

Improving strategic commissioning in the culture and sport sector

Case Studies

These case studies have been prepared to support 'Understanding commissioning: a practical guide for the culture and sport sector'

Wigan Leisure and Culture Trust: community weight management service

Wigan Leisure and Culture Trust has been commissioned by the local primary care trust (PCT), NHS Ashton Leigh and Wigan, to provide a community weight management service. Working with Slimming World, the nationally branded slimming franchise, Wigan Leisure will address high local obesity rates among adults in Wigan through a targeted twelve-week programme.

The project represents a continuation of a long-standing working relationship between Wigan Leisure and the PCT. Under this arrangement Wigan Leisure has been commissioned over many years to run a wide range of programmes and services on behalf of the PCT, with commissioning contracts now totalling over £2 million per annum.

From January 2009 Wigan Leisure have worked with their sub-contractor, Slimming World, to deliver a weight management service to overweight and obese adults who meet the participation criteria agreed with the PCT. People with a body mass index (BMI) between 30 and 40 with no co-morbidity and those with a BMI between 25 and 35 with a co-morbidity (such as type 2 diabetes) will be eligible. The twelve-week programme will include weekly two-hour sessions combining physical activity, healthy eating guidance and support for behavioural change among those attending. Outcome and output targets for the project include the number of participants recruited, the number completing the programme, and the percentage of participants who have lost weight after three months and one year. Other performance measurements include participation by gender and among targeted communities.

Under the terms of the contract the programme Wigan Leisure and Slimming World will be commissioned through a joint commissioning agency covering culture, health and wellbeing to deliver the weight management programme on behalf of the council and the PCT. Valued at £2.5 million and running for two and a half years, the contract includes agreed fixed costs and performance-related payments, the terms of which require Wigan Leisure and Slimming World to achieve a high level of performance in order to meet the costs of the programme. However, within these terms 'floor' and 'ceiling' performance targets have been agreed to take into account that this is a new business venture with limited research evidence to inform the likely programme outcomes. Programme managers will provide the PCT with quarterly progress reports and the University of Central Lancashire is providing an external evaluation programme. The PCT also has an option to extend the contract for up to six months.

From the perspective of Wigan Leisure one of the key learning points from the programme is that the tendering and contract process can take a considerable amount of time. The contract was put out to tender through the North West Procurement Hub and potential bidders were required to complete pre-qualification questionnaires prior to a full tender application and interview for

those selected for the second stage. This requires bidders to commit considerable resources to the process.

Other learning points include: consider partnership or sub-contracting of services to ensure compliance with the contract requirement; make sure that any performance-related aspects of the contract are achievable or that 'floor and ceiling' arrangements are in place to minimise risk; make sure that you have skilled and dedicated personnel to support the process; and make sure that all costs can be covered as part of the tender process.

Leicester Comedy Festival

The Leicester Comedy Festival began in 1994 as a student enterprise to add a winter event to the city's annual calendar. By 2009 it had become the longest running comedy festival in the country, a ten-day programme featuring over three hundred events and working with over 160 promoters. The festival also works with a range of commissioning partners across the public and private sectors, helping organisations deliver their particular messages to a variety of audiences through the media of humour and performance.

From simple beginnings the Comedy Festival is now an established part of a Leicester festival programme that has become a year-round celebration of the city's diversity providing opportunities for people of different backgrounds to come together and enjoy new and different experiences in arts, culture, sport and social activity. The Leicester Comedy Festival has developed its role and now has three principal strands of activity: the festival itself; the community programme, Make Me Happy; and commercial event management. This last was facilitated by an Arts Council programme that encouraged the festival organisation to recognise that it had a range of skills that could be used to secure the future of the festival itself. Understanding these skills, which included project management, event management, media relations, building partnerships and working with communities, proved to be an important breakthrough in planning for the organisation's future. From a turnover in year six of some £90,000, only a third of which was earned income including sponsorship, the Leicester Comedy Festival now has an annual turnover of £260k, over 90% of which is earned income and sponsorship.

At the turn of the millennium the education manager at the Phoenix Arts Centre in Leicester approached the Comedy Festival to collaborate on some work around men's health issues. Together the organisations made a successful bid to the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund and they developed a comedy stand-up show 'Hurt until it laughs'. The show toured working men's clubs – and it didn't work! However, some time later, different organisations started ringing up about the show and booking it (for a fee) for community days and events. The demand for the show was sustained over the next nine years.

Part of the learning from this experience was to encourage the organisation to think about the longer-term opportunities and the potential for sustainable income generation. This show earns the organisation around £30,000 per year. Most significantly, it is reaching a group of people who are 'hard to reach' in terms of health messages, using humour as a means of communication and raising debate. The Comedy Festival gradually began to develop other projects with health agencies, spending a long time in building relationships and understanding the health agenda. A number of projects were developed, including a project around young men's health which led to a film. An organisation called Young Minds, which promotes children's mental health, commissioned a show about emotional health and wellbeing. There was a realisation that using humour as a means of communication was transferable to other issues, such as smoking, obesity, alcohol use and sexual health; that using different arts media could connect with people who other forms of communication had missed. The festival organisation met Unison and promoted their approach of combining the arts and health at a national conference. This in turn introduced the Comedy Festival to senior people in the Department of Health and in government which in turn has led to an increase in enquiries from a diverse range of agencies, including the Food Standards Agency and a local teenage pregnancy group.

Along the way the Leicester Comedy Festival has learned numerous lessons about the commissioning process. Investing time to build networks and partnerships was one of the first and most important of these lessons. The festival director was aware of the advent of commissioning within the health service and made sure that he understood the opportunities that such developments presented to potential partners. This enabled the Comedy Festival team to be in early discussions as a partner organisation, discussing their needs and helping to shape a deliverable project.

Pricing of work has been another key learning point. The Comedy Festival always charges a reasonable rate and works on the basis of full cost recovery. The organisation will turn work down if there is insufficient funding and will not tender for projects that are under-funded. While this can be scary, it has proved to be a sound policy and the organisation now rarely finds itself trying to raise funds for projects. When commissioners discuss ideas with the Festival, it is their responsibility to find the funding for the work. This is quite a change for organisations used to the pressures of chasing grant funding, although of course it has other implications, particularly the length of time it can take for things to come to fruition.

Another lesson has been that the Leicester Comedy Festival name is a barrier to many commissioning partners. This has prompted the organisation to launch a new company name while still retaining the 'Leicester Comedy Festival' tag as a trading name. However, this does not mean that the organisation has departed from its original ethos, values or intentions. Some organisations fear that

commissioning will lead to 'mission drift', following the sources of funding rather than the objectives of the organisation. The ethos of the Comedy Festival was always about bringing people together, promoting the city and social regeneration. This has not changed but the ethos has developed in terms of how these are objectives delivered and the ways in which the organisation can help deliver better social outcomes for people.

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Kirklees Council Adult Services: Out of the Blue

The creative arts organisation Out of the Blue is a formal network of three creative arts organisations offering a range of choices for people as part of their mental health and wellbeing care planning. This network has been commissioned by Kirklees NHS and Kirklees Council's Adult Services to work with people experiencing mental health issues.

The Kirklees joint mental health commissioning strategy, published in 2008 by the council and the primary care trust, envisages helping local people with mental health issues to maintain and improve their wellbeing. The intention is to help those who experience mental health distress obtain the highest level of independence within their communities through the use of a range of support networks and services. A creative arts service, featuring art, drama, dance and music, is part of this service. As Shaun McNiff, author of *Art Heals: How Creativity Cures the Soul*, notes, "Whenever illness is associated with loss of soul, the arts emerge spontaneously as remedies, soul medicine." Out of the Blue reflects this ethos and responds to the personal needs of the people involved with the project, finding ways of ensuring people are closely involved in agreeing the support they need.

The project employs a process outlined in *The Outcome Star*, a tool that measures outcomes of work with people with mental health issues. Originally developed by Triangle Consulting to assist St Mungo's with its work with homeless people, *The Outcome Star* measures an individual's progress through a ten-step process which ranges from 'stuck', through 'accepting help' and

'believing', to 'learning' and 'self-reliance'. The collective outcomes from the process are mapped into the higher-level indicators required by the Department of Health document, Our Health, Our Care, Our Say, and these indicators are supported by evidence on referral pathways, attendance and personal testimony.

The Out of the Blue project was commissioned by Kirklees Council and NHS Kirklees in April 2008. The contract was valued at £90,000 a year over three years. Between 100 and 120 people are typically accessing the Out of the Blue project at any one time.

Out of the Blue demonstrates that people who experience mental health issues value creative arts very highly. Such projects promote social networking and enable the use of direct payments to provide personal solutions via creative arts. The Outcome Star has a real meaning for participants and the project continues to show how much a non-medical approach can achieve.

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Kirklees Council Culture and Leisure Services: the arts and emotional health

Kirklees Council's Culture and Leisure Services was commissioned by the local primary care trust, NHS Kirklees, to deliver creative and arts-based activities that will help children develop emotional literacy and improve mental health. Loca, the council's arts and regeneration agency which is based within the Culture and Leisure Services department, is providing six schools in areas of high deprivation with an 'artist in residence' whose brief is to focus on emotional wellbeing using their own particular art form.

Prior to this commission Loca had developed a similar programme based on arts and creative work with funding from the Children's Fund Kirklees. A rigorous evaluation of this scheme over two years presented strong evidence of significant impacts among the children taking part. Under the overarching objectives of 'building resilience' and 'developing emotional literacy' there was evidence of positive impacts upon self-esteem, confidence, self-awareness, relationship-building, team work and communication skills. The primary care trust had identified the emotional needs of children and young people as a priority through its own joint strategic needs assessment and, having been made aware of Loca's work, invested in the continuation and development of the programme for a further two years. NHS Kirklees has committed £300,000 for a sustained programme in six schools over two academic years, from September 2008 through to July 2010.

The programme provides each of the schools with a lead artist and each artist has a brief to serve as a 'creative wellbeing resource'. Using their own skills (such as creative writing, visual arts or photography) and occasional input from 'guest artists', the lead artists work with small groups of children who have been identified by school staff as being in particular need of emotional support. All the schools involved are based in communities that have high levels of deprivation and Loca has placed a strong emphasis on working with schools in which senior staff are prepared to give a strong commitment to the programme.

The outcomes and outputs of the project have been identified by Loca and NHS Kirklees as part of the commissioning process. The six long-term artists' residencies need to support measurable gains for children in relation to key emotional health indicators and provide alternative ways for children to achieve within the school environment. The programme will instil a culture of reflective practice for children and adults, building upon and demonstrating the belief that reflection aids awareness and understanding, and hence enables learning. The scheme aims to promote an understanding of the value of creative approaches as a tool for work around emotional wellbeing, and to support the development of professional practice in this respect. There will also be evaluation material drawing upon the programme to strengthen the case for the role of the arts within the Prevention and Child Mental Health arenas.

Although only six months into this programme, Loca is able to draw on experience of the programme so far and its previous Children's Fund work for key learning points. Investing in creative methods and using artists with appropriate skills and experience can make a strong contribution to the Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning agenda within schools. The use of artists with specialist skills in the field of arts and emotional literacy is paramount for the effectiveness of this work. Reflective practice should be integral to this kind of work but it requires practice, guidance and a proper investment of time. Collaboration and partnership-working between artists and school staff requires special effort and commitment from all parties but the potential for achieving lasting benefits for children and professional practice are considerable when such collaboration is made a priority.

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Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council: re:refresh

re:refresh is an innovative project to improve the health and wellbeing of people in Blackburn with Darwen through the promotion of sport and physical activity. Working with the local primary care trust and using proven community engagement methods, the council through its Healthy Living and Sport section has devised and implemented a scheme to get more people more active more often.

Healthy Living and Sport has been working with the local NHS since 1995, establishing a strong and successful partnership to provide a wide range of commissioned services which includes a variety of clinical referral schemes and community physical activity projects. The first Active People survey showed that Blackburn and Darwen had the lowest adult physical activity participation rate in the North West and the third lowest in the country. Only 8.1% of adults achieve the levels of activity recommended by the Department of Health against a national average of 11.6%; 58% of local adults do no physical activity at all, compared with 29% nationally. The council and their colleagues in the NHS recognised that without concerted local action the figures were likely to get worse and levels of poor health in the area would increase.

The re:refresh project was based on good practice from a number of leisure and community engagement schemes. These provided clear evidence that people can be successfully encouraged to increase activity levels if the appropriate facilities and opportunities are available; that increased physical activity does lead to improved emotional, physical and mental wellbeing; and that increased physical activity does result in a reduced need for spending on health and social care interventions. Armed with such evidence, the council along with their NHS partner devised re:refresh to encourage individuals to make healthier lifestyle choices and provide greater access to physical activity opportunities.

Engagement and enabling at a neighbourhood level are fundamental to the re:refresh project. The Healthy Communities Partnership, which had been running successfully for four years, has been expanded from four to seven teams to cover all five neighbourhood areas as well as a borough-wide youth team and another team focusing on diabetes. The Healthy Communities Partnership includes volunteers working with council and NHS staff at a neighbourhood level to promote the benefits of physical activity among local residents. Working on the basis of the 'four Es' – educate, enthuse, engage, enable – this partnership model has already been successful in reducing falls, improving diets, raising awareness of elder abuse and increasing uptake of diabetes services. As part of the engagement and enabling process the health trainer service has also been strengthened. Already recognised as an example of good practice by the Department of Health, this service will have five full-time trainers working with the support of volunteers across the five neighbourhood areas.

Free access to leisure activities is another important element of re:refresh, removing the barrier of price for anyone looking to build a more active lifestyle. By April 2009 all adults (those over sixteen) who live, work, are in full-time education or are registered with a GP in the borough will have access to a programme of free leisure activities. These activities include swimming, classes, walking, cycling, community gyms, family weekend activities, an expanded junior swimming programme in school holidays, and community activities tailored to local community preference.

A detailed business plan enabled both the council and the NHS to make an informed decision when committing the £6 million of additional funding. This funding is provided on a 50:50 basis over a three-year period (2008/2009 to 2010/2011) and the NHS contribution is transferred to the council under a section 256 agreement. Clear targets, based on increased numbers of participants in physical activity and decreased numbers of those not taking part in any physical activity, have been set and performance monitoring measures have been agreed. The annual Active People survey will form one element of the measurement but local activity measures will be accessed through the 'beeZ' free leisure card, which is required to access free activities.

The first year of re:refresh suggests that the project has been well received. The number of new members of the beeZ scheme is significantly up on the previous year, with new registrations among under-sixteens doubled and the 'fifty and over' category showing a ten-fold increase. The re:refresh team is confident that it can engage people at a neighbourhood level and so increase participation and help people make better lifestyle choices. Their success will be measured in terms of increased activity levels, improvements in mental and emotional wellbeing, physical health indicators and awareness of healthy lifestyle factors among residents.

The team's key advice to others includes: ensure the identification of clear needs; write a robust business case with a clear evidence base, performance objectives and scope of the service; get a clearly defined and agreed performance management structure; and good, open communication between partners.

Sefton Council Leisure Services: community weight management service

With the cost of obesity in Sefton calculated to be £82 million a year, the local public health partnership had identified a need for a programme that could offer support to people suffering from obesity and provide 'preventative' services for adults and children likely to suffer with weight problems in the future. Having worked with the local primary care trust, Sefton NHS, on a range of successful projects, Sefton Leisure Services was invited to respond to the public health partnership's brief and a proposal to expand the existing Active Sefton programme was accepted.

Sefton Leisure Services has been working with Sefton NHS since 1997 when the primary care trust asked Sefton Council's sports development section to run an exercise programme for children in years 3 to 6. From this start the leisure services team has become adept at offering its services to a wide range of partners, including the NHS, the voluntary and private sectors, national government departments and other departments within Sefton Council. These commissioned services now bring over £2 million of external funding into the department.

The commissioning process typically involves a partner, or the department itself, identifying a need for a service to address a strategic aim. Then, having finalised a brief, the length, value, key outcomes and outputs, monitoring and evaluation methods will be agreed in writing between the partners. In the case of the weight management programme there were good reasons for incorporating the proposed services into the Active Sefton programme. Active Sefton had already been running for eleven years with qualified, experienced staff and sound operational protocols. Evaluation processes had been shown to be robust and the Active Sefton team had already developed strong relationships with the necessary partners. Not only were all GP practices and rehabilitation services in the area engaged with Active Sefton but the existing operation, including trained and experienced staff, could also deliver a highly cost-effective weight management programme.

The proposed programme represented a commitment to educate and support local residents in weight management. It included physical activity, good nutrition, behaviour change, family participation and the removal of a number of typical barriers to participation. Level one comprised a fourteen-week early intervention programme of 'preventative' health advice. Level two was a twelve-week adult weight management programme, including personal sessions with a weight management adviser, and a fourteen-week exercise referral programme. Advanced dietetic support came in at level three. A fourth option available, specifically for children aged seven to thirteen and their families, was a ten-week healthy lifestyles programme called MEND (an acronym derived from Mind, Exercise, Nutrition, Do it!). Access to the programme was via health professional referral (primarily GPs and practice nurses) and exit routes were established for everyone involved at each level of the programme.

With the proposal accepted, Sefton Leisure Services and Sefton NHS drew up a service level agreement with details of a fifteen-month programme running from September 2008 through to December 2009. Funding for the project totalled £210,000, including staffing costs, staff training and personal development, and operational support costs, which included everything from health screening equipment through to vouchers for fruit and vegetables. In addition to the day-to-day management and staffing of the programme Sefton Leisure Services provided two early intervention leads based at the six centres across the

borough. Sefton NHS provided an advance dietician (0.5 WTE) and a full-time food and health worker. A full set of outcome and output measures were agreed as part of the programme, including an annual target plan prepared in association with the funders, quarterly reports outlining progress and regular meetings between representatives of Active Sefton and Sefton primary care trust.

Three months into the programme Sefton Leisure Services was able to report that the programme had been well received by local health professionals and that 370 patients had been referred, a figure in line with the agreed key performance indicators. Programme managers were able to note an average weight loss of 3kg per person, an average decrease of 5cm in waist measurements, reductions in blood pressures and resting heart rates, and improved lung functions; 89% of patients reported an improvement in their sense of wellbeing while 92% declared themselves very happy with the service they received. External evaluation undertaken on behalf of Sefton NHS has also been extremely positive and it is hoped that this will help secure extension or mainstreaming of the programme at the end of the initial pilot period.

Sefton Leisure Services offer the programme as a good example of how the strategic commissioning of leisure and cultural services can work. The learning points they suggest include: identify genuine need; get detailed requirements; have a clear agreement regarding the services to be provided, including time scales, costs, key outputs and reporting methods; to take into account all costs incurred by the provider, including senior management time; and, of course, deliver what you promise.

Lyric Hammersmith – www.lyric.co.uk/

The Lyric Hammersmith in the London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham runs an extensive Creative Learning programme for children and young people, with extensive provision for young people aged 11-19. Activities and opportunities include youth theatre, work experience and accreditation.

Over the last four or five years, Lyric has built a strong relationship with senior officers in Children's Services in the London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham.

"I go and talk to the senior officers and ask them about their targets for the year. I explain how Lyric could deliver the outcomes they need and how much it would cost. It's all about language - we need to put our activities into their language. But it hasn't compromised our artistic integrity. In fact, I'd say that some of the best creative projects we have done have been through commissions from Hammersmith and Fulham Children's Services." James Blackman, Lyric Hammersmith

The theatre needed to develop an understanding of the priorities of the LAA and the Children's Plan. They 'translated' the theatre's education activities into the language of the local authority. The theatre 's Co-Directors of Creative Learning worked to the targets that Children's Services had to deliver and showed how he could meet some of them through theatre-based work with children and young people.

An example was working with a young offender who had already committed 34 offences by the age of 16. At Lyric he wrote a play, which was produced to critical acclaim at the Studio theatre. This activity helped the local authority with NIs such as NI 45 (Young offenders engaged in suitable education, employment or training) and NI117 (16-18 year olds not in education, training, or employment).

Lyric has delivery 60 contracts over the last 3 years, covering areas such as extended services and targeting children with disabilities, NEETs, young carers and young offenders. Teachers and agency workers are able to refer young people to a range of innovative opportunities for young people facing disadvantage. Lyric also delivers accredited qualifications and is a core provider for the Creative and Media Diploma.

Lyric has found that it has been straightforward to access opportunities for commissions and that monitoring and reporting on outcomes has been fair and transparent. The Theatre has become a preferred provider and is able to draw down significant funding for work with young people.

Burnley Youth Theatre – www.burnleyyouththeatre.com/

Burnley Youth Theatre (BYT) was founded in 1973. Today the organisation is heralded as one of the most advanced youth theatres in the country and is at the forefront of community cohesion activities with young people in Burnley.

BYT works with an average of 450 young people a week aged 5 - 25 years. The year round programme encompasses all art forms through a range of training workshops, projects and partnership schemes.

BYT responded to an advertisement by East Lancashire PCT through the Council for Voluntary Services for local partners wanting to work with young people. The youth theatre has gradually developed a strong relationship with the PCT, on the basis of a strong track record of delivery. The Artistic Director has found no problems with collecting the necessary evidence of outcomes. BYT now has an agreement worth £36,000 to deliver 6 projects over three years. The projects will hone in on health issues that young people from all over Burnley consider to be important and use dance, the visual arts, music and drama to create performances, exhibitions and workshops that allow young people to express views and take action towards healthier lifestyles.

BYT has also built relationships with Lancashire Police, who commissioned a film on the danger of fireworks. The police force then asked for a play about young people's view of extremism, and offered funding of £10,000. This turned into a film project and BYT were able to lever additional funding from Arts Council England and the Prince's Trust.

"We have found working in partnership constructive, but we always set out clearly the company's own aims and priorities, so that these are not compromised. For BYT this means that young people are always able to take the lead." Andrew Raffle, Artistic Director

BYT is now working with Lancashire Education Business Partnership on delivery of the Creative and Media Diploma.

Real Ideas Organisation (RiO) – www.realideas.org

RiO is an agency for children and young people responsible for delivering the Creative Partnerships programme in the South West. In September 2008 RiO tendered successfully to run a three year programme for young people not in education or training (NEETs) worth in the region of £550,000. It is part of a programme called Cornwall Works for Social Enterprise. Partners are: referral agencies, the Creative Consortium and Cornwall County Council's creative unit, Entry to Employment (E2E) and Freestyle. The programme aims to help individuals find work, build confidence and nurture their own creativity, while growing Cornwall's creative industry. Rio's intervention will help Cornwall County Council to deliver NI117, reducing the number of 16 to 18 year olds who are not in education, training or employment.

RiO identifies young people's interests and needs and then finds them creative placements, employment possibilities and training that will help to kick start their careers. The required outcomes are to stabilise the young people's attendance and to show how they can find a job or training related to their placement.

Examples to date include three young people working as a musician and performers with Rogue Theatre on a touring show, 'Pathway to the Red Sun'; a young woman working as an administrator at the theatre development agency, The Works; and a young woman working at Event Cornwall, a creative events management service.

"I have improved my communication, social and organisational skills too, and forged great contacts with youth theatres throughout the county which ties in with my personal interests." Young participant

Before bidding to the Cornwall Works for Social Enterprise programme, RiO completed a pilot project that showed their success at working with NEETS. This was called Project X. Over two years Project X took on 18 young people with a

diverse set of backgrounds and circumstances, including criminal record situations, mental health issues including psychosis, anorexia, agoraphobia and social anxiety.

Through the intensive Project X process each young person was personally mentored, tackling barriers to their achievement head-on and building action plans that linked into a whole raft of support services as well as Cornwall's creative and cultural sector. Two courses of the programme had attendance rates of 77% and 89%. The national average attendance rate is 40%. Rio was able to use this hard evidence in their bid to the Social Enterprise programme, along with examples of how the young people had taken up work experience, training and education.

Birmingham City Council

Birmingham City Council has beacon status for its commissioning framework with the voluntary and charitable (third sector). Services from all third sector organisations (including the arts and cultural organisations) are commissioned in the same way. For culture this is against two priorities - quality of life for Birmingham residents and succeeding economically. This gives the rationale for the commissioning of the arts and culture in the city. All revenue organisations have to show how they contribute to one or other or both of these priorities and the outputs that result. BCC looks at its complete portfolio, so that small organisations are not disadvantaged.

The flagship revenue organisations are also allocated to one of the 10 constituencies in the city where they are an Arts Champion. Arts Champions work with local organisations to promote the arts and give local communities access to high quality arts experiences. For example, Birmingham Rep runs a series of youth theatres in the Northfield area of the city.

Soon community groups will need to show how they are contributing to two additional local indicators from the Local Area Agreement - participation in culture, and improving tourists' perceptions of Birmingham. Further work will be commissioned against these indicators by the local strategic partnership's Cultural Partnership.

Birmingham has an arts strategy for children and young people, A Creative Future. A Creative Future includes an entitlement target, showing the different ways in which children and young people should be able to gain access to the arts. The entitlement is defined through four roles: creators, participants, audiences and leaders. The City Council has commissioned work through the strand of funding for A Creative Future (Creative Future Awards), and arts organisations have to show how they are contributing to the delivery of the entitlement target. Other priorities are also included. In 2007-08 these were:

looked after children; involving parents and carers; promoting healthy lifestyles; and promoting active citizenship.

A Creative Future is under review, as is the way that revenue organisations provide data about their work with children and young people. The City Council is attempting to identify in more detail areas of high and low take up in terms of the Creative Future roles, geographic, art form and age spread, so that commissioning through the Creative Future Awards can be targeted on areas of greatest need.

Salford City Council – Salford Arts Development. www.salford.gov.uk

Salford City Council Arts Development Service was formed in 2003. A lack of revenue resources challenged the setting up of traditional service provision, so an approach based on partnerships, facilitation and commissioning began to develop. The service assists the City Council and other agencies to achieve their aims by developing arts development work that supports key areas such as regeneration, social inclusion, quality of life and improving health.

Over time a strong track record for partnership working and the delivery of high quality commissions has become established. Internally the service has gained commissions from the Drugs and Alcohol Action team, Neighbourhood Management, Regeneration schemes such as NRF, BSC, and the Health Improvement Team. External commissions followed on from Property Developers, Housing Associations, Community Committees, ACE and the PCT.

This work has been possible through the careful building of relationships with freelance artists, project managers, third sector organisations and supply companies. Improvements continue to be made on the contract and support offered for commissions and on the means of setting and measuring agreed deliverables.

Over the past year the service has made joint commissions with the PCT for Public Artworks in three Gateway Centres. These centres serve as local hubs combining public library and information, health and direct call centre functions under one roof. Over 250 local people have been involved in the creation of the art, engendering a sense of ownership in the new buildings. There have been 15 public art commissions over the past two years in Salford and this, coupled with Salford leading the redevelopment of the Irwell Sculpture Trail, has led to the inclusion of design and public art principles being featured in the Public Realm Design Handbook for the City.

The Arts Development Service has held some advice and information events to improve the skills of the sector to respond to commissioning. The department is likely to develop a preferred provider list; organisations and freelancers will go through a 'gateway' process to show that they have adequate health and safety,

safeguarding, data protection, insurance and risk assessment procedures. Experience gained from this work is now feeding into a strategic framework for improving culture and leisure provision in Salford and a culture and leisure commissioning strategy. We are also engaged through our Cultural Services section in strategic partnership work with the Lowry, Salford University, third sector organisations, other Local Authorities and ACE, NW.

“It has been challenging setting up new ways of working and striking the balance between sound partnership work and high quality arts processes and outcomes for participants. We are looking forward to working more strategically within culture and commissioning in the public sector.” Shirley Lundstram, Arts and Cultural Development Manager, Salford City Council

Working in partnership to improve service quality – Kingswood Foundation

Overview

Provider organisation

Kingswood Foundation is a charitable organisation which has been working with disadvantaged young people for the last 250 years, inspiring them to re-engage in education and mainstream society through arts-based projects. The foundation is based in East Bristol and offers a range of learning programmes which give young people the opportunity to work as a team, develop their creativity, personal skills and build their self esteem and confidence.

Key features of the case study

- Developing a provider consortium
- Relationship building and voluntary sector consortium delivery
- Successful commissioning and bidding for Young Persons (YP) early intervention and prevention services
- Working in partnership to improve service availability and quality of YP services

Why change was needed

The wealth of small, grass roots voluntary sector organisations is an asset, but also a challenge to commissioners. Commissioners must balance making the best use of voluntary sector organisations’ local knowledge and expertise, whilst ensuring efficient commissioning processes. Encouraging voluntary sector organisations to work in consortium is a potential way of optimising the use of local knowledge and expertise, whilst streamlining commissioning and funding mechanisms.

What was the situation originally?

What the commissioning process and intervention aim to achieve

Typically, funding for small voluntary organisations is delivered via grants to individual organisations. The consequence of this is that local authorities are often managing a large number of small contracts with the voluntary sector. It can also mean that the complementary skills that exist across the range of voluntary sector organisations are not optimised.

In November 2008, Bristol City Council commissioned voluntary sectors organisations to come together as a consortia to provide prevention and early intervention services for young people likely to become 'at risk'. The aim of this was to improve and expand early intervention provision, whilst building on the existing expertise of local providers.

What did we do?

The tendering process

Kingswood Foundation joined up with three voluntary sector partners: the Bread Youth Project, Fairbridge West and Youth Education to form a consortium to bid for this work. Kingswood Foundation met regularly with the other partners for 7 weeks to write the tender and plan strategically what the responsibilities for each organisation would be. The consortium discussed what as individual organisations they currently provided and how they could add value in terms of delivering various aspects of the project intervention. It was important the values and work ethos of all partners were aligned and considerable time was spent establishing a consortium agreement as part of the tender. The consortium also established a Steering Group and identified leads from all four organisations responsible for contributing to the tender and to provide a supervisory role for the project if the tender was won.

Early on in the process Bristol Council offered potential providers training and support which encouraged voluntary sector organisations to tender. This included several training days to clarify what the council were looking for in the tender, including potential partnership working, the selection criteria and scoring system to emphasise the importance placed on different issues in the tender. There was also opportunity to ask questions via an e-procurement system and other bidders' questions and answers to them were shared online.

Delivering the contract

The consortium was notified that it had been awarded the contract to deliver the 'Moving On Up' project in April 2009.

It has been important in the delivery of the project to facilitate collaboration, whilst ensuring accountability for each of the individual organisations. This has in part been achieved by the Bread Youth Project being the lead contractor with Bristol Council, and the other three partners acting as sub-contractors with Bread. Through careful setting of legal arrangements, the partnership has ensured that

the consortium retains power so that all four have a legal obligation to deliver project targets and any partner can be disciplined or removed from the consortium if they do not deliver. This has helped to create a good working culture of open questioning and accountable amongst the partners.

There is a Project Director who manages day-to-day delivery of the 'Moving On Up' intervention scheme. A web based management information system provides a focal point and joint platform for all services offered by the project. However any form of quality performance management and monitoring is undertaken via the organisations' existing systems as there is not enough resource funding to establish a separate system for the consortium.

A triangulated approach to quality performance monitoring involves each young person having an initial assessment, development of a Personal Action Plan and ongoing monitoring through regular review based upon eight to ten hours' contact time. A record management system is in place in order that information sharing between partner organisations is readily accessible. Information is triangulated from all partner organisations and the young person's key worker acting as the referral agent to the project. This helps to provide a more accurate representation of the young person's progress and how far they have travelled in their development. Aftercare assessment is also provided by the Consortium who meets with the key worker to see if each young person has continued to develop in mainstream society.

Performance is also monitored via quarterly audit checks by Bread as the lead contractor and spot audits by the Council. This enables even greater awareness of progress towards outcomes and any barriers to realising project aims. Regular meetings with the Steering Group and monthly staff meetings gives the Project Director opportunity to raise any issues and project risks across the board.

Who was involved?

The Chief Executives from the four organisations played a key role in the tender as well as finance staff and service delivery staff representing each of the partners and the nominated Project Director once the project started. The consortium also sought legal professional advice around sub-contracting arrangements. Young people were also involved, and were consulted about the tiered approach to the project to check feasibility and relevance of the various referral stages and what would/would not work in terms of possible programme activities.

What was the impact?

Different ways of working/tendering

The opportunity for the voluntary sector organisations to bid as a consortium has been quicker and more efficient than applying through grant applications, which can be time consuming. There is more flexibility in the commissioning approach which allows bidders to present different options in their tenders and take

account of the fact that different young people respond to different methods of providing support. However the process may also have an unintended impact on partnerships between voluntary sector organisations. When applying for grants, the sense of competing against other organisations for funding is less obvious, however the competitive aspect of bidding against each other in the commissioning process could lead to reluctance to share information amongst the voluntary sector organisation community due to the drive to gain commercial advantage.

What changed as a result?

By working as a consortium, the voluntary sector organisations involved in the 'Moving On Up' project have been able to build upon their existing qualities as service providers for young people and provide an effective united support front. By delivering as a consortium, the partners are able to provide a multi-faceted service to meet the varying young people, many of whom 'fall through the net' of statutory provision..

Working in a consortium has also increased the reach of the individual organisations. For example, before the Consortium was established, Kingswood Foundation was working with approximately forty young people per year; this has increased to between 100 and 150 per year.

Next steps

Partnership working will become increasingly necessary as councils begin to commission more consortium led delivery for future tendering opportunities. This experience of working in partnership has been a positive one so far. The organisations in the Consortium are more likely to consider tendering as part of a consortium in the future; particularly as it opens up the opportunity to apply for larger contracts and more readily meet the needs of Young People.

To find out more

This case study is based on a telephone interview with Sandy Hore-Ruthven, Chief Executive for Kingswood Foundation.

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