



Strategic Commissioning Evaluation Report

Part 1 Main Report

Final

March 2011

Contents

Executive Summary.	3.
1. Background to the programme.	6.
2. Tailored support – the offer.	6.
3. Evaluation Framework.	9.
4. Evaluation results.	9.
5. Looking forward & the next steps.	20.

See also:

Part 2 Detail reports from each project

Part 3 Examples of commissioning landscape mapping

Executive Summary.

In 2010/11 the culture and sport improvement programme carried out a single integrated work stream of support to councils based on developing the sector's strategic commissioning capacity and responding to the issues emerging in the CAA review. Although the CAA has now been withdrawn and ceased to function as a primary driver for the programme of work, it remained a reference point for some councils in terms of corporate priorities.

The offer to councils involved up to 10 days of consultancy support based on the LGID strategic commissioning guidance published in May 2010 and the learning gathered from previous research and pilot programmes going on in East Riding and with North West Renaissance.

In each case the exact offer was tailored to suit local circumstances and need. However the offer could include:

1. *Research to map the commissioning landscape locally*
2. *An action learning programme*
3. *Support to make an impact on a specific local outcome*
4. *Bespoke support on specific elements of commissioning*

The offer was supplemented by access to a series of training and development opportunities provided throughout the year.

The programme has been evaluated to assess if it made a difference to how culture and sport engaged with the strategic commissioning process and in particular the value of each element of the programme.

The overall feedback was that the **raising of awareness and understanding** of the commissioning process was a very successful and a key part of the process which would remain important going forward. The sessions offered were seen as:-

- Helping staff teams learn about the process and language.
- Bringing people up to the same level of understanding.
- Facilitating joint working across different services within organisations and identifying where in the organisation more support was required.
- Achieving high level buy in within the council.
- Improving visibility, recognition and credibility.
- Achieving clearer focus.

- Setting the foundations for building new relationships with commissioners.

As a result of the programme there are numerous examples of culture and sport improving its **positioning against corporate priorities** by building better relationships with commissioners.

However in terms of building new sustainable relationships between culture and sport providers and commissioners which have or will lead to **new income streams** it appears too early to judge success given the process was seriously disrupted by this years budget settlement and a budget process that saw significant cuts being negotiated. However, all the projects believe there is now significant potential and some encouraging examples have already emerged.

In terms of the commissioning process leading to the **redesigning of services** in order to respond to the needs of commissioners, the feedback suggests that this stage is the most challenging and difficult and is likely to be dependent on wider culture changes taking place across the sector. Projects reported least progress on this dimension and this is perhaps a reflection of the progress made to date in establishing significant commissions that would require transformational service redesign. However, the impact of the current financial climate on councils is already encouraging transformational change and in many places this is driving councils to consider and implement strategic commissioning based structures and delivery models with many more aspects of service delivery being externalised in some way. There are, however, a few emerging examples of service redesign and transformation in the projects.

Overall councils were very satisfied with the support received through the project tempered only by two responses from projects where set up and progress could have been much better.

In total expenditure on the programme including East Riding and NW Renaissance was approximately £110,000 providing approximately 140 consultant days to support the programme.

Looking forward all the projects agreed that all the key elements of the programme remained relevant in the current landscape in particular those elements that:-

- Provided external support to help demystify the process of commissioning and help people understand and engage with the language and governance arrangements surrounding the process.
- Provided external support to help map the local commissioning landscape and to talk independently to commissioners and bring all the knowledge together into one document.

- Provided external support to help broker the relationships with commissioners and provide facilitated support through key stages in the relationship building process.

In terms of new issues and challenges going forward the key ones to emerge are:-

- The impact of the loss of some of the national indicators that measured performance and the ongoing need to be able to measure outcomes. The existence of the LGID outcomes framework to support this process was welcomed and valued.
- Access to local or national evidence remained a key requirement. However increasingly commissioners will look for longitudinal evidence that investment was generating longer term benefits and cost savings in terms of public expenditure. Interest was expressed in developing further work on the concepts of the social return on investment and how this might be measured.
- The localism agenda was identified as a major opportunity and at the same time a challenge as it enabled culture and sport to make its case locally but had to operate in an increasingly more fragmented commissioning landscape. However at the same time the efficiency agenda may drive bigger commissions and new regional and sub regional structures and partnerships for both commissioning and providing services.
- Staff churn, loss of capacity and loss of leadership created by the significant financial pressures on the sector presented huge challenges going forward if the sector was to take the opportunities presented by commissioning. As the sector itself becomes far more decentralised, externalised and fragmented, maintaining strategic relationships with commissioners will increasingly become more difficult. The concept of investing in “brokers” to help bridge this fragmentation is an opportunity being considered by both Arts Council and Sport England as identified in the recent research on the capacity building needs of the sector. Capacity building particularly in civil society partners remains a major challenge.
- The programme has also raised some issues round culture change in the sector and it was suggested that the challenge was now seeing commissioning not as an addition to the day job but the day job. This raises some challenges in terms of training and development across all the professional bodies operating in the sector.
- Finally comments were made about how the sector shares the learning from the programme and it was suggested that there was a need to revisit the projects in the future to check what progress had been made.

1. Background to the programme

In 2010/11 the culture and sport improvement programme carried out a single integrated work stream of support to councils based on developing the sectors strategic commissioning capacity and responding to the issues emerging in the CAA review. Although the CAA has now been withdrawn and ceased to function as a primary driver for the programme of work it remained a reference point for some councils in terms of corporate priorities.

This work stream had three levels:-

- National and regional awareness activity aimed at NDPBs, regional improvement networks and professional bodies so they can support the work and share learning with other councils.
- A programme of training in different aspects of the commissioning process aimed at heads of service and lead members.
- Tailored support to a small number of councils who “volunteer” to participate in the programme. In the end 8 projects emerged involving 10 councils in addition to two pilot programmes in East Riding and NW Renaissance.

2. Tailored support - the Offer

The offer to councils involved up to 10 days of consultancy support based on the LGID strategic commissioning guidance published in May 2010 and the learning gathered from previous research and pilot programmes going on in East Riding and with North West Renaissance. The programme was based on the following principles.

- The CAA analysis highlighted that in about two thirds of councils culture and sport had limited visibility in terms of positioning and demonstrating its’ contribution to meeting outcomes and priorities. Where the sector was well positioned, there was evidence that it had been recognised in a range of Green Flags for the contribution it was making. The CAA analysis identified a number of councils with Red Flags where culture and sport could be making a contribution to improving outcomes. This at the time presented an opportunity to enable culture and sport providers to help their councils address Red Flags and in so doing transfer learning from the Green Flags councils who are already using culture and sport effectively.
- Strategic commissioning represents the key process whereby culture and sport can not only engage with and contribute to these wider issues and priorities but potentially be paid to do so. Previous research however had showed that the sector was not yet equipped to take these opportunities for a range of reasons; awareness and understanding, lack of leadership, fragmented structures, poor

- engagement with the right partnerships, lack of capacity in culture and sport civil society organisations and a lack of evidence and weaknesses in performance management mechanisms. By using the commissioning process there was therefore an opportunity to redress poor positioning and potentially generate much needed income streams. It was also believed that these weaknesses and the above CAA issue could have ongoing implications for the “Total Place” concept then being piloted at the start of the programme.
- The analysis of National Indicator data suggested at the time that there was a significant risk that many LAA culture and sport improvement targets would not be achieved. It was felt that by aligning support on commissioning with work to address Red Flags there would be new incentives to improve participation levels and meet outstanding targets.

In each case the exact offer was to be tailored to suit local circumstances and need. However the offer could include the following elements.

1. Research and mapping the local commissioning landscape

This element would involve undertaking some ‘mapping of the commissioning landscape’ in the authority and feeding back challenges and opportunities as was done in the ‘Better outcomes for children’ research.

The benefits of an independent person doing the research and mapping was seen to be that they would focus on what the commissioners want and how they see the world. They would also identify the barriers and opportunities from that independent perspective. The work would primarily but not solely focus on the identified Red Flag areas.

This approach was developed as part of the original research and was already being piloted in the North-West for a Renaissance project and in the East Riding that had already entered into a separate contract with LGID to support them on strategic commissioning.

2. An action learning programme

This element was to be aimed at culture and sport staff and be based around the ‘Understanding Commissioning’ guide as a ‘curriculum’ or workbook resource and the exercises as the training course material.

3. Making an impact on a specific outcome

The core element of the package was to concentrate on the specific Red Flag or key issue that needed improvement. It was to assess with the providers what the culture and sport sector can do to contribute to that outcome and support them engage with commissioners and partners. This could have involved capacity building for the statutory

and voluntary partners and if required involve some creative workshops and innovatory thinking.

4. Bespoke support on specific elements of commissioning

In addition it was envisaged that support could also be offered on specific elements of the process for example needs assessment, option appraisal, performance management, partnership working and consortia building, and capacity building for the third sector including an awareness event for local third sector culture and sport organisations interested in engaging with the commissioning process.

The offer was supplemented by access to a series of training and development opportunities provided throughout the year.

The final list of chosen projects is set out below.

	Council	Theme or focus
East Midlands	Leicester	Health improvement Red Flag
North West	Trafford	Health improvement Red Flag and links with adult social care. May be opportunities round building third sector capacity
North East	North Tyneside	Building on a regionally driven programme positioning culture and sport against adult social care. Opportunities round supporting carers and the personalisation agenda.
West Midlands	Telford & Wrekin	Red Flag round Children's services especial NEETs
East	Luton.	A more general focus on supporting the existing organisational capacity to develop a stronger strategic commissioning relationship with a focus on community cohesion.
London	Barking & Dagenham	Health improvement Red Flag. Positioning culture & sport against corporate priorities
Yorkshire and Humber	Hull, North Lincs & NE Lincs	Health improvement Red Flags but in a sub regional setting.
South West	Torbay	The council is moving strategically to a commissioning model. Culture and sport need support to help build a better position and profile against the corporate priorities. Red Flag round helping the worse off.

The programme followed this broad framework but was adapted locally at scoping meetings to meet local need and adapted and changed along the route. Projects moved at different paces and completed the programme to different degrees due to a whole range of factors including mounting pressures caused by the political and financial changes taking place.

The major policy and financial shifts that followed the election had a major impact on the programme particularly towards the end when maintaining momentum and focus became difficult as some councils increasingly struggled with budget processes requiring significant savings to be identified and services became embroiled in wider change programmes.

Notwithstanding this, the bulk of the programme has been completed on time and on budget with substantial learning available.

3. Evaluation Framework

The evaluation framework has comprised the following aspects.

Outcome - The programme made a difference to how culture and sport engaged with the strategic commissioning process	
<i>Hypothesis</i>	<i>Methodology & source</i>
Staff developed a better understanding of strategic commissioning and gained new skills to respond to commissioning opportunities and engaged earlier in the commissioning process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feedback from sessions. • Formal evaluation session with each project at the end. • Evaluation day with all projects
Culture and sport was now better positioned in terms of corporate priorities and more able to take up commissioning opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formal evaluation session with each project at the end. • Evaluation day with all projects • Case studies
New sustainable relationships have been created between culture and sport providers and commissioners which have or will lead to new income streams	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formal evaluation session with each project at the end. • Evaluation day with all projects • Case studies
Services were being reformed or redesigned in order to respond to the commissioning needs and opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formal evaluation session with each project at the end. • Evaluation day with all projects • Case studies
The client was satisfied with the support received	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Client feedback

4. Evaluation results.

(Detail reports relating to each project are included in part 2 of the evaluation report)

4.1. Staff developed a better understanding of strategic commissioning and gained new skills to respond to commissioning opportunities and engaged earlier in the commissioning process.

The overall feedback was that the raising of awareness and understanding of the commissioning process was a very successful and key part of the process and would remain important going forward. The sessions offered were seen as:-

- Helping staff teams learn about the process and language.
- Bringing people up to the same level of understanding.
- Facilitating joint working across different services within organisations and identifying where in the organisation more support was required.
- Achieving high level buy in within the council.
- Improving visibility, recognition and credibility.
- Achieving clearer focus.
- Setting the foundations for building new relationships with commissioners.

It was pointed out that generally understanding grew quicker in sport and leisure services than cultural services, mainly it was believed because of their previous and longer term experience of procurement and business practices stimulated originally by compulsory competitive tendering (CCT).

In terms of improving the process, the key feedback related to how the awareness raising process is done. Each project approached it differently, some restricting it to senior managers across the organisation, some involving bigger vertical staff groupings and a few engaging partner and culture and sport civil society providers. The main suggestions to improve were:-

- Doing the awareness raising horizontally and vertically including engaging senior managers and elected members in the process from the outset would help to get better organisational buy in.
- Involving culture and sport civil society providers in the process from the outset would be beneficial to building relationships.
- Involving the commissioners in the process would be a good basis for establishing better relationships from the outset.
- Where service providers have been externalised, involving the trusts and private contractors from the outset would be beneficial.

The pace of this stage of the process also varied across the projects and in some cases delays in completing the initial understanding sessions resulted in relationship building being squeezed towards the end of the programme. Project managing this phase of the programme was critical given the numbers involved and diary constraints.

In terms of identified issues and challenges the following were highlighted:-

- The context surrounding the project changed fundamentally after the election creating a range of new pressures and turbulence affecting progress in some instances. However in most cases, as the new political and financial pressures became apparent the importance of commissioning as a process became even more evident.
- The process often highlighted that many councils currently have no strategic joined up commissioning approach at a corporate level.
- The new and emerging policy landscape has exposed the ongoing need to strategically commission at a “place” level and the increasing decentralisation of commissioning potentially to GPs, school clusters, and neighbourhoods and through personalisation. This will add to the complexity and require new levels of understanding and awareness.
- The process highlighted the challenges for culture and sport between the requirement to provide universal service and the targeting of provision created through commissioning. The concept of “proportionate universalism” developed in the Marmot review¹ helps explain and address these tensions and needs to be incorporated in the process of raising awareness and understanding and also developed alongside personalisation. Developing services that are sensitive and responsive to these three elements is a challenge which the participating projects are beginning to address in their service planning.
- The process often exposed the fragmented nature of culture and sport civil society providers and their capacity to engage effectively with the commissioning process. (See LGID research report into building capacity in the culture and sport civil society²).
- The process exposed the tension between the outcome focused requirements of commissioning and the current contractual requirements placed on trusts and contractors running leisure centres and other facilities to focus on delivering outputs. It suggests a need for better contract technology and partnership arrangements that enables a better focus on outcomes and variation to contracts to happen more quickly and efficiently.
- There was an emerging awareness of the coalition government’s desire to introduce more emphasis on “payment by results” in the processes of commissioning.

¹ Marmot Review: <http://www.marmotreview.org/>

² Building capacity in the culture and sport civil society organisations: <http://www.idea.gov.uk/idk/core/page.do?pageId=25797047>

4.2. Culture and sport was now better positioned in terms of corporate priorities and more able to take up commissioning opportunities.

The programme has facilitated numerous examples of culture and sport improving its positioning against corporate priorities at a relationship level if not yet at an operational level.

- In the East Riding relationships with health and social care are now developing rapidly and the work has been integrated into the wider corporate service transformation programme.
- In the NW Renaissance project the programme enabled the museum services to position themselves in a major neighbourhood focused programme in Ardwick.
- Leicester City is pursuing a similar approach and piloting joint working at a neighbourhood level with Adult Social Care to explore the opportunities in practice.
- As a result of the workshop with Children and Young people's Services, Leicester are engaging in the development of the Child Poverty Strategy and in the consultation on the 'Core offer' for schools.
- In Barking and Dagenham the programme has enabled positioning to be improved with health and in particular create the focus for a major initiative with local GP services and the development of a citizens' card for older people.
- In Torbay the programme provided the impetus to reignite a strategic partnership and build relationships with the older people's board.
- In North Lincolnshire the service is now better positioned with public health, adult social care and children and young people.
- In North Tyneside there is a stronger relationship with public health and children and young people and a new relationship with adult social care.

In terms of improving the process of relationship building the following points emerged:-

- It is important to understand commissioner needs by listening to them but equally important to have a menu of offers that will meet these needs when dialogue takes place.
- Although evidence of benefit and impact is important, it is equally important to have access to some practical local examples that have worked on the ground.

The main emerging issues and challenges identified were as follows:-

- In many cases progress has been built on good personal relationships, however this alone is not sustainable as such relationships can change particularly in the current turbulence. The challenge is to turn personal relationships into sustainable business relationships.
- The brokerage role of the council as a strategic commissioner may need to change as fragmentation is created by the localism agenda. Relationships therefore need to be both strategic and local.
- In the commissioning process roles will change over time and individuals may find themselves playing different roles in different relationships at the same time. The four main roles are that of strategic planner, a partner, a commissioner and a provider and knowing what role you are playing at any moment in time is important.
- Understanding the language and the governance arrangements relating to each service commissioning processes is the first step to building better relationships.
- Elected members have an equally important role to play in building these relationships with commissioners.
- Once providers move into more business orientated relationships the levels of risk will rise significantly.
- There are personal skills requirements involved in being able to access and influence relationships which may not yet be prevalent at the required levels across the sector and point towards a training and development need in the sector.

4.3. New sustainable relationships have been created between culture and sport providers and commissioners which have or will lead to new income streams.

The general feedback is that it is still too early to be confident that the programme is opening up new and sustainable income streams. Progress was seriously disrupted by this year's budget settlement and a budget process that saw significant cuts being negotiated. However, all the projects believed there was significant potential for new income to be generated and some encouraging examples have already emerged.

- In Barking and Dagenham an additional £0.5m over two years was secured through a health related programme and opportunities are under discussion with adult social care to support the personalisation agenda.

- North Tyneside has negotiated free access for looked after children that they hope will result in a payment in the future. They have also piloted a new ‘charged for’ after-school activity programme which they hope to roll out after evaluation and are developing a new health initiative around bowls and older people.
- East Riding has negotiated two Living Well weight management programmes funded through the PCT.
- In North Lincolnshire there is hope that new additional programmes to their core service will generate new income.
- In Hull the programme is supporting the museum education service negotiate potential new programmes.
- In Luton, the Library service is exploring it’s response to personalisation by examining: what is core business and we can do for free anytime; what is core business and we can do for free but needs to be timetabled; what can we do that might need a little additional funding; what can we do that might involve additional staff?

**Specialist Weight Management Services -
Contract with NHS East Riding of Yorkshire (NHSERY)**

NHS East Riding of Yorkshire (NHSERY) invited bidders to apply for the contract to operate a specialist weight management service in late May 2010. Bidders were requested to submit two proposals to operate the service, one for £60,000 and the other for £80,000.

Bariatric patients are those that are on the current waiting list for bariatric surgery and those patients who have approached their GP for bariatric surgery and/or have significant weight management issues.

The essence of the contract is to deliver and administrate a 26-week weight loss programme for the patient that is underpinned by aspects of physical activity, healthy eating and psychological aspects.

21 applicants applied to operate the service and East Riding Leisure was awarded the status of ‘preferred bidder’ on 23 June.

East Riding Leisure has a substantial and successful track record of delivering complex, sustainable programmes that are embedded within a model of behavioural change including –

Exercise Referral
Cardiac Rehabilitation
Stroke Rehabilitation
Weight Management
MEND Programme
Walking for Health

East Riding Leisure now runs a 26 week programme known as the ‘Live Well Programme’. The charge to NHSERY is £600 per patient and payment is broken down into key stages on the patient’s journey through the 26 week period. GPs receive progress reports every five weeks.

In terms of improving the process the following points were identified:-

- It is important to get the right people at the table at the right time. This requires senior buy in from the service management and the corporate management of the council as well as commissioners.
- Turning better relationships into funding opportunities will depend totally on matching commissioner priorities with evidence of benefit and impact.
- There are real dangers in over simplifying the relationship building process as a “dash for cash” rather than building long term business relationships.

Key issues and challenges that emerged from the process included the following:-

- The personalisation agenda is a major opportunity but also a major challenge. If we get it right we can generate major new income streams and really change some people’s lives. Some interesting models and ideas to engage with the personalisation agenda have emerged through the programme:
 - Linking with the ‘brokerage’ teams in Adult Social Care, including opportunities to second someone into these teams to open up the culture and sport offer
 - Improving the knowledge of the opportunities in culture and sport for social workers through joint training, producing evidence and demonstrating an understanding of the outcomes and requirements
 - Some councils are developing on-line shops for people with personal budgets and there are opportunities to explore how culture and sport can feature within this
 - Knowing how much an hour of staff time costs is necessary
 - In some circumstances people with personalised budgets may be interested in pooling these to share the costs of a bespoke service
- The transfer of public health to councils specifically if it comes with new ring fenced budgets is a major opportunity but will depend on people being round the right tables as local policy and strategies are designed and priorities are set.
- Decentralisation of commissioning to GPs will add new challenges as well as opportunities caused by a further fragmentation of relationships. In terms of evidence it was suggested that GPs are more likely to rely on NICE guidance in taking investment decisions.
- All culture and sport providers including in particular civil society providers must become more business focused in their approach. They

- Collaboration and brokerage will increasingly become more important as efficiency drives bigger commissions.
- Currently commissioning cycles can be infrequent creating limited opportunities to enter provider markets until they are retendered. It is important to understand the local cycles and when opportunities will appear. However, most commissioners want maximum flexibility in contracts both to continually adapt requirements and respond to changing patterns of need or poor performance. This means opportunities to enter the market can be continuous.
- We need to confront and become more comfortable with the concept of decommissioning. If a service is no longer required or performing poorly exiting relationships will be a critical but some times a painful and a politically sensitive process. Learning to manage decommissioning is as important as managing commissioning.
- There remains a major challenge to address the cultural challenges in the sector exposed by commissioning particularly the need to change from seeing commissioning as a process that bolts on additional projects and funding to current service provision to one that is about realigning current mainstream services to delivering local priority outcomes.

4.4. Services were being reformed or redesigned in order to respond to the commissioning needs and opportunities.

The overall feedback suggests that this is the most challenging and difficult stage in the commissioning process and will be dependent on wider culture change across the sector. Projects report least progress on this dimension perhaps a reflection of the progress made to date in establishing significant commissions that would require transformational service redesign. However, the wider financial climate and the impact it is having on councils is driving transformational change and in many places this is driving councils to consider and implement strategic commissioning based structures and delivery models with many more aspects of service delivery being externalised. However, some council's also have a political perspective that is based on retaining direct control of the provider functions as well as the commissioning functions and driving transformational change wholly internally.

There are a few emerging examples of service redesign and transformation in the projects:-

- North Tyneside are redesigning services to create a balance between maintaining a universal offer and providing a range of targeted services focused on specific corporate priorities.
- Torbay have transformed their creative and cultural education services and looking at other alignments of services round “people” and “place”.
- East Riding is undergoing a major corporate business transformation programme and 'Transforming Cultural Services' is a key part of this. The goal is to reduce the net cost of service provision whilst simultaneously seeking to ensure that culture makes the biggest possible contribution to the council's corporate priorities. The commissioning pilot in the East Riding has laid the foundations for this transformation work and is in many ways, a continuation of it.
- The NW renaissance programme is influencing wider change programmes across the council and the sub-region.
- Trafford is looking at neighbourhood models of delivery influenced by the programme.
- Barking and Dagenham are also taking the experience of the programme into wider discussions on service redesign.

Programme improvements identified include:-

- The need to recognise the importance of the Joint Strategic Needs Analysis (JSNA) to the process of commissioning earlier in the process.
- As the financial challenges started to bite it exposed new opportunities of working across council boundaries and within sub-regional contexts, however, it also opened up new challenges of joint working and political governance.

In terms of issues and challenges that emerged from the programme the key ones were:-

- Service redesign can quickly open up organisational and staff resistance to change if not managed effectively.
- The commissioning process also exposes a potential tension between a needs led and data driven set of community priorities and the politically driven priority setting process particularly at ward level.
- There are still some culture and sport services and individual providers who fail to see themselves as being in the “service providing business” but expecting to retain funding to “do what they have always done”.

- All the above factors play into the need for wider culture change across the sector which itself requires political and managerial leadership and the ability to influence change.
- There was a view that tinkering at the edges with small scale commissions would not tackle the major social outcomes such as health improvement. It was suggested that what might be required was “industrial scale” intervention as applied in Blackburn & Darwen to use sport and physical activity as a major driver to improve health.

4.5. Client satisfaction with the support received.

The overall feedback on client satisfaction was very good particularly with the quality of consultant support but tempered by two responses from projects where set up and progress could have been much better. Individual project reports and feedback from the projects is included in Part 2 of the evaluation report.

Some comments from the projects:

“The project was a great opportunity to discuss with colleagues from Public Health and Children & Family Services ways in improving relationships. Progress on this has been patchy over the last four years however with the change of government and national policy developments this has also helped.” North Lincolnshire.

“There is a better understanding and clarity of what we didn’t know before. There has been an increase in understanding of how the sector can contribute to wider commissioning opportunities and the recent refocus of council priorities around three new strategic outcomes.” Barking & Dagenham.

“ Involving key people from the PCT, children’s services and adult services in the interviews and partner workshops has built working relationships and led to many opportunities to explore joint working” Trafford.

“It was a chance for us to have the eye of key authority officers and partners in a time of great change, so it will provide future benefits as a result of this reaffirmation of our existence.” Telford & Wrekin

“This has been a valuable exercise in raising awareness within Children’s Services, Adult Social Care and Public Health of the services and opportunities within Leisure and Culture that can help towards delivering outcomes in each sector. A change in thinking and planning is now needed” Luton

“Really useful. An opportunity to develop links with Adult Social Care and other partners in culture to create a way forward with commissioning services.” Hull/N Lincs & NE Lincs

“Discussion session with Adult Social Care brought some clarity about what they want from the commissioning process and allowed me to consider how we could deliver services.” North Tyneside

*“The programme will definitely make a difference. We will focus more on evidence, on non-users and be much clearer about needs analysis.”
Leicester*

“We have increased motivation to continue to crack issues that are more difficult. Our understanding has deepened and we have addressed issues we wouldn’t otherwise have done.” East Riding

Improvements identified to the process relevant to LGID all relate to project set up and project management with a particular comment about the impact of changing consultant’s midstream. Other observations included:-

- Support to identify particular commissioning opportunities would have been helpful.
- More opportunity to share learning between projects throughout the programme perhaps through a community of practice would have been helpful.

The councils identified the following areas for improvement in the way they worked:-

- Some felt they could have done more between facilitated sessions to follow up the work.
- Some felt they could have opened access up to the understanding sessions to a wider audience.
- Some felt that they could have done more to get better buy in from senior managers.
- Some felt they could have defined the work more clearly to have prevented “scope creep”.
- Some felt they could have taken more opportunity to report the project to members and engage them in the process.

4.6. Programme cost

In total expenditure on the programme including East Riding and NW Renaissance was approximately £110,000. This included £60,000 from the

culture and sport improvement project, £5,000 from the Healthy Communities Programme, £10,000 from NW Renaissance and £5,000 from East Riding council. Approximately 120 consultant days were provided to support the programme over the year.

5. Looking forward and the next steps.

All the projects agreed that all the main elements of the programme remained relevant in the current landscape but in particular the elements that were most useful were:-

- The support provided to help demystify the process of commissioning and help people understand and engage with the language and governance arrangements surrounding the process. The written guidance³, currently being updated was praised as was the training that went alongside the support programme but it was the provision of direct support from the consultants that really assisted the learning and helped embed it.
- The mapping of the local landscape and again having access to the consultant to talk independently to commissioners and bring all the knowledge together into one document. Examples of commissioning landscape mapping reports are included in Part 3 of the evaluation report.
- The brokering of the relationships with commissioners and the access to facilitated support through the consultants at key stages in the process.

In terms of new issues and challenges going forward these are:-

- The impact of the loss of some of the national indicators that measured performance and the ongoing need to be able to measure outcomes. The existence of the LGID outcomes framework to support this process was welcomed and valued.⁴
- Access to local or national evidence remained a key requirement. However increasingly commissioners will look for longitudinal evidence that investment was generating longer term benefits and cost savings in terms of public expenditure. Interest was expressed in developing further work on the concepts of the social return on investment and how this might be measured.

³ Understanding strategic commissioning guidance:
<http://www.idea.gov.uk/idk/core/page.do?pageId=19049492>

⁴ Culture & sport outcomes framework: <http://www.idea.gov.uk/idk/core/page.do?pageId=21649171>

- The localism agenda was identified as a major opportunity and at the same time a challenge as it enabled culture and sport to make its case locally but had to operate in an increasingly more fragmented commissioning landscape. However at the same time the efficiency agenda may drive bigger commissions and new regional and sub regional structures and partnerships for both commissioning and providing services.
- Staff churn, loss of capacity and loss of leadership created by the significant financial pressures on the sector presented huge challenges going forward if the sector was to take the opportunities presented by commissioning. As the sector itself becomes far more decentralised, externalised and fragmented, maintaining strategic relationships with commissioners will increasingly become more difficult. The concept of investing in “brokers” to help bridge this fragmentation is an opportunity being considered by both Arts Council and Sport England as identified in the recent research on the capacity building needs of the sector. Capacity building particularly in the third sector partners remains a major challenge.
- The programme has also raised some issues round culture change in the sector and it was suggested that the challenge was now seeing commissioning not as an addition to the day job but the day job. This raises some challenges in terms of training and development across all the professional bodies operating in the sector.
- Finally comments were made about how the sector shares the learning from the programme and it was suggested that there was a need to revisit the projects in the future to check what progress had been made.