

Modernising Commissioning



Response by Cornwall Council and the Voluntary Sector Commissioning Board to the Commissioning Green Paper

Date 05/01/2011

Background

Cornwall Council and its Voluntary sector partners have decided to respond to this consultation jointly as a partnership. The Voluntary Sector Commissioning board was set up in October 2010, to facilitate greater dialogue between the Public sector and the Voluntary Sector by helping to build capacity within the sector to help deliver public services and to aid commissioners in making commissioning decisions. The board is currently made up of ten thematic leads representing organisations within the voluntary sector, the Voluntary Sector forum for Cornwall and Cornwall Council's lead commissioners, Head of Procurement and Commissioning and the Director of Public Health.

It is anticipated that in the future the board will become a full public sector voluntary commissioning board with colleagues joining the board including Health, Police etc.

The responses

The response is divided into the voluntary sector response written by colleagues from Volunteer Cornwall, which is by no means a comprehensive view from across the sector; due to the timescale allowed for this consultation and by Cornwall Council directorate.

We have also ensured that our corporate procurement unit have been able to comment and these comments are included in the response below.

The following directorates have responded which corresponds at the moment to about 95% of the Council's current commissioning activities. This is set to extend to other directorates as the Council shifts to a more commissioning approach to delivering services over the next few years:

- Adult Care and Support (ACS)
- Children Schools and Families (CSF)
- Corporate Procurement

Adult Care and Support

Adult Care and Support welcomes the proposals as outlined in the Green Paper and acknowledges the need to shift to price and value rather than cost, and shift power to the local level.

Payment by results sits comfortably with outcome focussed contracting which is the vision for future contracts in Adult care and Support. Adult Care and Support has also identified the need to build incentives to encourage re enablement and maintenance of existing abilities as well as diversification for civil society organisations.

Civil Society Organisations will comprise a range of organisations which could significantly differ in size and management capacity.

Whilst recognising that there is a need to ensure openness about the proportions of spending distributed to independent providers, setting proportions may result in disadvantage for some smaller organisations who are not in a position to compete with the bigger players.

Adult Care and Support looks forward to the report of the Civil Society Red Tape Taskforce. With the introduction of personal budgets, it is essential that civil society organisations are encouraged to develop vibrant services to meet local need. TUPE is seen as a major barrier in developing new services largely on account of pension requirements and deficits. Civil Society Organisations do not always have the capacity to submit tenders which accurately reflect the risks associated with TUPE. There is a need to develop capacity in the sector – perhaps through consortia - to enable smaller organisations to be fully participative.

A focus on price and value rather than cost should address perverse incentives which can impact on service user choice and links clearly to outcome focussed commissioning. This focus should be of benefit to Civil Society Organisations where the added value of economic and social impact is assessed.

Commissioners need to have a strategic approach to identifying appropriate provision for people in the community. The approach to strategic commissioning adopted by Adult Care and Support in Cornwall will result in a holistic approach and will ensure citizen involvement throughout the commissioning cycle. This citizen involvement could be further enhanced by civil society organisations facilitating the process and ensuring a wide range of representative views which reflect local need. In particular in relation to personal budgets and direct payments, civil society organisations, and user led organisations, can play a crucial role in support and brokerage. This could be further extended in developing communities to support and in commissioning locally.

Children Schools and Families

The CSF commissioning approach already encompasses many of the discussion points for potential change listed in the consultation paper. CSF already employ an outcome focused, integrated commissioning approach which focuses less on price, but more on outcomes and sustainable futures.

The building of capacity and maximising the public and community sector is fundamental to developing quality services in Cornwall, whilst ensuring that there is equality for all partner organisations, no matter what size the organisation.

Reducing the bureaucracy and developing a more transparent process to commissioning is certainly something CSF would support and we are continually striving to ensure that processes and communication are as simple as possible.

Corporate Procurement Unit

The unit are all ready providing support and streamlining our processes for SME and VCS organisations with corporate standard and simplified PQQ, ITT and will further enhance this with the organisation wide introduction of E procurement and ERP.

Our dedicated webpages on the main Council website raises awareness and provides detailed advice and guidance for suppliers including a supplier toolkit.

There is also a link to our dedicated "tenders in Cornwall" website where all tenders are advertised and improved visibility, with access to information on contract opportunities by posting our contracts on the South West Portal (RIEP funded).

We are also encouraging and working closely with external business partners like Business Link and participating in presentations with local business forums.

The Voluntary Sector Commissioning board responses are contained in a separate appendix to this response.