

Strictly Commissioning

13th November 2009, Dorford Centre, Dorchester



Report and Action Plan



Report on Strictly Commissioning Event

held on 13th November 2009

at the Dorford Centre, Dorchester

Organised by Dorset Community Action (DCA) with support from Dorset Youth Ass'n (DYA)

Report compiled from Feedback sheets (50% return rate) and Action Planning points received from participants. Together with additional information from DCA and DYA

Author

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November 2009

Strictly Commissioning

There were nearly 80 people attending this event which included 18 statutory partners and approximately 60 participants from Dorset's Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) and Social Enterprises.

The aims of the day were to

- Stimulate discussion between VCS and local statutory services commissioners
- Increase VCS knowledge of commissioning
- Provide a platform for debate about the future of commissioning locally

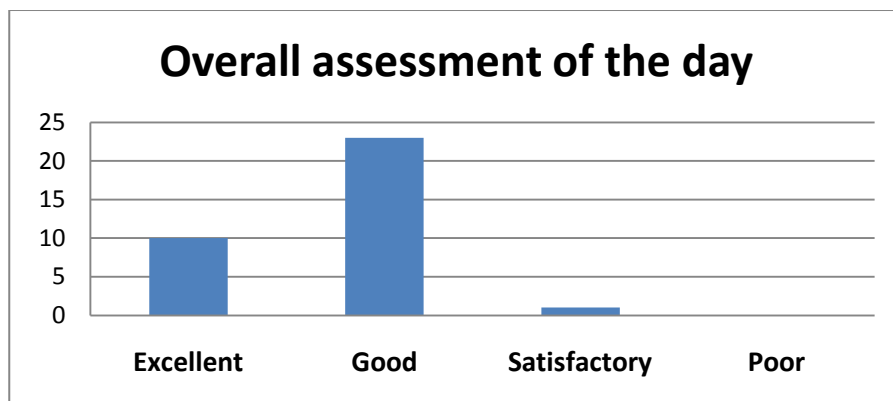
We wanted to do this in a light hearted way and did not want 'death by PowerPoint' while keeping the timing to a morning plus lunch.

Having committed ourselves to using a TV game-show format we had some difficulties persuading commissioners, on the one hand, and VCS volunteers on the other, to take part in Dragon Den. There being some concerns raised early on as to the expectations of both parties. We had to make it clear that there could not be any expectation of work being funded on the basis of a 'good pitch' being made on the day.

The format worked very well overall and as one comment stated

"Very entertaining presentation of a dry subject. Thanks"

And the overall assessment of the day's event was as in the following chart



Equipment on the day

Electronic Voting System

We used, for the first time, the electronic voting system loaned by Dorset County Council (DCC) and despite some initial hiccups this worked well in engaging participants in thinking about

- What they already knew about commissioning and tendering during 'Who wants to be a Millionaire' and
- Whether they would invest in either of the two 'pitches' for proposed new services in the 'Friendly Dragon Den'

We only had 50 handsets and only 39 or 40 seemed to be working but it was enough to get a good idea of knowledge and opinions - With the majority of the VCS getting the questions right. A couple of answers were way out, notably whether adult services would be commissioning more services as a result of the transforming social care agenda. The answer is fewer services would be commissioned, but most thought there would be more. This left an opening for further discussion during Commissioners Question Time.

Microphones and PA system

The feedback on the day, as shown above, was generally good or excellent. We did however have difficulties using the PA system as the microphones were not all 'hand held roaming microphones.

Not being able to hear everything clearly and 'feedback' on the microphones was very frustrating, and could have spoiled the whole event, but in the end the content was so useful that people coped with the annoyance.

In future we will need to check in advance what equipment is available and how to best use it.

We had the relevant quiz show music and that worked well as introductions to each part of the event

Commissioners Question Time (CQT)

This was the heart of the day with a panel of commissioners¹ and procurement/contract officers from DCC and NHS Dorset answering a range of questions about how they commission what they commission and most importantly how the VCS can engage in the whole process.

This was the most commented on part of the event with 16 of the 23 comments overwhelmingly positive². The comments are shown verbatim in appendices 3³ and 4⁴.

I would like to thank the panel members for their contributions and their willingness to engage the sector in further discussion, particularly NHS Dorset who acknowledge they are on the beginning of a journey in working with the VCS.

There was a very clear message from DCC Adult Services, as a direct result of the personalisation agenda, about the shift from commissioning services delivered to groups of e.g. older people or people with a disability to services needing to be developed and delivered directly to the new purchasers – the individuals with budgets allocated for their needs by Adult Services and in the future by Childrens Services.

The Market was mentioned several times – the VCS need to be aware of the market-place and their place in that. The need to capacity build organisations was very clear but the message on grants is – **there are no grants.**

However when is a grant not a grant – when it is a 'pump priming allocation' from the transforming social care budget or 'a non-recurrent allocation' from the NHS.

¹ Appendix 1 - panel members

² Appendix 2 - summary table of feedback sheets

³ Appendix 3 – what did you find the most useful and why? – comments from feedback sheets

⁴ Appendix 4 – What did you find the least useful and why? – comments from feedback sheets

These may be used to capacity build a particular project or organisation that is required to deliver something very specific. There are also specific grants for specific projects that statutory sector partners can apply for from various government departments or regional quangos. This is the case with the need to develop user led organisations, as defined by the Department of Health (DofH), and the allocation of grants by DofH⁵ to local authorities for capacity building.

There was some discussion about grants being needed and a show of hands did not demonstrate a clear way forward on this issue.

The *Friendly Dragon Den*

There were originally to be three pitches but as one of the contributors had been ill with the flu we had two excellent presentations.

The first was for a new proposed service by CAB Dorset, for a pilot to run 4 outreach advice services for parents who use the family centres run by Barnardos.

The other pitch, from Age Concern Dorchester, focussing on older people and nutrition proposed to meet the needs of rurally isolated older people, with three new and different services.

The audience gave very useful and thoughtful feedback, however table discussions were cut shorter than planned due to slight over run on Commissioners' Question Time. The contributors were very happy with the feedback they received from VCS and statutory partners and when it came to voting for investment, the majority said they would buy in for either 50% or 100%, if money was no object.

I wish all the organisations involved good luck with obtaining funds for their proposed new services and if they have the right service to offer commissioners - who knows, perhaps someone will buy it!

Action planning

Each table had a series of Action Planning sheets for

- The VCS⁶
- Commissioners from statutory partners⁷
- Umbrella organisations e.g. DCA and DYA⁸

These sheets have been transcribed and can be found as appendices 6,7 & 8.

There were also a number of 'what's bugging you?' postcards that are either included already in the comments and action point or have been added where most relevant.

DCA and DYA as part of the third sector infrastructure group (3SIG) will be planning how to take these actions forward, in partnership with DCC and NHS Dorset – we will keep you informed.

⁵ User led Organisations - <http://tinyurl.com/user-led-orgs-dofH>

⁶ Appendix 5 – actions for VCS

⁷ Appendix 6 – actions for commissioners – statutory partners

⁸ Appendix 7 - actions for umbrella organisations

One action needed now is for any voluntary organisations interested in the DCC Adult Services led

'Transforming Social Care Developing the Markets (TSCDM)'

planning group to make contact with DCA's rep on that group, Steve Place, who is DCA's chief exec and was our quiz show host and CQT panel chair at the event.

Don't be misled by the gold jacket - Steve is very informed about the voluntary sector and will be better informed to discuss all relevant issues if you keep him informed. One way of doing this would be to form a reference group working alongside the TSCDM group. Contact Steve on 01305-216400 or email him steve.place@dorsetcommunityaction.org.uk

Conclusions

The most important time for VCS to get engaged is – **NEARLY ALL THE TIME.**

Make sure your organisation is linked to a 3rd⁹ **sector forum**¹⁰ or other such forums and networks like the health network and local DAP (Dorset Age Partnership) meetings so you can influence decisions about NEEDS of individuals.

Then be prepared to discuss how needs are met through appropriate service delivery and IF the commissioners decide to tender to buy a service remind them to follow the

- ✓ Dorset Compact¹¹
- ✓ The National Compact guidance on commissioning¹²
- ✓ The National Compact guidance on procurement law¹³
- ✓ The DCC 3rd sector framework on commissioning¹⁴

THEN – step back during the tender process as contract rules do not allow any more influencing BUT make sure you get appropriate support and advice on the tender process and completion of documents from DCA or DYA or from one of the national support agencies listed in the information pack supplied at the event.

Keep DCA and DYA in the loop about

- any inconsistencies and
- about your experiences

so we are in a better position to help you.

I hope you found the event useful and that this report makes sense of all the feedback we received.

Contact Alannah Bolt 01305-216422 alannah.bolt@dorsetcommunityaction.org.uk for any further information or to comment on this report

⁹ 3rd sector means voluntary and community sector or social enterprise

¹⁰ See link to all the 3rd sector forums on the following web pages for the Voice project http://www.dorsetcommunityaction.org.uk/voice_project or call DCA on 01305-216407 for more information about the forums, or DYA on 01305 – 262440 about the 0-19 3rd sector forum

¹¹ The dorset compact - <http://www.dorsetforyou.com/index.jsp?articleid=4243>

¹² <http://www.thecompact.org.uk/files/103954/FileName/CommissioningGuidance.pdf>

¹³ http://www.thecompact.org.uk/files/139878/FileName/compactandprocurementlaw_webversion.pdf

¹⁴ This was in the packs and is not yet on dorset for you

Commissioners Question Time

PANEL

Andrew Morris	NHS Dorset Director of Strategic Service Development
Ali Wilson	NHS Dorset Interim Director of Commissioning
Chris Fuller	NHS Dorset Head of Strategic Procurement and Market Management
Anne Salter	DCC Head of Strategic Planning, Commissioning & Performance Dorset Childrens Services Directorate
Alison Waller	DCC Strategic Commissioning Manager - Adult Services Commissioning
Nicky Beaton	DCC Commissioning and Contracts Manager Adult & Community Services

Appendix 2

Evaluation Forms - 13th November 2009

	Excellent	Good	Satisfactory	Poor	total response to this question	positive comments	negative comments
Pre event publicity & booking process/ confirmation	12	14	4	1	31		
1.Venue	14	15	2	3	34		8 mics
2. Catering	11	14	3	0	28		
3. Access	15	15	1	0	31		
4. Who wants to be a Millionaire	6	18	8	1	33		
5. Commissioners Question Time	8	19	5	1	33	16	7
6. Friendly Dragons Den	9	20	5	0	34	3	3
7. Networking Time	7	18	2	2	29	6	4
8. Displays	4	18	5	1	28		
9. Information Packs	15	15	0	1	31		1
10. Overall assessment of the day	10	23	1	0	34	4	1

STRICTLY COMMISSIONING

What did you find the most useful & why?

1. Commissioners' Question Time. Greater understanding of commissioning, although work in PCT, not area of work.
2. Commissioners' Question Time.
3. Opportunity to reflect on trends in commissioning & the importance of identifying key outcomes – both commissioners & providers.
4. Information regarding the commissioning process.
5. Clear information on commissioning, information given out was great.
6. The enthusiasm for developing 3rd Sector commissioning.
7. Q & A to Commissioners & opportunity to talk to DCA & DYA about what to do next...esp after tea/coffee break. Will make appointments to approach Tendering.
8. Question Time – hearing from the horse's mouths.
9. Question & Answer sessions.
10. Opportunity to hear first hand (collectively) how we can do better in engaging third sector orgs in community & service planning.
11. Info from commissioners about how to engage/get on the list for tendering opportunities.
12. 1st panel.
13. Some of the spontaneous questions at Question Time. – I'd like an E-Forum set up for this so we can continue to ask commissioners the questions that I will think about later.
14. Commissioners trying to be clear about how they specify what services they buy.
15. Raising awareness and seeing who the Commissioners are.
16. Question Time to DCC/NHS staff.
17. Feedback on pitch to Dragon's Den. We can use this to improve.
18. Dragons Den – seeing bidding in action and getting commissioners' viewpoint.
19. Bizarrely, Friendly Dragons' Den. It underscored for me the essential need to focus on outcomes, clear costing, innovation, use of existing services and infrastructure.
20. Networking.
21. Networking
22. Networking.
23. Networking – it always is.
24. Finding out what Dorset is doing. Good ideas from other providers.
25. Meeting new people & catching up with "old friends".
26. The event as a whole.
27. It was all useful.
28. All informative & engaging.
29. Very entertaining presentation of a dry subject. Thanks!

STRICTLY COMMISSIONING

What did you find the least useful & why?

1. P A System
2. The microphone system was poor.
3. Sound quality of course.
4. Poor quality microphones – really made it hard work.
5. Acoustics.
6. Microphones & audio speakers.
7. P A feedback
8. Whole event was ruined by the microphones and sound quality of the venue.
Why does anyone use Dorford?
9. Question Time – The answers did not provide anything different or new for smaller organisations.
10. Questions were pre-set? How was this decided? Would like more information on how we can keep in the loop from now on.
11. Some questions in “Commissioners’ Question Time” were rather dull and predictable – more challenging questions would have prompted some broader discussion. (Dorset CC Children’s Services)
12. Commissioners’ replies were mainly very predictable.
13. Question Time – some respondents were a bit dull & wordy.
14. Commissioners’ Question Time – lots of repetition & some unhelpful remarks (lack of knowledge of the third sector)
15. Commissioners’ Question Time – Sorry, needed to be much more focussed and for commissioners to be looking for sub texts that need attention.
16. Dragons’ Den – a bit biased to specific sectors.
17. Dragons’ Den was a little artificial to be really helpful.
18. Dragons’ Den fun but what did I learn about commissioning?
19. Not enough time to network – but very useful morning.
20. Might have been good to have a bit more space for table discussion – but not a big gripe.
21. There was a buzz at coffee time & clearly a networking opportunity – could have done more.
22. Information Pack – Lots of information but no list or detail of what was included, not put in the pack.
23. Tried to fit too much in.
24. The “Razz mittaz” too airy fairy.
25. Nothing.

Appendix 5

ACTION PLAN FOR VOLUNTARY ORGANISATIONS/ THIRD SECTOR

1. Commissioners need to understand the reality of the small voluntary sector – awareness raising.
2. Need to develop capacity/ resources to make case for funding of services, including commissioning, and time required.
3. Better information networks/ newsletters re funding opportunities, including tenders – currently very diverse/ fragmented.
4. Register interest in being commissioned with local authorities & NHS where appropriate.
5. Communicate needs more efficiently with NHS/PCT.
6. Need to ensure promotion & marketing of service to general public with implementation of individual service budgets. Cost implications on core funding.
7. More joined-up working/ consortia either on locality or on issue/client group basis.
8. Start to prepare for micro-commissioning! – Difficult to know what to prepare for though!

ACTION PLAN FOR COMMISSIONERS – STATUTORY PARTNERS

1. DCC to set up market and engagement tab on their website (User friendly)
2. Commissioners need to understand (and experience) the reality of small voluntary organisations – learning.
3. For Children's Services- Adult Services invited 3rd Sector orgs to write in about future tenders. Is this the same for Children's Services? If so, can we have some contact details please?
4. A need to break down the voluntary sector into groups, i.e. delivering services in Health, Education or Social Care so that the relevant information on Tenders/ Commissioning is sent to those organisations i.e. Tenders for Health goes to organisations working in Health.
5. What shape will the local voluntary sector be in say 5 years? Commissioning will have an impact on the local market. What?
6. Challenge will be to break/ develop the bureaucratic models being proposed to enable small & medium community groups to access funding opportunities.
7. More information required on practicalities/ opportunities of direct payments/ personalisation of care.
8. Ensure consultation with 3rd sector providers at an early stage of planning.
9. Set up easy methods of registering interest for individual organisations.
10. Carry out processes described by NHS' Andrew Morris i.e. talking with providers on a regular basis.
11. What quality accreditation is required/ acceptable – guidance please. Charter marks.
12. Seek out umbrella organisations to support small vol sector/ 3rd sector organisations.
13. Need more information about PQQ requirements – thresholds etc.
14. Send tendering opportunity alerts through the DCA e-mail vol sector contacts plus directly to vol orgs themselves.
15. How are you going to get rid of this perception that you are either 'in' or 'out' of the club? (Re Commissioning)
16. Keep a small grant programme option open – especially for smaller organisations – look at the 'Community Win' 'Seed Funding' Programme and the outcomes delivered through that programme – one off small grants that have to be sustainable.
17. DCC should have a similar registration of interest system as the NHS via their website.
18. More opportunities for 3rd sector to be involved in NHS/ PCT needs identification and decision making processes.
19. How are direct payments promoted? How are the recipients informed as to available services? Is there a document, e.g. 'Dorset Services Yellow Pages' Service User magazine?

20. Have a Service User representative on all Tender selection panels e.g. as per experience of recent Home Improvement Agency selection at DCC.
21. Vol orgs need to understand and prepare for micro-commissioning – training! Also what services will individuals be looking for? We need to prepare.
22. When holding consultation events prior to commissioning, take time to talk to providers/ prospective providers rather than talking at them. Current consultation events give the impression that the tenders are written & specifications are set.
23. Make it easier/ more publicized/ about how & where tenders are placed e.g. websites etc.
24. Be aware of the appropriate standards & quality-marks 3rd sector orgs may already hold & how these can therefore slim down the application process.
25. Much 3rd sector work is preventative – both “pitches” this morning were, so (a) may not be targeted at groups that NHS/DCC can find & (b) may not have easily quantifiable outcomes.
26. Improve communication to 3rd sector on “market intentions”
27. Develop strategy to show future market possibilities for 3rd sector.
28. County website to register an interest.
29. The Compact has been running for 10 years – adhering to it should not be optional!! Especially timescales.

From the what’s bugging you postcards

30. How do new and emerging groups get started in all this when we don’t have a track record or references or funding or capacity?
31. Is it possible to have the names of successful tenderers to be relayed to other orgs. That took part?
32. There needs to be clearer transparency about any tenders/bids/contracts?
33. I’d like to know more about micro commissioning and any joint work across BDP (0-19 provider)?
34. Details of SDS(?) also how would they deal with residents of care homes?
35. Commissioners need to be realistic about the time, skills, of trustees in medium size orgs to engage in these processes
36. NHS – like to see more childrens’ services involvement – still need to know who to speak to!

ACTION PLAN FOR SUPPORT ORGANISATIONS e.g. DCA & DYA.

1. Voice for what's "bugging" the statutory sector with reference to commissioning with vol. & comm. Groups.
2. Collation of contracts awarded to community & voluntary orgs. By DCC, NHS, District Councils for both analysis purposes, monitoring & signposting community orgs to those successful for advice.
3. Better ways of getting groups to work together (syndicates etc.)
4. More days to let small organisations know how to find out about tenders have input into PCTs to discuss what needs to be provided etc.
5. Would it be useful to have a CJS (criminal justice system) vol com forum pan dorset?

From the what's bugging you postcards

6. Like to know more about the 0-19 forum (pass to Lindsey)