

**Delivering public services in the mixed economy of  
welfare: Putting research into practice**  
**North East Regional Workshop**  
**Newcastle January 24<sup>th</sup> 2008**

**Attendees** John Ramsey, Age Concern England; Rob Wilson, Newcastle University; Irene Hardill, Nottingham Trent University (NTU); Sue Baines, Manchester Metropolitan University (MMU); Chris Ford, NECE; Geoffrey Crute, Age Concern; Jo Curry, VONNE; Lynne Corner, Years Ahead; Peter Ellis Lloyds TSB Foundation; Neil Shashoua Age Concern England; Bob Simonds, Henshaws Society for Blind People; Tom Tweddell, South Tyneside Council

**Apologies:** Judith Brown

**Project information.** After a welcome from John Ramsey as chair and introductions round the room, Irene Hardill (NTU) gave an overview of the project, its aims and objectives.

**Introduction to Social Clauses**

- Rob Wilson gave an introduction to the theme of social clauses in the context of service commissioning and challenges to the VCS. Chris Ford drew on recent work Commissioned by the Office of the Third Sector to talk in more detail about the background to Social Clauses and how they have been implemented. Most Social Clauses to date have been around labour markets, employability and training and that is where most of the experience and evidence can be found. Chris worked through an example provided by Leeds City Council of a shopping initiative to assist older and disabled people. It is essential to argue for 'relevance' – the brackets in the documents matter! Social Clauses requiring targeted recruitment and training have survived challenge but overall there is limited case law

**Responses, questions and reflections**

- A definitive list of what a Social Clause can and can not do would be useful – but does not exist - there are only things they have been done that have (so far) gone unchallenged.
- Some local authorities have been reluctant to share their social clause experience – maybe they don't want to draw attention to things that have not been challenged but could be.
- Can VCSOs work together – what about a 'match making' service for supply chains?
- What about individuals as 'commissioners' as in direct payments? Could people make consumer decisions from a catalogue that would include information such as 'locally produced'?
- Social clauses to date have been used in construction contracts where experience shows that enforcement is tricky – only things that can be measured, and policed, actually get done

## **Group tasks**

Two breakout groups each worked with two examples of commissioned services, and suggested the kinds of social value a VCS organisation could claim to bring. The examples were a 'home security service' and 'benefits outreach', based on anonymous versions of case studies.

## **Reports from the tasks**

Each group produced quite long lists of potential examples of social value, based on their knowledge of local services as well as on the short texts provided. Each group took a rather different approach, one producing a high level, generic list and the other including more specific examples. (The summary of each group report is reproduced in Appendix 1.) Discussion focussed in particular on:

- The need to move from identifying and claiming benefits to articulating them in ways that could be encapsulated in terms of a tender
- How to measure achievements, and how much to include measurement in a 'pitch'
- Lack of clarity about 'relevance' e.g. is it possible to propose to support young offenders in a project for older people?
- Uncertainty about the weighting that is likely to be given to social clauses in the commissioning process – if the weighting is too low social clauses are unlikely to make a difference.

One person commented at the end of this exercise 'social clauses are more difficult than I thought!'

## **Environments for a thriving third sector**

In the last session the group reflected on one of the new 'national indicators' for the performance of local government 'an environment for a thriving third sector'. People were asked to think about what such an environment would look like – and how it could be recognised.

- Measure amount of time spent fundraising (staff and volunteer time) rather than service delivery
- How many contracts awarded are of three years duration?
- To what extent are there 'bite size' contracts for small local VCS organisations
- Time for strategic partners - is there funding to enable VCS representatives to receive expenses to sit on partnerships
- How many VCOs think they will be here in 12 months time?
- What proportion of contracts emphasise community benefits (via social clauses)

## **Appendix 1: Summary of breakout group reports**

### Home Security Service – Group 1

- Maintenance of urban fabric
- Support renewal of social networks
- Improve the local economy
- Enhance individual choice
- Avert additional support costs
- Intangible constituent parts of “wellbeing”

### Home Security Service – Group 2

- Safer community
- Reduced fear of crime
- Reduced anxiety leading to fewer unnecessary calls to the police
- Reduction in actual crime
- Supporting the local economy
- Supporting independence of older people
- Promoting equality in the local community
- Speedier discharge from hospital
- Improved joining up between social care and health
- Volunteers learning skills – possible use of hard-to-reach groups e.g. ex offenders as volunteers
- Service users becoming designers / evaluator of the service

### Benefits Outreach – Group 1

- Support citizenship agenda
- Increase financial independence
- Develop a knowledge base through collective advocacy
- Promote more coherent service responses
- Increased mobility and independence leading to lower public spend
- Improved sense of wellbeing and improved health
- Ensure earlier intervention through signposting
- Local economic multiplier effects (through more local spending)

### Benefits Outreach – Group 2

- Alleviating poverty
- Improving the local economy (more benefits uptake tends to increase local spending)
- Improving access to employment by providing information on in-work benefits
- Anchoring local employers in the area by supporting low wage employment (through in-work benefits)
- Supporting other third sector organisations by making people aware of their services
- Building up the local skill base through training for employment
- Investment in the community by training volunteers