

COMMISSIONING: TAKING THE AGENDA FORWARD AND UTILISING A SYSTEM APPROACH TO COLLABORATION AND SHARE

Patsy Northern, Chair

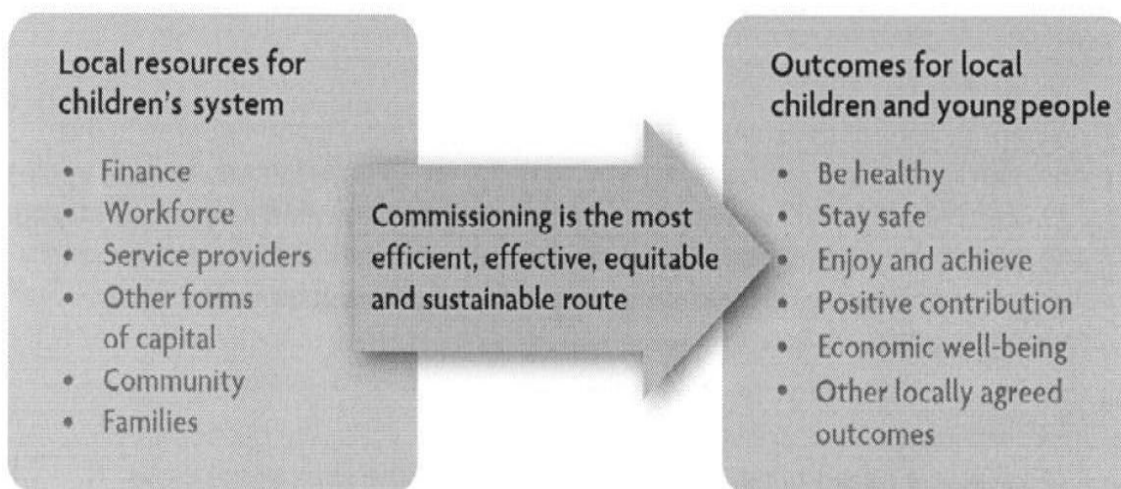
Cross Government Commissioning Learning and Development Group

1 ISSUE

- 1.1 A number of departments who have to date invested significant resource in the production of learning and development material for commissioners are due to close by 31 March 2011. They are independently assessing how this work is stored and made available for future use. However, we are concerned that there is not one approach or solution to this and the potential for all of this good work to just disappear is great.
- 1.2 This paper:
 - Provides a background into commissioning and the work of the cross government learning and development group;
 - Identifies some of the similarities of commissioning across government departments; and ;
 - identifies a potential solution for consideration as to how this information could be stored and disseminated. Although further work would need to be undertaken to determine how it retains its currency and provides ongoing capability development opportunities for those engaged within the commissioning system

BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Commissioning has the potential to transform public services and improve the quality outcomes. The government is clear that it wants to deliver a stronger society, a smaller state with power and responsibility in the hands of citizens. The cross government commissioning learning and development group (membership and governance attached at Annex A) sees its vision as developing a learning model with quality outcomes that enables systems of public services to transform themselves.
- 2.2 Commissioning can be defined as the process for deciding how to use the total resource available in order to improve outcomes in the most efficient, effective, equitable and sustainable way. The Department of Health and the Department for Education Commissioning Support Programme¹ have produced the following diagram to support their understanding of commissioning



- 2.3 The cross government group has continued to identify that the development of a common approach to formulating the learning and development within commissioning can support the governments agenda:
- That there is a need for an intermediary to connect providers and commissioners in the sharing of knowledge and learning within the commissioning landscape
 - That coproduction can add significant value and save on duplication of cost as it also recognises that understanding the needs and building an designing service solutions requires a whole system approach
 - We can build capability across the system through the development of generic learning and development commissioning packages that support the development of the system and not just individuals
 - An holistic approach to learning and development can breakdown silos and can support organisation focusing on outcomes as well as joint commissioning

- 2.4 Through the development of the National Occupational Standards for commissioners it became clear that there was much support for the definition under point 2.2 and that this was what departments were driving to achieve. The key differentials were:
- The way they used commissioning to deliver it; and
 - The policy environment that they operated in, which created a different language and interpretation.
- 2.5 The Cross Government Commissioning Learning and Development Group was established in 2009 to bring together those involved in the development of learning and development material for commissioners across government to:
- Share knowledge; information and content to reduce the duplication of product development;
 - Identify opportunities for co-production of courses, sharing of learning and the adoption / adaption of existing material reducing duplication of design and development and thereby reducing pressure on the public purse, for example:
 - The Academy for Justice Commissioning has funded the development of an e-learning tool for commissioner development taking a DCSF product and working with other government departments and the National School for Government to share a product that was already in use within DCSF.
 - The DH have diagnostic tools that we are looking at making accessible across government
 - The NHS East of England are developing learning packages for General Practitioners, however they are keen not to reinvent and are currently reviewing what is already known about through the cross government group to minimise reinvention.
- 2.6 The Academy for Justice Commissioning has been in existence since 2007 and was established to support the development of capability within the criminal justice arena. However through the work of the cross government group it has become clear that there is a potential opportunity for the concept of an Academy for Commissioning to become a broader reality across the system as there is currently nothing else that provides access to the system from public, private, voluntary, charitable and social enterprise sectors. More information is attached at Annex B.

3. CONSIDERATION

- 3.1 What is clear is that the work of the Group has identified a large amount of excellent work that has been undertaken by departments but until the formation of the group there was no sharing of this information and, therefore, minimal collaboration and sharing
- 3.2 It is also evident that there is duplication being undertaken within the system and although we are supportive of the localisation agenda, it is important that the system has somewhere to go to determine what exists; make choices over whether it is fit for their purpose and to use it; recruit it or buy it. What would be unhelpful in the current climate is that much of it ends up being reinvented.
- 3.2 A number of the teams that have been developing this work are due to close by 31 March 2011 and each is considering how it retains the information with the knowledge that currently it will receive no further development nor will it be kept up to date.

- 3.3 In a climate where collaboration, sharing with people taking ownership whilst recognising that it would be wasteful to re-create, there is currently no vehicle to take this forward.
- 3.4 With the commonality that has been identified across departments in understanding the elements of a commissioning system, not having one definition is unhelpful and unhelpful to sharing and bringing communities together – one of the key asks of the new government.
- 3.5 There is a huge opportunity to potentially use something like the Academy for Justice Commissioning concept to promote the adoption and sharing of learning and capability development across the broader system including the citizen even within an environment of localisation.

4 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 There is a real opportunity to harness the work that has been done within the commissioning community across government at a national, regional and local level and it is recommended that consideration is given to:
- Supporting the work of the Academy for Justice Commissioning and considering whether there is a broader opportunity to build on something good that exists to share learning and to build cooperation; collaboration and capability development
 - Identifying some resource to support the storage; adoption and spread of the good work of those departments who have engaged in the development of commissioning products in support of capability development
 - Further promoting and developing some of the products that are available, for example:
 - Diagnostic tools within DH for use across the system
 - Competency profiles developed by Commissioning Support for London
 - Courses and course content developed by many government departments
 - Seminar programme of Academy for Justice Commissioning
 - E-learning tools being developed through collaboration between DCSF; NSG and Academy for Justice Commissioning
 - Two year commissioning programme – free licence provided by Excalibur to the Group being used by Probation Association to development Probation Trusts

Patsy Northern Chair Cross Government Commissioning Learning and Development Group
Richard Selwyn: DCSF (PIPC) Member of Cross Government Commissioning Learning and Development Group