



Public Services Team
Office for Civil Society
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Date 5 January 2011

when responding please contact

our ref

your ref:

Dear Public Services Team

Modernising Commissioning: Increasing the role of charities, social enterprises, mutuals and cooperatives in public service delivery

Please find enclosed a brief response to some of the questions posed in the above Green Paper from East Sussex County Council's Adult Social Care Department. The Coalition Government's stated intentions in the Green Paper to tackle the difficulties experienced by commissioners and Civil Society organisations in becoming fully involved in the public sector market are to be welcomed. It is acknowledged that these difficulties are longstanding and represent real barriers to the creation of a genuine plurality of provision within public sector markets.

In East Sussex, with our health partners, we are currently working with local Civil Society organisations to transform the way we fund the sector to increase its role in delivering health, wellbeing and social care outcomes for residents in the county. The approach we are adopting is based on models of good practice promoted by the Local Government Improvement and Development Agency – mainly Birmingham City Council and also the Isle of Wight Council. Although as a two-tier Shire County we are different in composition and issues to both Birmingham and the IOW, we have found their experience to be invaluable in developing a model specific to the needs of East Sussex. We have also found the National Audit Office's work in this area to be extremely useful.

In February we will publish jointly with our local NHS Commissioners a Commissioning Grants Prospectus detailing a range of investment opportunities available for Civil Society organisations. Our local approach is based on the following key building blocks:



1. Reaching consensus locally on what social capital is in relation to the outcomes we need to see delivered for residents – and within this acknowledging the role that civil society organisations play in delivering social capital in a structured and organised way.
2. Establishing a clear link to the delivery of social capital, and therefore the role of Civil Society organisations, as part of the funding objectives being published in the Prospectus.
3. Determining whether there is a relatively under-developed market for delivery - making grant-making via the Prospectus appropriate.
4. Designing an appraisal process that enables the value added by social capital to be acknowledged, scored and weighted equally alongside cost and quality.
5. Ensuring that the journey towards achieving funding is competitive, transparent, proportionate and streamlined – and above all a 'user-friendly' experience.

We are in the process of designing an end to end funding process that enables the Council and the local NHS to manage the legal and financial risks associated with commissioning activity. There will no doubt be learning that comes out of this exercise and we will take stock after this first Prospectus is published and funding is awarded. However, as a Council we are committed to using our commissioning and place-shaping role to try and maintain sustainable patterns of delivery at the grassroots level – where the most vulnerable residents in the county will need them most - at the same time helping communities to help themselves.

It should be noted that this response is necessarily brief and we have only addressed some of the questions. Although I appreciate that constraints on time given to respond to consultations are inevitable I would like to express my dismay at being given less than a month, including the festive holiday period, to comment on this important area of policy development.

A final point would be that it is individual local authorities and organizations that bear the risks associated with commissioning for delivery of local public services. Any changes heralded by the Green Paper will need to take this into account by implementing measures that support local authorities to carry out this role effectively.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'KH', followed by a horizontal line.

Keith Hinkley

Director of Adult Social Care

Enclosed - Response to the Modernising Commissioning Green paper from East Sussex County Council Adult Social Care