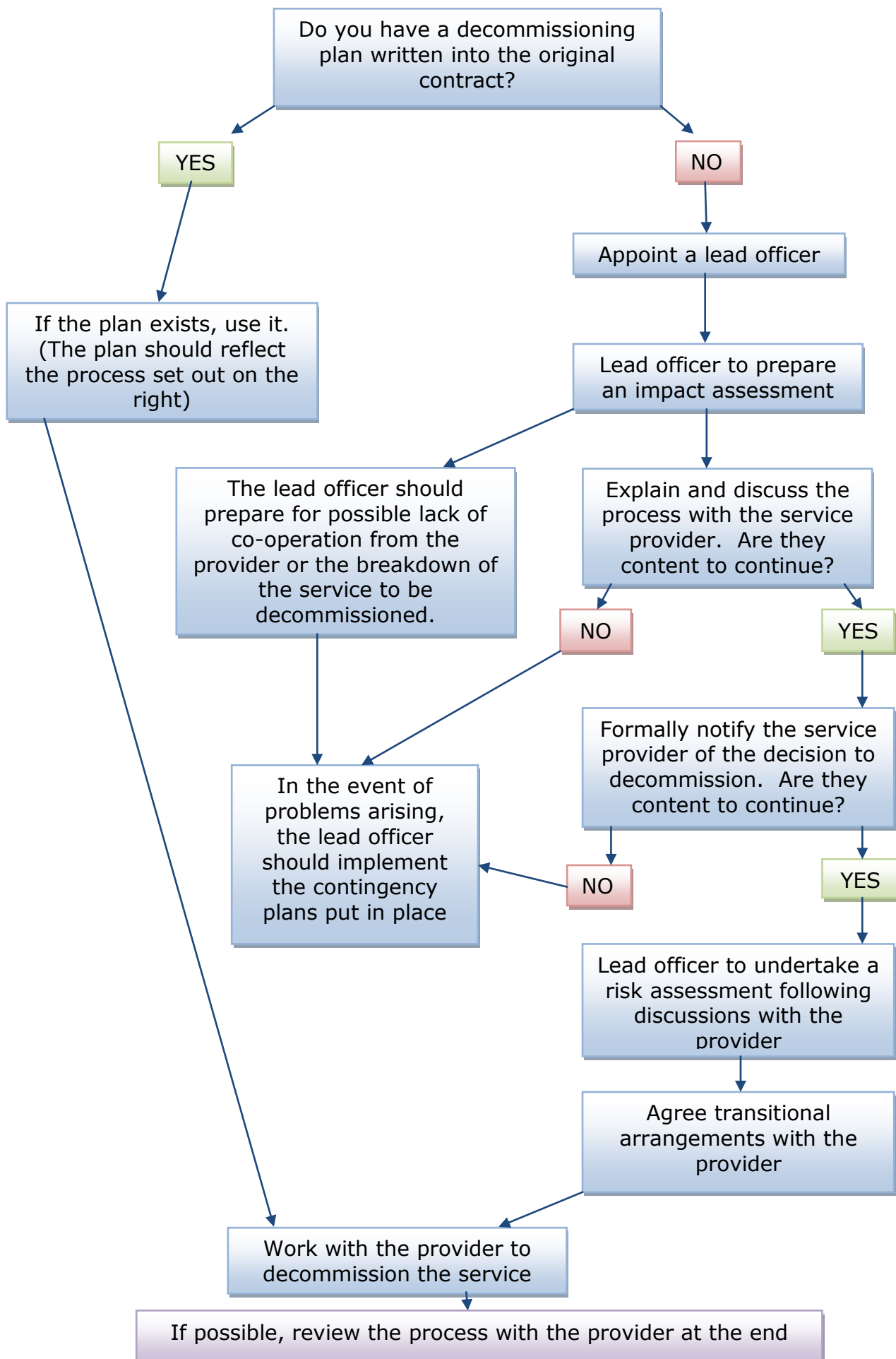
A	Preparation	Yes	No
1	Is there a decommissioning policy and/or guidelines for decommissioning in your authority?		
2	Is this policy/guideline recent, and does it have both corporate and political support?		
3	Does it include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decision making processes? • Risk assessment and management? • Approaches to project management? • Communication plans? • Availability of resources? 		
4	Do service contracts allow for potential decommissioning situations?		
5	Is there regular engagement with providers, which includes the discussion of the decommissioning policy?		
6	Is there ongoing performance management of contracts with proactive approaches to reviewing and improving services?		
7	Are there well-publicised communication mechanisms and consultation structures in place? Are these accessible for all stakeholder groups?		
8	Is there an approved approach to risk assessment and management, and to carrying out impact assessments?		
B	Decide		
1	Is it clear what the issues are with the service that is being reviewed?		
2	Is there a good understanding of the needs and aspirations of current and potential service users?		
3	Has there been a thorough consideration of all of the options for the service? Have all of the potential service models been researched and considered? Is it clear how this service fits with local and national policy drivers?		
4	Is it clear what resources are available to meet this need, and whether any resources released through decommissioning can be recycled into any reconfigured services?		
5	Have all of the key stakeholders been identified and is it clear what their role will be in the decision process? When will they be involved, and how will they be involved?		
6	Has the contract for the service been reviewed, and does it create any particular issues for potential decommissioning?		

C	"Do"		
1	Is there a project plan which clearly describes the scope of the project? Would it be more deliverable if it were broken down into smaller projects?		
2	Has a lead officer or project manager been identified who has access to support as needed?		
3	Does the project plan include clear milestones which fit with stakeholder decision making structures, and allow time for effective communication? Is there scope for some flexibility within it?		
4	Is it clear what the legal requirements for the process are, and how they will impact on timescales in particular?		
5	Is there a clear communication plan which includes all stakeholders? Are messages tailored for particular audiences?		
6	Is there ownership of the project plan both corporately and politically?		
7	Does the project plan allow for an impact assessment and a risk assessment (if not already completed)?		
8	Are there clear transitional arrangements for service users which have been agreed with the provider, and minimise impact on service users? Do these include proposed timescales, ongoing communication arrangements, and an agreed approach to the sharing of information?		
D	Review		
1	Is there an agreed approach to the evaluation of the decommissioning process?		
2	Does this evaluation process include other stakeholders?		
2	Is there a mechanism for sharing any learning from this evaluation process?		

APPENDIX B

Decommissioning flowchart





APPENDIX C

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