

Public Services Team
Office for Civil Society
Admiralty Arch
The Mall
London SW1A 2WH

10th December 2010

Dear sirs,

Modernising Commissioning Green Paper

Submission of support capability offered in the local government esd-toolkit (effective service delivery) programme for consideration in the consultation process

I write in response to your call for ideas and recommendations as part of the consultation exercise within the Modernising Commissioning Green Paper. This is a paper copy of an electronic version which I sent to you by email on 17-Dec-2010. The electronic version includes hyperlinks to more information (highlighted in blue in this document).

Since 2001, local authorities and their partners have worked steadily together in developing a widely used public sector initiative known as the esd-toolkit (effective service delivery). I am the programme manager for this initiative with a remit to develop a standards framework that describes and evidences local authority performance information in a comprehensive and consistent manner across all organisations in the sector.

The Local Government Group feels sure that the assets of the esd-toolkit programme are well placed to contribute to the need for information and processes that will be necessary to underpin modernised commissioning. In summary, there is a ready made information source to help the process of understanding communities and their propensity to support widespread and new forms of commissioning, and links directly to the right officers in every council in the land. There are free methodologies and tools to develop focused strategies, develop business cases, and target marketing, and also ready-made sharing protocols. A very concise summary of the tools and know-how that I wish to draw to your attention is set out in the short paper online at:

<http://www.esd.org.uk/esdtoolkit/Documents.ashx?doc=ESD03322p&agency=573>

In the two sections that follow this letter, I give specific answers to relevant sub-questions in the consultation paper.

Background to esd-toolkit

In recent years, programme priorities have focused on developing better evidence of council business processes, on understanding customer make-up and their needs in each council area and on developing improved and efficient services around these needs. As a result, the esd-toolkit now hosts a number of mature business tools supported by case studies and hundreds of project summaries to assist councils in the following areas:

- Customer insight – knowing your citizens, where they live, their needs, preferences and propensity to change or to participate
- Productivity/Business Transformation – designing improved business processes/strategy and encouraging efficiencies by understanding of costs, of risks, of external factors to develop informed business cases
- Key information & information sharing standards – a mature framework that links business data (normally held in silos) with improvement tools giving a 360° view of local government operations underpinned by data transparency and Linked Data standards.

Impressive results have been achieved by the programme, whose work now centres on a community of over 24,000 local government practitioners working together to understand the challenges of the modernising and improvement agenda. They are collectively developing sector-owned knowledge-sharing standards, business tools and content, and a communications infrastructure to make sure the programme benefits are widely deployed and remain effective and relevant to councils. The programme centres on an online resource at <http://www.esd.org.uk> and is funded from council subscriptions and central grant sources. Around 70pc of councils currently subscribe to the programme.

I have tried to keep this response short and concise in order to draw your attention to the potential of these areas of activity to the Modernising Commissioning agenda. There is substantial information online at www.esd.org.uk/overview at www.esd.org.uk/publications and at the top level entry point www.esd.org.uk. Either myself or other team members will be happy to provide more details or visit you for briefings if you require to take these ideas further.

Yours sincerely



Dr Tim Adams
Programme Manager
Local Government Group

Response to specific sub-questions

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Objective: to enable commissioners to make strategic commissioning decisions on the basis of a full understanding of the social, environmental and economic impact.

Sub-question: what approaches would best support commissioning decisions that consider full social, environmental and economic value?

During 2010, the esd-toolkit has been integrating the outputs from the centrally funded five year Delivery Innovation Programme into an online resource centre available to all public sector initiatives. The objective of the programme was to facilitate close working between public, private and academic organisations to develop innovation methods and practical examples for business strategies and services that are informed by a full understanding of economic, social environmental considerations.

Specific tools that I would draw to your attention include:

The Social and Economic Business Case Tool which offers a robust process to produce a concise business case to inform the initial decision about commissioning a service including the justification for doing it. The tool helps create a clear and methodical project definition, identify and achieve stakeholder engagement, fully identify social and economic benefits, and create a comprehensive strategic project appraisal and investment case. – see

<http://www.esd.org.uk/esdtoolkit/Communities/EffectiveServiceDelivery/ContentView.aspx?ContentType=Content-513>

The Innovation Toolkit is a local service innovation process map and resource toolkit to guide service designers through the activities from initial ideas in response to the drivers for change and good research through the various stages of planning, challenging and agreeing the best approaches for a way forward. The process is rigorous, mature and dynamic. It is underpinned by hundreds of examples of worked examples for Local Authorities and proof of concept from Beacon councils. – see

<http://www.esd.org.uk/esdtoolkit/Communities/EffectiveServiceDelivery/ContentView.aspx?ContentType=Content-477>

The Solutions4Inclusion projects' data base which currently holds over 900 case studies and examples of practical projects in the public sector that have made use of the innovative tools provided within the esd-toolkit for engaging and improving the lives of citizens who fall into the most vulnerable groups in society. See - www.esd.org.uk/solutions4inclusion

The Customer Insight suite of tools assists councils in understanding the demographic profile of groups of citizens in their boroughs and their preferences to change, methods of interaction and specific user needs based upon their circumstances. We also have substantial evidence of the services delivered by local government that each citizen tends to use (drawn from evidence collected central by participating councils). This information is critical in highlighting the types of individual (and their home locations) who are particularly susceptible to embracing a commissioning agenda. For examples of the types of features and facilities in use by local government in this area, see:

<http://www.esd.org.uk/customerinsight>

The Service Re-Design and Value for Money tools assist councils in driving productivity and efficiency gains by understanding and sharing the internal business process maps in each council that underpin service delivery from initiation to fulfilment, costing each stage in the process and highlighting areas of duplication, waste, non-value adding and over-spend. Moreover councils can share performance between each other and optimise their approaches by selecting best practice from the sector as a whole. This area of back office scrutiny can play well into the commissioning process to ensure that the approaches adopted remain efficient, focused and built upon past experience and lessons learned by others. See: <http://www.esd.org.uk/vfm>

Objective: to enable civil society organisations to support and facilitate the increased involvement of citizens and communities in commissioning.

Sub-question: what can civil society organisations contribute to the roll out of Local Integrated services? What barriers exist to realising this contribution? How can these barriers be removed?

The heart of the esd-toolkit is the Local Government Business Model (LGBM) that has been developed by officers in the local government sector over nine years and which now has become a *de facto* standard for describing the business of local government. This model comprises a series of interconnected lists (or ontologies) of definitions for every aspect of a councils operations. It might be considered a mind map of a local authority, centred around the LGSL – the local government services list, containing over 1000 different services that a council delivers – with links to lists of customer types, their needs, the legislation underpinning council operations, their partners, the documentation they hold, their web site navigations, internal processes, etc.

The benefit of this in-depth understanding of how local services are delivered, by whom and to whom provides critical intelligence when designing a commissioning strategy. It provides ready made evidence on who best to be involved, the existence of projects already underway, how they support and interact with each other.

Particularly, I would draw your attention again to the work by the sector on Customer Insight as described in the previous section. This will help 'commissioning' projects to identify individuals and businesses best likely to support the objectives of the project and most able to be supportive. Councils already use these tools and techniques to assist targeted marketing campaigns for service take-up, movements to cheaper channels of interaction (such as paying council tax by direct debit), etc. Case studies are available here:

<http://www.esd.org.uk/esdtoolkit/Communities/Profiling/ContentView.aspx?ContentType=Content-334>

Solutions4inclusion on the esd-toolkit has been mentioned already in the previous section. It provides a living, changing data base of project examples, along with participants, beneficiaries, achievements and lessons learned, where civil society organisations, public sector groups, academics and private companies have worked together to contribute to the roll out of local integrated services – especially those serving the most vulnerable groups (which tends also to be the areas of largest spend).

Several examples of the achievements of this work are documented in research papers and case studies in the relevant sections here: <http://www.esd.org.uk/publications>