

Procurement Services

Relationship Management

**Report to People and Families Scrutiny,
June 2018**



Essex County Council

Background

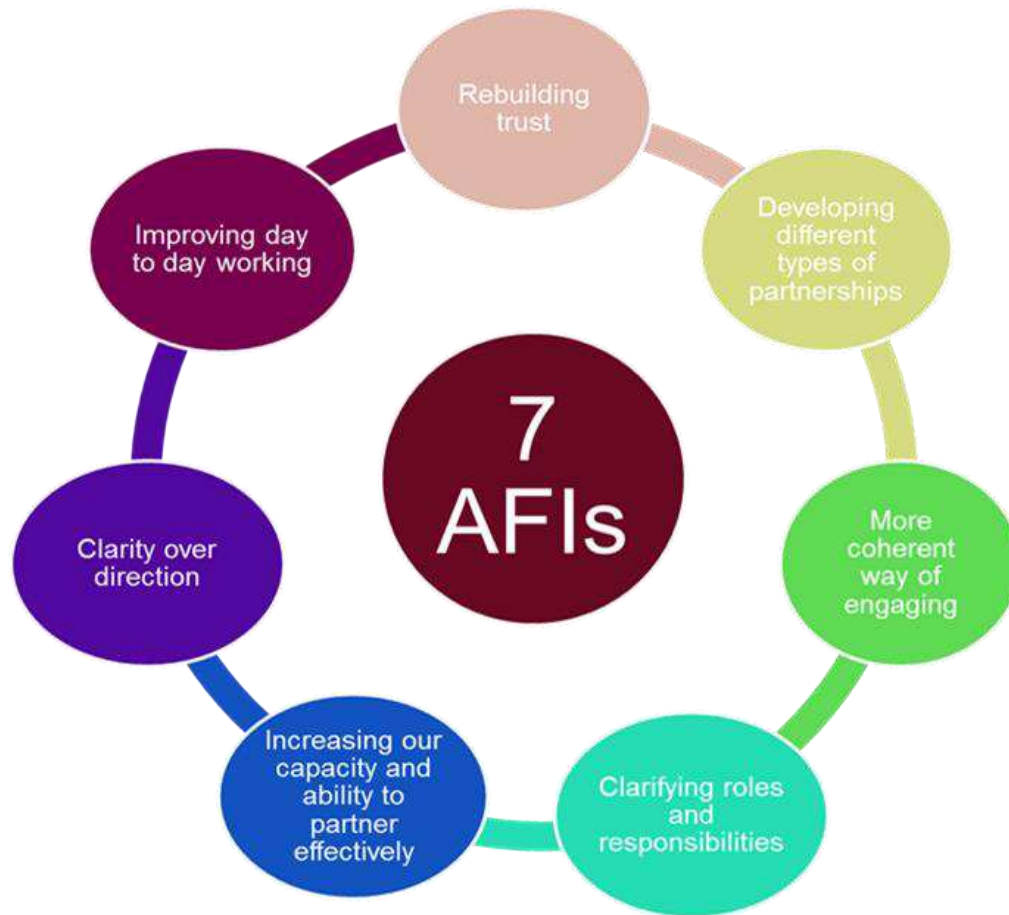
A project was initiated in 2016 to fully evaluate the relationship between ECC and its adult social care supply base and to consider how matters could be improved. The reasons for this project were:

1. A perception that relationships between ECC and the care market were poor and getting worse.
2. Additional responsibilities imposed by the Care Act around market management and sustainability. ECC recognised that it could not meet these new duties without improving relationships with the care market.

The project produced the following [report](#).

Recommendations

The November report identified 7 Areas For Improvement (AFIs):



Actions to date

Care Provider Information Hub - to improve ECC's communication and to be open and transparent the Council set up the [hub](#) to act as a 'one stop shop' for news, details of events, key documents, contact details, etc.

Essex Care Association (ECA) - the Council has repositioned its relationship with the ECA. ECC directors and senior officers regularly attend their events. Simon Harniess has been seconded into the role of Development Director to help them grow their business and forge improved links with the Council.

Annual Relationship Management Surveys - since the relationship management report was published, ECC has committed to conduct an [annual survey](#) of providers and officers to measure the development of relationships.

Care Market Strategy 2017-21 - the [Care Market Strategy 2017-21](#) has been developed to detail ECC's future direction for adult social care, setting out how the market in Essex needs to develop over the medium term.

Actions to date (2)

Workforce Initiatives - a number of [workforce initiatives](#) have been developed to help alleviate the issues of recruitment and retention. This has included a [newspaper supplement](#), funded by ECC, which promoted careers in care.

Strategic Provider Groups - ECC has set up a [Live at Home strategic provider group](#) for the domiciliary market to discuss issues with senior officers and improve collaboration.

Strategic groups for other specialisms will be set up in 2018 and details of these will be published in the relevant pages in [Working with Us](#).

An Advisory Forum – the inaugural meeting of this group will be held in July. The Forum will develop ideas and shape thinking between ECC and a number of key players in the market.

Actions to date (3)

Quadrant Provider Forums - quadrant-based forums, which give providers a chance to discuss local-level issues with senior ECC officers, have been revitalised.

Roles and Responsibilities – it can be difficult for suppliers to navigate between the various departments and teams in ECC involved with the market. Roles and responsibilities therefore need to be clearly defined, with contact details provided. Work has begun and can be found on the [Meet the Teams](#) section of the Hub.

Payment Issues - a project team has targeted this complex area. Aged debt has reduced to around £1.2m, helped by a major focus on improving processes. This represents less than one day's spend.

Have relationships improved?

- The 2017 Relationship Management survey reported a 208% increase in provider responses, and a 10% increase in overall scores, compared to the 2016 survey. Issues still remain, but good progress is being made.
- The various forums / provider groups have discussed many issues with actions being managed and progressed centrally. Previously, it was apparent actions from similar forums had no ownership, which was a cause of frustration for providers.
- At a subjective level, it is clear that discussions with providers are now more strategic in nature. Less time is spent discussing operational concerns or payment issues.

Summary

- Significant progress has been made. Most of the recommendations in the November report have been implemented, although we have consciously chosen to adopt a different approach in some areas.
- Providers welcome the opportunity to have face-to-face contact; this helps to build rapport and trust.
- The Care Provider Information Hub has received 100% positive feedback. The site has content which is in direct response to recommendations from the relationship management report (eg. roles and responsibilities).
- Although good progress has been made, more work is needed to effectively deal with operational frustrations.

