

'How can voluntary organisations help to transform care? Articulating Social Value

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Policy Context

- 'Mixed economy' of care – state, market, informal (household), and 'Third sector'
- Policy in UK promotes delivery of social care and health by agencies that are neither state, market nor household
- The 'Third Sector' - not part of the public or private sectors
 - formal organisations
 - separate from government;
 - non-profit-distributing;
 - self-governing.
 - typically voluntary participation but many are professional organisations with paid staff
- The role of the Third Sector in public services has become a key strand of the drive to improve public service delivery



Some example of policy

- *Our Health, Our Care, Our Say* (Department of Health 2006) third sector organisations an important means of raising the quality of services
- The Office of the Third Sector created in 2006 tasked with bringing about a 'a step-change' in the quality of interaction with government that third sector organisations can expect
- The local government white paper *Strong and Prosperous Communities* (2006) potential of the third sector to bring expertise and experience with user groups, as well as innovative and cost-effective approaches to service delivery.
- National Procurement Strategy - local authorities should stimulate diverse markets, consider 'community benefits' and improve engagement with suppliers



Delivering public services in the mixed economy of welfare: Putting research into practice

- "Impact" Grant from Economic and Social Research Council – intended to ensure that social research gets translated into policy and practice
- Collaborative project 3 universities and Age Concern England (September 2007 – March 2008)
- Project tasks
 1. *Collate existing material and knowledge*
 2. *Explore good practice* – case studies from two English Regions, and workshops
 3. *Produce resources* - web based material socialwelfareservicedelivery.org.uk



Claims and fears

- Direct experience of the issue they seek to address;
- Flexible, changing and informal structures capable of responding more sensitively than the state or the market
- Innovative - experimenting - new ways of responding to unmet need
- Older people's services – 'low level' help that makes a difference
Reduced legitimacy with service users
- Mission drift
- Worry about being incorporated into government thinking
- Becoming more like for-profit businesses
- The sector becoming a stepping stone from the public to the private sector



Two sides of Third Sector service delivery

New Public Management

- Supporting a plurality of providers to drive down costs, drive up standards, and increase choice
 - Mechanisms to open supply opportunities to TSOs
 - Entrepreneurial skills to sustain activities that in the past were grant funded

Notions of 'Public Value'

- Challenge the premises of New Public Management
 - Greater emphasis on added social value in contract design and evaluation
 - Experiments with 'Social clauses' in contracts



Case studies – origins of public service contracts

- People in need not provided for or offered only poor quality services by existing (usually public sector) suppliers
 - “People with dementia were passed around like parcels; they and their carers felt powerless. Carers were frustrated with the lack of locally based services, leading to hospital and residential home admissions ”
- Small, time limited grants from charitable trusts
 - “Because one funding stream ends does not mean the need has gone away”
- Contracts from local authorities and health service sources more reliable income
 - “It’s where the money is - we need reliable sources of income and this is one despite the problems” - But a step not taken lightly



Case study key points

- Users influence on services
- Negotiating price - awareness of the finite budgets of public sector agencies, and the complex overlapping nature of funding arrangements
- Influencing policy eg sitting on local fora
- Actively seeking opportunities, energetic networking, and sometimes taking considered risks.
- Learning, change growth in response to new opportunities
- Challenge of giving an account of the value of services in ways that make sense to public sector funders
- Some were imaginative and resourceful in trying to evidence the 'softer' outcomes which seemed to them to better represent their value.



Workshops

- Third sector as innovators - prevalent in rhetoric - does not sit well with commissioning agenda because commissioners buy what they want and won't or can't risk the untried.
- Grant funding is particularly important for innovation
- Not all TSOs can or should participate in contracts with the public sector
- Poor understanding between Third Sector and public sector
- Third Sector performance and value can be hard to define, much less measure, for individual organisations and for the sector
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What TSOs can do

- Reflect upon the question, 'What's your organisation's theory of what it's for and what it does best?'
- Routinely gather evidence to understand what works and how the service improves outcomes
- Be clear about the real cost (even if they don't charge it)
- Understand and manage stakeholders' expectations
- Spread the risk and be creative, for example by working in partnership with others, building relationships and developing shared resources where possible

