



Lucy Sydney, Deputy Director,  
Commissioning and Capability,  
Cabinet Office

## Content

### Editor's Comment

*Page 2*

### Integrated Commissioning Collaboration -

**A case of 2+2=5**

*Richard Field, Cohort Lead*

*Page 4*

### "Changing the World"

*Val Birchall,*

*Birmingham City Council*

*Page 6*

### Developing Leicestershire Police and Crime Commissioning

*Office of the Police and Crime  
Commissioner for Leicestershire*

*Page 8*

### The Norfolk Commissioning Academy

*Catherine Underwood,  
Norfolk County Council*

*Page 11*

### The Commissioning Academy One Year On

*Dan Ramsey, Department for  
Work and Pensions*

*Page 14*

### The Humberside Fire and Rescue Service Commissioning Academy experience

*Chris Blacksell, Humberside Fire  
and Rescue*

*Page 14*

### Academy Restructure

*Page 16*

### Events & Information

*Pages 17 & 18*

**Welcome to the Spring edition of our quarterly news bulletin.**

**This issue has a focus on the Cabinet Office's Commissioning Academy which was launched in April 2012. This is an extended development programme for senior commissioners from all parts of the public sector and aims to help commissioners deliver more efficient and effective public services. This edition features articles from leaders that have participated in the programme and demonstrates how it has helped them improve their commissioning of public services.**

## Academy News

### Academy Restructure

The Academy executive has just undergone a restructure and been replaced by the Academy Strategy Group to lead the Academy moving forward. The Strategy Group is led by our new Chair, Simon Marshall, Head of Health and Wellbeing Co-Commissioning, National Offender Management Service. Please see page 16 for more details.

### NEW Introduction to Commissioning Learning tool

The Academy is launching a new commissioning learning tool - Introduction to Commissioning. This eLearning module is intended as an introduction for those who will be commissioning public services at both national and local level and is designed to help promote a shared commissioning language across the public sector. Visit the Academy [website](#) to find out more.

### Manchester Academy Evening Seminars

We are pleased to announce that we have now made bi-monthly seminars in Manchester a permanent feature and our next event is entitled **Multi-Agency Domestic Abuse Commissioning: Lessons for Policy and Practice**. The event is scheduled for Thursday, 1 May at Manchester Metropolitan University and more details can be found on the Academy [website](#).

### Academy Learning Groups

These groups are self directed, self supported groups led by an expert facilitator. Do you have a topic that would work well in a learning group environment? We are considering **Victim Services** as a topic and if you would like to be involved or have any suggestions for other topics [email](#) us.

# Editors' Comments

**Thank you to our Guest Editor for this issue -  
Lucy Sydney, Deputy Director, Commissioning  
Academy and Capability at the Cabinet Office.**



*Lucy Sydney, Deputy Director,  
Commissioning Academy  
and Capability,  
Cabinet Office*

**The Cabinet Office Commissioning Academy –  
going from strength to strength**

## Commissioning Academy

*I'm delighted to have been given the opportunity to guest edit the Spring edition of the Academy for Justice Commissioning News Bulletin. Since recently taking over responsibility for the Cabinet Office's Commissioning Academy, I've been captured by the enthusiasm of all those connected with the programme, and the real feeling of community amongst them – a message which comes through clearly in a number of the articles in this bulletin. Members of the Academy for Justice Commissioning are an important part of this community so I really welcome the opportunity to spread the word about what we have been doing.*

This is one audience that will already be very clear of the need to improve commissioning skills. You don't need Cabinet Office to tell you that every part of the public sector will continue to need to face up to the challenge

of reduced budgets for some time to come – and at the same time demand for services and public expectations for services are rising and there is huge pressure to do more for less. So there needs to be a transformation in the way services are designed and delivered to deliver more flexibility and choice for users, and more local control over the way they are run.

And you'll already be aware that the public sector is far more diverse now than it was a decade ago, with an ever-increasing number of live and trading public sector mutuals added to the mix of joint ventures, social enterprises and charities already providing public services. Commissioners are at the forefront of this public service transformation; they need the practical skills and judgement to design different ways to deliver services, to shape and manage new markets and build more effective and more efficient models of delivery.

So what does Cabinet Office bring to the party? It's true that we are not known for our extensive commissioning experience, but we are at the centre of a whole range of innovative practice in terms of open policy making, the mutualisation agenda, social investment, working with the voluntary, community and social enterprise sector to open up more public sector business opportunities and developing commercial capability. We are well-placed to marshal the brightest and best to deliver an exciting programme and our long-established power to convene people from across the public sector helps us reach out into the diverse population of commissioners.

The Commissioning Academy programme was carefully developed and tested with and by senior commissioners. It is about 'hearts and minds' rather than technical training, designed to equip participants with the tools to tackle the many challenges facing our public services, take forward the new opportunities and consistently commission the right outcomes for their communities. The feedback

from participants and their sponsors has always been terrific; recently the CEO of Lewisham Council commented that staff who had attended were “quite wise owls and not easily impressed but they simply couldn’t stop singing the praises of this course”. You can read more about participants’ positive experiences in the articles that follow.

As we work to scale up the programme, we recognise the importance of hanging onto the founding principles that make it such a positive experience for participants:

- An extensive programme bringing together small mixed cohorts from across the public sector over the course of 6 months
- Time and space away from the office to think strategically and the opportunity to cover a range of topics including outcome-based commissioning, behavioural insights and new models of delivery - such as mutual and joint venture companies.
- Exposing participants to stimulating new thinking. In this issue Richard Field, one of our Cohort Leaders, reflects on the importance of effective collaborative leadership across organisational boundaries in contrast to a narrow concern with the technical aspects of commissioning, and participants from Leicestershire’s Police and Crime Commissioner explain how they valued the opportunity to think differently and to challenge existing practice.
- The peer network – or as Val Birchall from Birmingham City Council puts it in her article,

meeting “the need for the strategic commissioners amongst us to keep the faith and support each other”. Ongoing support is available through our alumni network.

We know that we need to reach out beyond those who traditionally consider themselves to be “commissioners”; all public servants involved in policy development and delivery must be commercially astute. Chris Blacksell from Humberside Fire and Rescue Services describes how he became aware that “commissioning is not procurement but is actually a means of ensuring that all available resources are harnessed so that outcomes are achieved in the most efficient and effective way possible...something that Fire and Rescue Services do every day”. This example shows how transformation makes a real difference to frontline public services. And as Dan Ramsey from the Department for Work and Pensions argues in his article, all central government leaders involved in transforming public services would benefit from the cross sector experience which the Commissioning Academy provides.

The Commissioning Academy has come so far in a short time: from the first pilot in 2012, a total of 231 people from over 50 organisations have now passed through our virtual campus gates. But the challenge now is to reach a much larger population. Francis Maude, Minister for the Cabinet Office, refers to it as a ‘must attend’ programme for

all commissioning leaders. He is not alone: in their pre-budget statement, NCVO called for significant upscaling of the programme.

So we are delighted that Norfolk have taken a pioneering approach in becoming the first local Commissioning Academy – as set out in Catherine Underwood’s article – and we look forward to working with many other alumni from the central programme to further spread the word in this way. I would also like to thank the Academy for Justice Commissioning for their contribution in getting us this far and I look forward to deepening our relationship.

We need capable, confident and courageous people in the public sector who are responsible for designing and delivering services for the future. The Commissioning Academy is an important tool for helping deliver that. We will continue to be open to all public sector commissioning organisations, including central government departments, local authorities, health bodies and justice organisations.

The next cohorts will start in September, and we welcome enquiries and applications. To find out more visit GOV.UK (<https://www.gov.uk/the-commissioning-academy-information>) or email us ([servicedesk@cabinet-office.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:servicedesk@cabinet-office.gsi.gov.uk)).

*Lucy Sydney  
Deputy Director, Commissioning  
Academy and Capability  
Cabinet Office*

# Integrated Commissioning Collaboration - A case of 2 + 2 = 5



*Richard Field is a cohort leader for the Commissioning Academy offered by the Cabinet Office*

*The current context within which public services operate is turbulent. Legislation, budget cuts, wicked issues and unprecedented interest in the perceived quality and performance of public services make this the most significant period of change for decades. Commissioning and collaboration are two important responses to this turbulence, sometimes pursued separately, other times in a thoughtful, integrated manner.*

Commissioning as defined by the National Offender Management Service (NOMS) is the 'cycle of assessing the needs of courts, offenders, defendants, victims and communities then designing, securing and monitoring services to meet these needs while making the best use of available resources' <sup>1</sup> Definitions however vary, for example the Department for Communities and Local Government define commissioning as 'the means to secure best value and deliver the positive outcomes that meet the needs of citizens,

communities and service users'. <sup>2</sup> It is not just definitions that vary, so do specific approaches to commissioning and the vigour with which these are pursued. One important difference for example is whether the focus for commissioning is services or outcomes, a distinction which affects the level of challenge and the extent to which innovation is encouraged. An outcome focus is more likely to involve consideration of alternatives to conventional service delivery including stimulating service users to 'self-care', local communities to co-produce, other agencies, providers and the wider community to change behaviour, etc.

There appears to be widespread agreement that commissioning involves analysis, planning, doing and reviewing, each of which is a set of technical processes, activities and tools that constitute the 'what' of commissioning. Done well commissioning leads to improved outcomes, reduced cost, better performance and a host of other benefits.

The second growing response to environmental pressure is collaboration, a term the Oxford Dictionaries define as 'the action of working with someone to produce something'

Collaboration occurs in different theatres including internally between units within a public sector body, between public sector bodies, with providers, with service users and other members of the community (Figure 1).

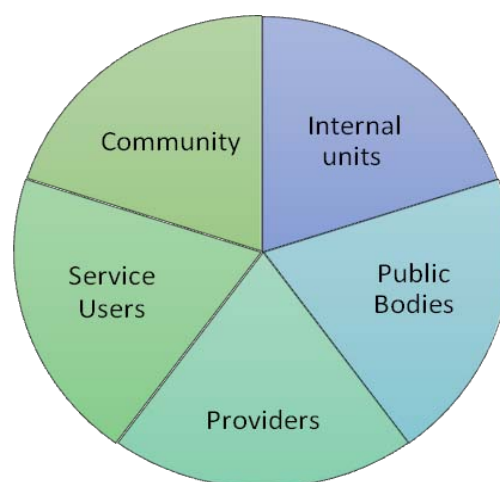


Figure 1: Collaborative Theatres

The potential for collaboration in each theatre depends on context. It should be noted that even where collaboration is relevant the extent to which this occurs varies.



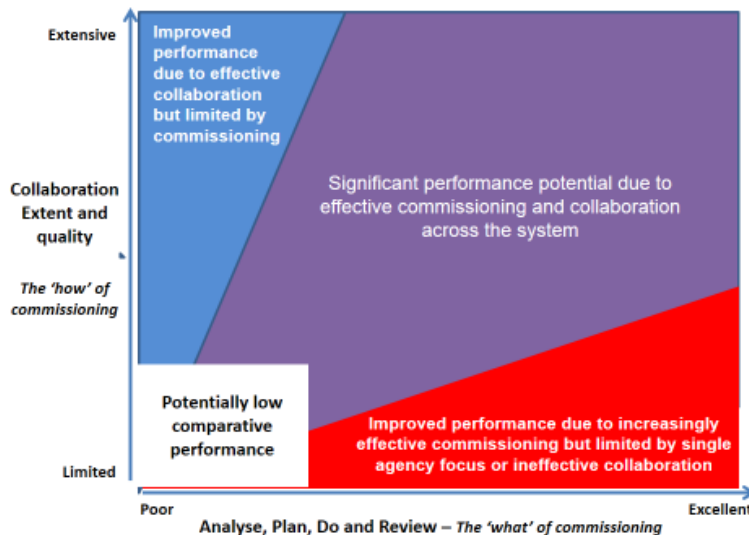
Collaboration is only one type of relationship; others include consultation, engagement, co-design, co-production, integration and partnership, all of which in practice have unclear meanings. Collaboration is not new and for years public servants have been pursuing economies of scale, pathway efficiencies and outcome improvement through combining back office services, creating one-stop shops, integrating teams, etc. Working with individual service users or the community to realise the outcomes they wish is quite different from merely consulting or engaging. As public funding diminishes the extent and quality of collaboration will need to increase.

Integrated commissioning and collaboration should lead to the right outcomes being pursued, in the best possible way with less reliance on public funding. Ultimately this may lead to community commissioning.

Simply being involved in collaboration does not however guarantee high performance. It is the quality of collaboration that really counts and effective relationships between a few collaborators is better than poor quality relationships with many. All commissioning, even when undertaken in isolation by a single agency, involves some element of collaboration. This is the 'how' of commissioning and higher performance can be

expected where effective collaborative leadership is exercised across the system.

Figure 2 brings together the technical processes of commissioning and collaboration resulting in four performance areas each with the following



potential:

**Area 1** - Organisations that have either failed to embrace or are not good at commissioning and collaboration run the risk of performing less well than ones that do either or both well.

**Area 2** - Organisations that are good at the technical aspects of commissioning but less so collaboration are likely to be found to the bottom right of Figure 2. While these organisations may benefit from effective technical commissioning processes the scale will be limited by single agency operation

**Area 3** - Organisations that are good at collaborating in terms of scale and quality of relationship but are poor at the technical aspects of commissioning are likely to be found towards the top left of Figure 2. These

organisations might achieve economies of scale and joined up services but run the risk that the outcomes pursued are not the ones most desired by the community and that the general public expectation will be that the state will provide services to meet all need.

**Area 4** - Organisations that pursue integrated commissioning and collaboration and are good at both are well placed to reach high levels of performance.

In recent years much has been written about the technical process of commissioning, less about collaboration and even less about the integration of commissioning and collaboration. The

skills required for effective collaboration include many that are common to general leadership including influencing, the use of power, coalition building, team leadership and working in partnership. However collaborative commissioning demands different application of these skills and the ability to work effectively with an even greater diversity of people. Emotional intelligence is at premium when working in today's highly contested spaces; managing today while co-inventing the future.

A series of questions face us in the emerging world

1. How effective are we at the technical aspects of commissioning?
2. Are we commissioning services or outcomes?
3. Who could we collaborate with?

4. Are we collaborating with all those that we should?
  5. What is the quality of our internal collaboration?
  6. What is the quality of our collaboration with other public agencies and providers?
  7. What is the quality of our collaboration with individual service users and wider community?
  8. Are we commissioning and collaborating in an integrated way?
  9. Do we have sufficient leadership skills to collaborate?
  10. To what extent do we possess emotional intelligence?
- Many organisations are well into their commissioning journey and

rightly asking 'what next'. For many the answer lies in further developing collaborative capacity alongside strong technical skills within a well thought through commissioning strategy.

***Richard Field**  
Cohort Leader, Cabinet Office  
Commissioning Academy*

#### References

1. Ministry of Justice (2011) Commissioning Support Guidance, An Introduction to NOMS Offender Services Commissioning (online) [www.justice.gov.uk/downloads/publications](http://www.justice.gov.uk/downloads/publications)
2. Department for Communities and Local Government (2009) Empowering Communities, Shaping Prospects, Transforming Lives – A Vision for Intelligent Commissioning in Local Government.

# Changing the world - a new commissioning approach for Birmingham City Council



*Val Birchall  
Birmingham City  
Council*

***"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it is the only thing that ever has". This quote from Margaret Mead could have been written as a byline for establishing a new commissioning approach for Birmingham City Council.***

It sounds like something from Yes Minister, but our Joint Commissioning Network this week took the decision to de-commission itself, considering finally that its work is done and new arrangements for commissioning across the Council are taking hold. It

hasn't been an easy ride. Reflecting on our journey from a coalition of the willing to a new corporate approach, it has been largely the conviction of just such a small group that has moved us forward.

From the off, in a bid to join procurement and commissioning activities more effectively, Procurement colleagues took the lead and established a Joint Commissioning Network of senior officers from across the Council, with responsibility for commissioning services as diverse as adult care, children's services, culture and employment access.

Our initial work to develop a Commissioning Toolkit, capable

of being used to support commissioning activity across the authority, acted as a force to galvanise us and a shared opportunity for learning from each other, and from colleagues elsewhere in the country.



When three of our team started to attend the Commissioning Academy programme, the toolkit was still a draft. Now "completed", we continue to

improve the toolkit and incorporate new developments in our thinking, and respond to changes in legislation and good practice from wherever it is to be found.



Our early “maps” of commissioning provided visibility across the Council’s directorates but in developing the 100 day plan which formed the basis of our output from the Academy, we concluded that a Council wide framework of outcomes would be needed to enable commissioning to have a strategic focus.

Thus the thoughtful, committed citizens of the Joint Commissioning Network had formed, stormed and normed, when an authority-wide service review process began. It was the natural grouping to support the development of a structure that would enable a commissioning approach across the Council.

The service review of Commissioning and Contract Management found disparate approaches within the authority. It identified a need, in the context of reduced resources, for a more strategic approach to commissioning and contract management (distinct from operational management) and supported a further move

We will **focus on people or places** and their needs rather than the different organisations in which we work. In areas such as social care, health, housing, family support and learning, there will be **integrated planning, commissioning and delivery of a complete package of services to the individual or family** rather than a number of different services that have to develop separate relationships with them. Services for each local place or neighbourhood will also be integrated and co-ordinated, using **neighbourhood management.**”

“At all levels there will be a **radically reformed approach to commissioning**, including the promotion and celebration of social responsibility amongst service providers and suppliers and a wider contribution to running the city. The consideration of social value is being built into our commissioning decisions and we are working hard to manage external contracts more effectively.”

towards becoming a commissioning organisation.

This was articulated in the Council’s White Paper on future working, which also sought to increase co-production of services:

As the thinking developed, the Joint Commissioning Network considered a structure to enable, including centralising all commissioning and contract management, or establishing directorate-based centres of commissioning.

The Centres of Excellence for Commissioning were eventually created along thematic lines (and supported by a Corporate Hub), which we believed would be more effective in enabling joint commissioning for outcomes, in keeping with the White Paper aspiration. The Thematic Centres of Excellence for People, Place and Economy aim to remove duplication, provide best value/best fit to outcomes, demonstrate efficiency, consistency and transparency of process. They are charged with commissioning for multiple outcomes and focused on reducing future demand for services. The principle is to work as a “One Council” approach.

At this stage in the process, as the new Thematic Centres take up the cause, our pressing tasks are to develop the corporate outcomes framework and incorporate the mapping of contract and commissioning activities to enable forward planning in keeping with the vision set out above. One of the key challenges remains to spread the word and encourage a commissioning mindset across the Council. A programme of communication, led by the Cabinet Member responsible for Commissioning and Contract Management and the senior managers who comprise the new centres, is poised to start.

Also about to begin is another round of corporate reviews which will be utilising the corporate commissioning toolkit and the support of the Centres





of Excellence to ensure a focus on outcome based planning and optimisation of resources.

Our early “storms” have developed into a fast-maturing and well-developed approach to

commissioning (with a fully integrated understanding of its relationship with procurement) and we hope this is capable of informing models across local government.

Change, according to Martin Luther King, does not come in on the wheels of inevitability, but comes through continuous struggle. Even with high level support, there is a need for the Strategic Commissioners

amongst us to keep the faith and support each other to ensure that as resources dwindle, an effective case is made for a clear and outcome focussed approach that can support the reinvention of public services.

*Val Birchall  
Birmingham City Council*

# Developing Leicestershire Police and Crime Commissioning



**POLICE & CRIME  
COMMISSIONER  
for Leicestershire**  
Your voice in Leicester,  
Leicestershire & Rutland

*A team of 3 from the staff of the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) for Leicestershire were part of Cohort 1 of the Commissioning Academy. The team consisted of Paul Stock - Chief Executive, Sue Haslett - Commissioning Manager and Suzanne Houlihan - Planning and Performance Co-ordinator. Our team supports the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) - the “and Crime” Commissioner part of his job title is not*

*only innovative, but also essential to achieving the outcomes in his Police and Crime Plan.*

At the launch of the Academy, it was said that it would deliver “a new wave of expert commissioners”. It’s fair to say we all started the Academy with very different levels of knowledge and experience of commissioning but obviously we were all keen to learn more. It hasn’t made us experts but it has definitely helped the OPCC to think differently and challenge our previous thinking.

From October 2014, Police and Crime Commissioners will be responsible for commissioning local victim and witness services within their geographical areas. This presents a time of both challenge and opportunity. It’s the time to redefine our relationship with other public sector partners, provider organisations (private, other public and voluntary) and local communities. We need to avoid the creation of postcode lotteries, the duplication of provision and ensure that victims and witnesses get the high quality help and support they need, when they need it.



Our aim is to improve the journey of all victims and witnesses through the whole criminal justice system, with particular emphasis on ensuring that specialist support is available for victims of serious crime, and those who are vulnerable, those who are intimidated or those who are persistently targeted.

Our Victim and Witness 100 day plan was primarily developed during the programme. The Academy provided us with precious thinking time, in a period spent away from the office, to reflect on the PCC's vision for victims and witnesses and consider the many lessons learnt from guest speakers. Together with peer challenge, this resulted in a plan which has provided focus for this complex piece of commissioning.



We're having detailed discussions about potential solutions with local providers – trying to understand their viewpoints and also to tackle some of the misconceptions they have previously had about the role of the OPCC. We've learnt the importance of taking

account of the strategic aims of providers at all levels, whilst considering the links to regional and national strategies and legislation.



The sessions on market development/engagement and working with the voluntary and community sector were particularly useful. Our commissioning framework includes a PCC Grants process which has recently been completed. The lessons learnt from the Academy resulted in us holding information and advice workshops with the sector which led to significant improvements in the quality of the grant applications received, particularly in terms of identifying relevant performance measures. We also refined our PCC Grant evaluation process, involving partners at both the shortlisting and Grant Review Panel stages. Their specialist knowledge and ability to identify potential threats and opportunities proved to be invaluable.

The Academy enabled all of us to learn from many other commissioning organisations. We've built an extensive network of contacts with a

wide range of experiences and skills who are more than willing to discuss our ideas and issues. It's been great to continue to develop some of those relationships over the 3 to 4 months since we 'graduated' from the Academy. It's also broadened our networks as our Academy peers have put us in touch with some more of their local colleagues and partners.

Our PCC, Sir Clive Loader, has always insisted that we should commission outcomes and not services. The programme has supported this and it has improved our belief in our own commissioning framework. The sessions regarding insight and analysis based commissioning have increased our confidence in requesting evidence and managing contracts through the use of evidence based performance. As a result, we commission outcomes and aspire to provide services that continually improve outcomes for the people and communities of Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland.

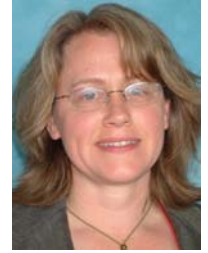
***Paul Stock,  
Chief Executive***

***Sue Haslett  
Commissioning Manager***

***Suzanne Houlihan  
Planning and Performance Co-ordinator***

***Office of the Police and Crime  
Commissioner for  
Leicestershire***

# The Norfolk Commissioning Academy



*Catherine Underwood,  
Norfolk County Council and  
Norfolk Clinical  
Commissioning Groups*

*In 2013 Norfolk County Council was part of the pilot of the Cabinet Office's Commissioning Academy. The timing was just right for us – as commissioners we are all trying to solve the same problem: how to square off reduced budgets and growing demand while retaining the quality and outcomes that really matter? We relished the opportunity to develop new solutions to these challenges.*

Being part of this national programme allowed us to bring new thinking to our approach to commissioning. The Academy requires participants to devise and deliver '100 day plans' to deliver real impact from their learning. Our plan set out how we would implement a new approach to commissioning in the Council. The rigour of the Academy's peer challenge helped us to hone the recommendations we made to Chief Officers and the Cabinet.

Having completed the programme we identified key benefits as:

- Hearing top notch speakers and thinkers from all sorts of fields
- Exposure to new approaches, perspectives and technical methods
- Peer challenge under the Chatham house rule
- The structure of delivering a project from our learning on the programme
- The sign up of our Chief Executive and Leader as sponsors, meaning they not only endorsed our attendance but also welcomed the challenge we would bring back to the authority
- The Alumni Network keeping us linked with commissioners all around the country
- Direct impact on our commissioning practice.

## **Creating a local Academy**

On completing the programme we thought how powerful it would be if we'd been able to share the opportunity with our partner commissioners in Norfolk. We have one county council, 7 district and borough councils, 5 clinical commissioning groups, a

police and crime commissioner. We are all seeking to get the best outcomes for Norfolk within the resources we have available to us and we know the old solutions are no longer adequate to the task. Norfolk has a strong history of collaboration in commissioning and a diverse set of partnerships but the Academy had provided us with some real stimulus for change.

Hence the idea of a Norfolk Commissioning Academy which became a key deliverable of our 100 day plan. Our vision was to bring the experience of the national Academy to Norfolk: to stimulate senior commissioners to develop innovation in partnerships which would deliver real benefits for Norfolk.

We have been seeking to create a sustainable community of learning and practice in which those creating, delivering and using commissioned services can learn from, and share with, colleagues from across the many facets of the commissioning landscape.

## **Making it happen**

The Cabinet Office team were tremendously helpful – and generous - sharing their advice

and expertise on how to transfer the approach to a local level. Buy in was essential so we engaged early with chief executives across our local commissioning organisations to share our proposals, which were welcomed and supported.

Like the Cabinet Office programme, the Norfolk Academy comprises of 8 days across about 8 months. Each day is themed with invited speakers and space for exploring the material and topic. Themes include outcomes based commissioning, provider perspectives, new models and financing. This is a collaborative learning experience and importantly, part of the design allows for the group to determine what they want out of the latter part of the programme.

It has been really important to us to share the ingredients of the Cabinet Office programme which were so vital:

- The right ethos: challenge and stimulation of commissioning experts, not teaching people how to commission
- The right input: great speakers from a range of backgrounds
- The right cohort: ensuring sufficient seniority and balance to make the group work
- The right co-ordination: someone who could work the magic of bringing it all together and allowing the cohort to influence the

programme to meet their requirements.

### Progress so far

The Norfolk Commissioning Academy launched in November 2013. Mirroring the national approach, we invited chief executive sponsors to the launch. Alumni from the national programme spoke to the group of their experience and the benefits of the opportunity.

We have a thriving group of senior managers as our first cohort, from district, borough and county councils, the health service and police and crime commissioning. They are spending precious time thinking differently together about their commissioning challenges and innovative solutions. They are committing to novel approaches to familiar problems. New connections are being formed and existing relationships have a new focus. It's a powerful mix. With integration of services, public service efficiencies and partnerships, community assets and budgets high on everyone's agenda, there are plenty of opportunities to innovate together: implementing the Better Care Fund, enabling communities and local commissioning budgets are areas for early attention. The group are driven to use the Academy as a springboard for real local impact.

We are evaluating and adjusting the programme as we go along – a lesson we learnt from our Cabinet Office colleagues. But

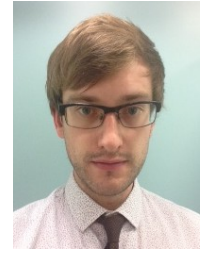
already we can see the value of the Norfolk Commissioning Academy and expect to be inviting applications for the second cohort shortly.

### Top tips for a local academy

- Get your partnership executive and member sign up
- Ensure the invitation to participants emphasises that this is a collaborative learning experience – not a traditional training programme
- Make sure participants are committed to driving changes across the local public sector landscape
- Ensure a diverse cohort – and who are in senior commissioning leadership roles
- Don't get stuck on the commissioning/procurement debate
- Make sure you don't just do the day job on the Academy days
- Invite speakers from out of the area for refreshing perspectives – from all aspects of the system – particularly providers
- Enlist an outstanding facilitator – who ideally combines leadership and commissioning experience and knowledge
- Leave scope to shape some of the programme with your cohort.

*Catherine Underwood  
Norfolk County Council and  
Norfolk Clinical Commissioning  
Groups*

# The Commissioning Academy One Year On



*Dan Ramsey,  
Department for  
Work and Pensions*

*It's just over 2 months since the Commissioning Academy 'One Year On' event was held at LGA headquarters in Smith Square, Westminster. There was a great deal of positivity – even when speakers pushed the attendees hard to voice concerns and issues with the programme, few were forthcoming. Perhaps the packed room of senior public sector officials proved prohibitive, but we should probably take the reluctance of the attendees to offer criticism as a sign that the programme is being well received – and that perhaps the Academy is generating a certain loyalty too.*

The anniversary of the programme is a good point at which to reflect on progress made and the challenges ahead. I have a number of lenses through which to consider this. I'm a member of the Commissioning Academy 'Operations Board' that supports the Cabinet Office team in running the programme; I'm a member of the alumni, having completed the second 'pilot' cohort; and I've attended the steering group, chaired by the Minister for Civil Society Nick Hurd.

## *Progress*

As a member of the Operations Board, I've seen the programme grow. When I attended my first Operations Board meeting in September 2012, the first pilot cohort was yet to complete the programme. By the time of our most recent meeting in February 2014, we had an Alumni of over 100 with 87 commissioners currently working their way through the programme.

In 15 months, we've gone from



testing the concept to having an established model, which both feedback from participants and demand for spaces indicate is valued. My colleagues and I at DWP have contributed to that positive feedback and generated some of that demand. While there's scope to develop the content of the programme further, the three DWP groups to complete the programme have all valued the experience – and we have two more groups just beginning the Academy journey. The challenge now is to capture

the impact that experience is having in our organisation – demonstrating how it is helping us to deliver 'more for less'.

For DWP, the impacts of the Academy will be diverse. For example, there will be impacts at the strategic level: exposure to the way in which the wider public sector has sought to meet its commissioning challenges has shaped our high-level commissioning strategy for welfare-to-work, due for publication this year. There will also be impacts at the operational level: frontline Jobcentre Plus managers used their time on the Academy to develop plans for better joint working with local partners.

These impacts reflect the way DWP, as a large and complex entity, commissions. We have staff across the country who engage in the commissioning process in different ways. For example, in welfare-to-work, we may seek to meet our Departmental objective of promoting high levels of work through a Jobcentre Plus frontline manager who commissions a small-scale specialist service to meet a very localised need or by nationally commissioning a large-scale programme like the Work



Programme, which draws on staff from across the Department's corporate centre. Therefore our 'commissioners' may be strategists, policy makers, commercial experts, change specialists and frontline managers. That we've already had staff across roles attend the Academy programme is a real positive; their diversity points to a challenge facing commissioners – and by extension the Academy – in the years to come.



### ***Future challenges: an identity problem to tackle?***

The Civil Service Reform Plan and Open Public Services White Paper have set a clear direction. Both documents are also clear that there will be more public sector commissioning. But what is commissioning? It's a question often raised. In the discussions I've witnessed, commissioners themselves are generally pretty confident of what's *not* commissioning (i.e. just the procurement process) but there tends to be less clarity about what it is. There are plenty of documents which cover commissioning or aspects of the process – and some use more carefully defined terms than others.

There are many definitions of commissioning and Academy programme participants have set out the high-level stages of an excellent commissioning process in the Academy 'framework document'. But documents tend not to set out a detailed description of the commissioning process – and for a good reason: there are lots of models of commissioning and so there's an understandable reluctance to pin the notion down too precisely and in too much detail. And I can also understand those who have argued we shouldn't spend too long debating terminology and definitions; 'what's in a name' after all?

However, to build capability in commissioning in central government, I'd argue we need to be clearer on what it is. Our job is to identify solutions to the most complex problems and to deliver these at the largest scale requires considerable input from numbers of highly specialised staff from across the current set of professions (there are currently 22 recognised professions in the Civil Service). These staff are required to play an important 'commissioning' role, but I doubt many would view it in these terms – which is not surprising given the breadth of the definitions and descriptions of commissioning. And if they do not view their work as commissioning, then what use to them is a Commissioning Academy? Yet all central government leaders involved in transforming public services would benefit from the cross



sector experience which the Academy provides.

That the Commissioning Academy alumni count amongst its number public officials from such a range of organisations, and with a range of backgrounds and specialist skills, is testament to progress in communicating what commissioning is and who commissioners are. But to build an even stronger cadre of commissioners we need to go further here – particularly in central government. And I think the task going further falls to existing Academy alumni from central government. If we're able to reflect on successfully tackling commissioning's 'identity problem' at the Academy's 'Two Years On' event next January 2015, it will be another step toward a reformed Civil Service *commissioning* transformed public services.

***Dan Ramsey***  
***Contracted Employment***  
***Provision Directorate***  
***Department for Work and***  
***Pensions***

**DWP** Department for  
Work and Pensions

# The Humberside Fire and Rescue Service Commissioning Academy experience



*Chris Blacksell,  
Deputy Chief  
Fire Officer  
Humberside Fire and  
Rescue Service*

*What were Humberside Fire and Rescue Service doing on the first cohort of the Commissioning Academy? That was no doubt a question that was being asked by a few people in the room, certainly it was a question that was crossing the minds of myself and my colleague on the first morning of the Academy.*

As Deputy Chief Fire Officer for Humberside Fire and Rescue Service I did not feel particularly knowledgeable about commissioning as a subject. Unlike other organisations, such as Social Services and Public Health, Fire and Rescue Services have not traditionally commissioned any public services.

The operational part of the Service, for example fighting fires, extricating people from Road Traffic Collisions and rescuing people from floods, are delivered by direct employees who are given the necessary powers by the Fire Services Act.

Our other areas of service delivery, preventing fires and other emergencies from occurring and ensuring premises meet the requirements of the Fire Safety Order, have also been delivered by directly employed staff. However our successes in driving down demand by reducing the numbers of fires have only been possible by our work with other partners.



**HUMBERSIDE**  
Fire & Rescue Service

We had recognised the move in other partners to increase commissioning, and also the potential for legislative change to enable a Fire Authority to commission the operational part of the Service (at the time there was much talk of fire and rescue mutuals which would require that statutory change) and therefore the “Commissioning Environment” featured on our Strategic Risk and Opportunity Register. When the opportunity to attend the Commissioning Academy came up it seemed an ideal opportunity to help us develop.

By the end of the first day I had recognised that if you recognise that commissioning is not procurement, but is actually a means of ensuring that all available resources are harnessed so that outcomes are achieved in the most efficient and effective way possible, then commissioning is something that the Fire and Rescue Services do every day... we just don't call it commissioning!

- Working in partnership to ensure that other agencies visiting the vulnerable in their homes check their smoke alarms while they are there.

- Encouraging young people to make sure their elderly relatives are safe from fire and prepared for other events, such as flooding.
- Working with waste management teams to reduce arson by removing any fuel which could be ignited.

All of these, and many more, are effective commissioning and importantly work upstream to stop emergencies occurring in the future. In fact we are looking much further upstream now, for example if we can encourage young people to have healthy lifestyles, become better educated and increase their aspirations we know they are less likely to die or be seriously injured in a fire... so why wouldn't we do that?

Humberside Fire and Rescue Service was one of the first in the United Kingdom to use the freedoms within the Localism Act to trade at a significant level through our Community Interest Company, HFR Solutions. This meant that an increased awareness of the procurement side of commissioning was also beneficial as we are better able to be commissioned to deliver services for others using that company. So therefore, it was clear to me that we are both commissioners and commissioned.

I personally found the Commissioning Academy extremely useful in terms of increasing my overall knowledge of the subject, having some procurement myths burst and most importantly being able to chat through thoughts and issues with other members of the Academy who were from a very varied background.

The Academy also neatly dovetailed with some work we were doing to transform ourselves into a completely outcome focused organisation. The learning and the space to think that attending the Academy provided us was invaluable.

We developed a 100 day plan as part of the Academy programme and whilst ours was probably a lot more easily achievable than others, as we were coming from a starting point of having no formal commissioning arrangements in place, we did commit to actually make some internal process changes and run at least one trial in that period.

It goes without saying that to make any significant change you need support from the top. I have to say this was relatively easy as we had already recognised commissioning formally within our Strategic Risk and Opportunity Register, and so had discussed it at length with elected Members for some time. Myself and another member of the Corporate Management Team took part in the Academy programme and our new Chief Fire Officer is committed to the organisation becoming focussed on outcomes. Notwithstanding those positive elements, we have still made sure that we work with Elected Members to ensure political buy-in and also work with staff so they can understand what we are trying to achieve and how it might

benefit the communities that we serve.

### **The First Step**

To ensure that we had the building blocks in place to really make a difference we had to make changes to a number of our existing procurement arrangements. We needed to ensure that we didn't over specify how we wanted anything to be delivered and just have a simple and much shorter outcome specification to enable potential providers to be more innovative in how they might deliver those outcomes. We then took the unusual step of trialling an outcome based commissioning exercise for Internal Audit services. Clearly it wasn't a case of commissioning services to be delivered for our communities, but nevertheless it gave us the opportunity to trial some of the thinking and meant that we could spend time to develop the market so we would get Internal Auditors who understood what we were trying to achieve. This also meant that we set the relationship as one focussed on community outcomes right from the start. We are just in the process of appointing the new auditors but even just the exercise of running a provider day and bringing them in to discuss how their services could directly contribute to the outcomes we want for the public we serve was extremely useful.

### **Next Steps**

While we cannot commission operational services, and nor do we want to, we are now in a position where we could commission some of the preventative services that we deliver. All of those services are already outcome focussed in terms of working to reduce the numbers of people killed or injured and reducing the risk in our communities. They are also very

effective so we don't want to throw the baby out with the bathwater. But we do want to create an environment where a local manager has the autonomy to be innovative in how they achieve their outcomes, without being constrained by having to directly employ a specific number of staff.

Again, this has required us to review our arrangements internally, but I envisage a near future where all of our preventative services are delivered by a blend of directly employed staff and commissioned providers. The most likely providers seem to be third sector organisations who already work either in our at risk communities or with the specific individuals that we have identified as high risk and who have been targeted for bespoke preventative services.

We are just working up the details of our first trial in our preventative services and are funding it through income generated by our trading company, HFR Solutions, so that those commissioned services can run alongside our existing arrangements. Firstly so we can measure the relative effectiveness and secondly so that we keep the existing skills in the workforce while future commissioning decisions are made.

So I believe we have a more flexible future utilising some of our learning from the Commissioning Academy, and I have shared this with colleagues around the UK so that hopefully the next time a Fire and Rescue Service take part in a Commissioning Academy it will be more obvious to everyone why they are there.

*Chris Blacksell  
Deputy Chief Fire Officer  
Humberside Fire & Rescue Service*



# Academy for Justice Commissioning Restructure



*The Academy Executive has just undergone a restructure and been replaced by the Academy Strategy Group to lead the Academy moving forward and to reflect the diversity of our membership. The Strategy Group is led by our new Chair, Simon Marshall, Head of Health and Wellbeing Co-Commissioning, National Offender Management Service.*

Each member of the Strategy Group is also Lead for an Academy Function as in the diagram below.

'Learning Groups' initiative and ensure all learning is shared with Academy members to advance development

### Sharing & Debate

- To organise a 1 day autumn conference themed around the identified core commissioning skills aimed at supporting the development of public sector commissioners.
- To further develop a model for regional setups and expand services in one other region
- To run a number of different types of events – i.e. seminars, workshops, forums, panels, roundtable debates, etc. to

support development and debate

- To support members understanding of wider reforms in the commissioning environment e.g. transforming rehabilitation, universal credit, etc.

### Growth

- To develop a promotion strategy to sustain and increase membership to encourage the sharing of commissioning knowledge and best practice.

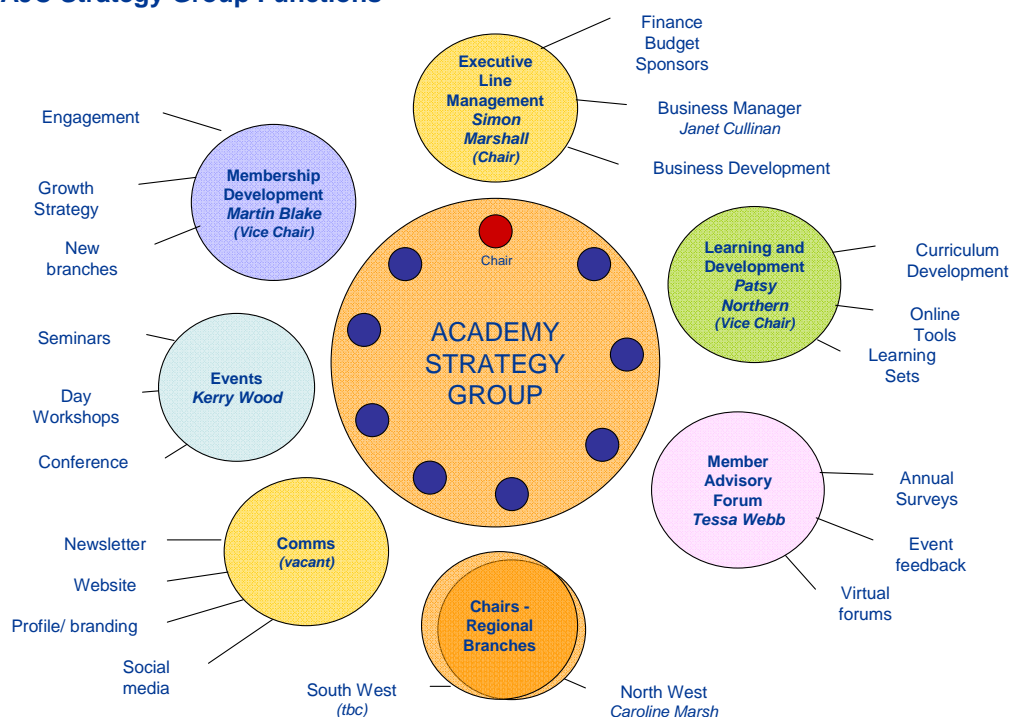
*For further details on our Strategy group please visit the Academy website.*

## Key Objectives for 2014/15

### Skills Enhancing

- Undertake a core skills gap analysis working with Academy sponsors
- To develop a strategy for a core curriculum for commissioners
- To support the development of core commissioning skills with a focus on balancing different elements of the commissioning cycle, e.g. audit v.s. relationship management
- To further develop the

## AJC Strategy Group Functions





# Academy Evening Seminars

These events are free and open to Academy members and provide important context for our work as commissioners & providers, open up networks of contacts and promote the role of the Academy amongst participants from other sectors.

If you would like to attend, please ensure you have registered as a member of the Academy prior to requesting a place. Registration is free and only takes a couple of minutes. Please follow this link to the [member registration form](#) on our website

To book your place please email your job title and organisation to Janet at: [academy@noms.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:academy@noms.gsi.gov.uk)

*Please note that delegate places are limited and are offered on a first come first served basis*

## Commissioning for the NHS

Tuesday, 29 April, 2014

featuring

**Ann Sutton, Director of Commissioning (Corporate), NHS England**

In this seminar Ann will offer her personal reflection on how far NHS England has been able to go towards achieving its vision in the first year of healthcare reforms and what is still to be done.

**Venue:** MoJ HQ, 102 Petty France, London. SW1H 9AJ

## MANCHESTER EVENING SEMINAR

### Multi-Agency Domestic Abuse Commissioning: Lessons for Policy and Practice

Thursday, 1 May

featuring

**Gavin Butler, Senior Manager, Adult Safeguarding and Domestic Abuse, Cheshire West and Chester Council**

and

**Chief Inspector David Griffiths, Lead for Strategic Collaboration, Cheshire Police**

In this seminar, *Altogether Better* programme representatives from CW&C and Cheshire Police will set out progress to date, initial costs and benefits and early lessons from what has been, in effect, a whole system recommissioning of domestic abuse services.

**Venue:** Manchester Metropolitan University

Thursday, 15 May

### Women Offenders Seminar

**Venue:** MoJ HQ, 102 Petty France, London. SW1H 9AJ

Tuesday, 17 June

### National Probation Service Seminar

**Venue:** MoJ HQ, 102 Petty France, London. SW1H 9AJ

## Academy Information

The Academy for Justice Commissioning seeks to source and promote excellence in justice commissioning.

By setting standards and raising commissioner capability we will support the transformation of justice services to enable improved effectiveness and increased public confidence in the justice system.

### Academy events - delegate feedback

*"Excellent calibre of speakers and a good mix of attendees from all sectors."*

*"Very good to have an all day event with a range of speakers offering something that was directly relevant to you and giving the opportunity to learn about other areas and meet people with different perspectives."*

*"Very informative. Lots of useful information."*

*"All the discussed topics were interesting and very relevant to my job. It was interesting to meet others and make contact."*

*"Excellent speakers, pushing boundaries"*

Contributions and feedback are most welcome.

If you are interested in submitting comments, relevant information or an article for inclusion in a future edition please contact Janet at [academy@noms.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:academy@noms.gsi.gov.uk) or call Janet on 01733 443 191

### Disclaimer

Please note that the views in this bulletin are expressed by individuals and are not necessarily the views of the Academy for Justice Commissioning

### A selection of past Seminar topics

*Commissioning & procurement: hand in glove*

*Sentencers & Commissioners: A new relationship?*

*DWP Work Programme and Next Generation Commissioning*

*Criminal Justice Reform: The Future of Police and Crime Commissioners*

*Corporate Social Responsibility*

*Personalisation in the Criminal Justice System*

*Information Sharing for Violence Prevention: the Cardiff Model*

*Transforming Justice Strategy*

*Alliance Contracting*

*Implementing the Public Services (Social Value) Act*

*Commissioning for Public Health England*

*A Year in the Life of Police and Crime Commissioners*

*Integrated Offender Management*

If you would like a full list of presentations or a summary of a particular one please visit the Resources section of our website

[www.academyforjusticecommissioning.org.uk](http://www.academyforjusticecommissioning.org.uk)

or contact Janet via email:  
[academy@noms.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:academy@noms.gsi.gov.uk)