

Engaging the VCS in Commissioning

**Outputs of workshop for VCS organisations and
Commissioners**

February 2013

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About this report

Commissioning is not new, but it has come to dominate the landscape of how voluntary and community organisations and the public sector relate to each other.

Commissioning as a way of describing what outcomes are needed and what services are delivered to meet the needs of our city sounds simple, but throws up many complexities and challenges. Commissioners and VSC organisations need to be able to listen to one another and learn from that listening.

Throughout the last year or more and through several different commissioning processes, it became apparent that there were a number of concerns about the impacts on and experience of, commissioning on voluntary and community bodies. So BCC and Voscur decided to hold an independently facilitated event to better understand both sides of the commissioning process; to provide a safe forum for views to be expressed and heard; and most importantly to develop actions that will improve the commissioning process for all.

This report of our joint event is the result. This is probably just the start of our improvement journey, rather than the end.

Nick Hooper, Bristol City Council (Chair of former Enabling Commissioning Board)

Mark Hubbard, Voscur

The content of this report reflects the notes made on flip charts, post-its and worksheets during the workshop on 8th February.

The Action Lists name a person who was in the workshop who will 'own' the action. This does not necessarily mean they go on to lead or have any part in the action but they are the person who has been delegated by the workshop to begin the process by passing it on to the right person/department/group supported by background information/views/learning from the workshop.

This summary report pulls together key findings and has been reviewed by a small working group including Voscur and Bristol City Council (BCC) representatives as well as representatives from each of the groups at the workshop.

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1 Summary of findings

As expected, a broad range of issues were raised and discussed at this extremely productive workshop. The key themes identified were as follows:

- **Risk** – in all its forms including length of contract, the use of new ‘vehicles’ for service delivery, e.g. consortia, financial thresholds required by public sector providers
- **Joint strategic shaping of services** – thinking about how commissioners and providers can co-design services in the future to ensure best use of resources when meeting the needs of the people of Bristol
- **TUPE** (Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations) – including the need to be clear about what is required by commissioners and providers in order to comply with legislation and submit effective bids
- **Expertise and Information** – relating to the need for commissioners and providers to enhance levels of expertise, knowledge and understanding of commissioning requirements and the changing environment
- **Process and proportionality** – including consistency in the application of processes
- **Marketisation of Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) v Mission** – matching the pressures for change and a commercial approach with the fundamental social principles of a VCS
- **Quality and Social Value** – ensuring that the quality and social value that the VCS can provide are not stifled by commissioning processes and an assumption that only large organisations can deliver value for money.

These themes, along with proposed actions are explored in more detail in the following sections.

Issues relating to consistency and proportionality of process featured strongly. There was also a recognition that the world of commissioning is changing, not least because of the changes that the VCS organisations, Bristol City Council (BCC) and other public service providers have to make in response to the changing economic climate and the demographics of the City.

BCC is currently going through some major changes, including changes in the way it commissions services. The proposed actions listed in this report will help to inform and direct priorities. Working with Voscur this report provides a focus for further work, development and dialogue on commissioning activities.

2 Overview of the Workshop

2.1 Aims of the meeting

This workshop was held to learn from the issues VCS organisations and commissioners have faced during recent commissioning exercises and to come up with some ways forward which could help.

Objectives

- Explore recent commissioning and procurement processes to highlight issues that may need to be addressed
- Discuss and understand different experiences and perspectives
- Identify ways to help VCS organisations to more effectively participate in commissioning
- Identify ways that commissioners can continuously create systems which are accessible to VCS organisations
- Work together to agree learning points, potential solutions and a way forward.

Please note that the 'actions' identified in this report are **not** intended to represent a set of new joint policies; but together they provide a focus for further work, development and dialogue on commissioning activities.

2.2 Selection of participants

A cross section of local VCS organisations and commissioners attended the workshop.

Commissioners were invited by Nick Hooper (BCC Service Director) to reflect a range of departments and ensure a mix of those new to commissioning and experienced commissioning professionals.

VCS organisations were invited through a range of publications and online portals and the resulting group spanned small medium and large organisations, from a range of sectors and with a range of experiences of commissioning.

Sixteen participants spoke with the Workshop Facilitator over the phone to inform the design of the day and expectations of possible future actions. They advised on:

- What they thought the issues might be that would come up
- Any solutions they had already thought of
- People they would like to see at the meeting
- Advice on the running of the meeting

2.3 Identification of themes, issues and actions

In the first session, participants outlined the issues they had faced during recent commissioning processes. Each table group included a mix of commissioners and providers from a range of sectors. After collecting the issues on large post-it notes, participants identified the emerging

themes that reflected the issues raised. Participants then selected the groups they would work in depending on the themes/issues they particularly wanted to work on.

During the afternoon session participants worked with template flipcharts to come up with possible solutions and actions which could be undertaken to address the issues in their theme. The following key themes were identified:

- Risk
- Joint strategic shaping of services
- TUPE
- Expertise and Information
- Process and proportionality
- Marketisation of VCS v Mission
- Quality and Social Value

The aim of the workshop was to develop a good understanding of what the issues were for participants in relation to commissioning and to consider possible solutions. There was a great deal of work to cover on the day and inevitably some tasks had to be carried out very quickly. It was agreed that a small joint (Voscur/BCC) working group would review the solutions suggested for practicability, clarity and impact, and update the 'Action Lists' accordingly. This has now been done and the working group will now monitor progress on those actions.

The following sections 3 to 10 of this report record the key themes and related issues along with the comments and suggested solutions that have been summarised in proposed Action tables.

3 Risk

3.1 Issues identified by workshop groups

- Short term contacts (staff always looking for another job)
- Commissioning process is very risk averse
- Costs - Full cost recovery – allow for core costs
- Confusion about grant or contract – need more clarity why one or the other? Is this a risk issue?
- Unexplained potential costs – eg cost of registration to IAPT (Improving Access to Psychological Therapies) database system (a cost per practitioner) cost only became apparent after Pre Qualification Questionnaire (PQQ) - even then the cost was not made clear
- Accountability for profits/surpluses made in public sector contracts
 - Voluntary sector to ensure surpluses to be aligned with requirements and excess reinvented
 - Private sector profits to be scrutinised in terms of overall benefit to public sector
- Payment by results process excludes smaller orgs
- Some services are being packaged into very large tenders that exclude most charities (BCC, NHS, others)
- Loss of specialist knowledge/expertise with loss of smaller orgs
- Onerous demands of current baseline standards that may exclude smaller providers
- Resources/money to provide all the services that council used to provide just isn't there any more
- Budget allocation to VCS doesn't match contract term
 - Eg 3yr contract with budget allocated annually?
- Where 'consultation' does take place:
 - Not early enough
 - Just 'lip service'
 - Outcome already predetermined eg reduce from 26 contracts to 5
- Payment by results approach excludes smaller charities and those with little reserves since the organisation needs to underwrite the delivery of services (maybe for quite some time) before being paid
- Developing consortia - lack of clarity and risks
- Contract not of enough value to make consortium viable
- Sums of money offered are often too large for VCS organisations to participate
- For third sector organisations to engage with payment by results contracts they may need loan finance
- Financial risk – organisations ruled out of processes and no account taken of their history as historic recipient of BCC funding
- Commissioning tends to advantage larger organisations and leads to bigger contracts
 - Doesn't necessarily deliver better value for money or outcomes
 - Very difficult for small organisations to bid even for services they currently provide

3.2 Proposed Actions: Risk

Theme: Risk			
Action	Lead from Workshop	By When	Why
<p>Look at different models of commissioning and procurement, including selecting the 'right provider' - for example competitive dialogue, framework agreement, open processes, competitive grants.</p> <p>Needs leadership of Mayor to back policies up. See also – Joint Shaping of Services in section below.</p>	Jane Stone, Strategic Commissioning Programme	To be determined. See Note below	Develop effective model for Bristol building on vision and backing from Mayor
<p>Investigate how provision of commercial advice and support in relation to commissioning & risk can be provided to VCS, e.g. could build into Voscur contract.</p>	Mark Hubbard (Voscur) Jane Stone	To be determined. See Note below	To build knowledge, expertise and confidence of VCS when preparing for bids
<p>Address the risk averse commissioning process by examining sharing risk, successful examples from abroad, flexibility and dialogue</p>	Jane Stone, Strategic Commissioning Programme	To be determined. See Note below	See above
<p>Note: Bristol City Council has just started a major transformation programme (Strategic Commissioning Programme) to change the way it works with other service commissioners and providers in order to meet the needs of Bristol in a targeted, effective and efficient way with reducing resources. The Council is currently scoping and planning the programme and is using the outputs of the VCS Event to inform this process and determine priorities; this in turn will inform the timescales. Timescales will also depend on securing required resources to progress the programme. Once further information on timescales is available it will be used to update the above actions.</p>			

4 Joint Strategic Shaping of Services

4.1 Issues identified by workshop groups

- Mismatch of government policy, (local and central) and what happens in commissioning process, e.g. need to help/encourage local providers
- Neighbourhoods being changed in an unplanned way as a consequence of how contracts are currently being commissioned
- Not given “heads up” re future service direction
- Council is not applying a cross agency/VCS approach at strategic policy setting level
- Inconsistent core commissioning process across the Council
- Influencing the design of the commissioning process – organisations not being part of that
- Organisations not often part of co-designing services
- Some VCS need to listen to commissioning messages and plan response to change (eg change or end of service being provided)
- Different commissioners use different language – need to be consistent / aware:
- Lack of sharing information from pre-consultation. It should be made available to help orgs understand how it has shaped/changed the design/spec
- Information in consultations being used by others

4.2 Proposed actions: Joint Strategic Shaping of Services

Theme: Joint Strategic Shaping of Services			
Action	Lead from Workshop	By When	Why
Obtain reaffirmation of the Council’s vision and values around VCS. Voscur/Compact to lead, gaining reinforcement of values following May elections	Matthew Symonds (Voscur)	May 2013 onwards	Provide renewed focus on VCS for development of future strategies and plans on service provision
Develop a process to do joint horizon scanning across organisations. Need to engage with Bristol Partnership work on joint commissioning. JS to liaise with Paul Taylor (BCC)	Jane Stone	To be determined. See Note below.	Ensure longer term requirements are identified and planned for in a strategic, cross organisational way.
Review and refocus politicians’ role in relation to strategic commissioning	Jane Stone	To be determined. See Note below	To give clarity to politicians, officers and VCS orgs
Develop a plan/contact list to keep all those that need to be in the picture about joint commissioning of services. -Ensure this is part of the ‘Communications Plan’ for individual commissioning exercises (Business as Usual).	Russell Ward (BCC)	June 2013 June 2013	To keep people up to date on each others’ commissioning activity and encourage time and cost savings. Keep people informed about the plans and progress of the Strategic Commissioning

-Stakeholder communications as part of Strategic Commissioning Programme	Jane Stone		Programme and how it will affect them.
Investigate model/framework that would support joint strategic shaping of all services	Jane Stone	To be determined. See Note below.	Build on existing good practice through current 'partnerships' e.g. Bristol partnership, Safer Bristol etc to develop a model for enhanced cross partnership/organisation working.
See also 'Different Models of Commissioning' in 'Risk' Section above, i.e. 'Look at different models of commissioning and procurement, including selecting the 'right provider' - for example competitive dialogue, framework agreement, open processes, competitive grants. Needs leadership of Mayor to back policies up.'	Jane Stone	To be determined. See Note below.	
<p>Note: Bristol City Council has just started a major transformation programme (Strategic Commissioning Programme) to change the way it works with other service commissioners and providers in order to meet the needs of Bristol in a targeted, effective and efficient way with reducing resources. The Council is currently scoping and planning the programme and is using the outputs of the VCS Event to inform this process and determine priorities; this in turn will inform the timescales. Timescales will also depend on securing required resources to progress the programme. Once further information on timescales is available it will be used to update the above actions.</p>			

5 TUPE

5.1 Issues identified by workshop groups

- Frequency of data collection
- Data protection
- £risk (pensions)
- Could BCC hold the pension risk?
- Lack of creativity of how we can solve the TUPE problems
- Unquantifiable cost of TUPE = high risk for VCS, need best value solution managing /sharing risk
- Mixed messages given out eg whether TUPE applies, what information is given to orgs, sometimes different info is given by different officers
- Lack of clarity around TUPE
- Late release of TUPE/Liability info (eg AGES)= impossible to budget
- TUPE lack of data needed to calculate financial implication
- Lack of detailed info on TUPE (early enough)
- Can affect whether an org can bid or not due to financial risk

5.2 Proposed Actions: TUPE

Theme: TUPE			
Action	Lead from Workshop	By When	Why
Ensure that TUPE information is included early on in the process – at PQQ stage	Russell Ward	With Immediate Effect	So that VCS know the consequences of bidding/not bidding
Ensure that commissioners are equipped to be the contact for questions about TUPE. To be done by: Updating and circulating guidance (RW). Ensure it is included in future training programme/s as part of Strategic commissioning programme (JS)	Russell Ward Jane Stone	With Immediate Effect From June 2013	So all get the same information about TUPE in the same way
Current providers need to update TUPE information. This refers to the commissioner request for providers' information to be kept updated regularly in approach to a new contact.	Russell Ward Matthew Symonds	With Immediate Effect	Information may change even after TUPE questionnaire); i.e. there is an early requirement for information and then a legal requirement for data 14 days before the new contract.
Within training and guidance make it clear and give examples of where regulation should be rigid and where flexible. To be done by: Review and update current guidance (RW)	Russell Ward		Also links to Expertise and Information Section on Page 13

Build into Strategic training requirements (JS)	Jane Stone (with Input from Voscur)	From July 2013	
Provide generic TUPE advice for VCS organisations	Mark Hubbard	July 2013	
Standardise the TUPE questionnaire	Russell Ward		So that it is the same across all sectors
Voscur and BCC to signpost individuals to trade unions for support with TUPE issues.	Russell Ward Mark Hubbard	Ongoing	Support / advise VCS organisations through the TUPE process
Voscur's Support Hub to provide specific advice on TUPE process for specific potential provider organisations.	Mark Hubbard	July 2013	Support / advise VCS organisations through the TUPE process
Voscur's Support Hub to identify level of legal advice that it can provide about TUPE to provider organisations and the cost of the advice.	Mark Hubbard	July 2013	Support / advise VCS organisations through the TUPE process

6 Expertise and Information

6.1 Issues identified by workshop groups

- Lack of familiarity of the process (disadvantage for smaller organisations)
- How do small VCS organisations know about funding/commissioning? Language access to right information
- VCS organisations do not have expertise/knowledge of how to tender
- Risk of losing expertise because of the commissioning process
- Providers unaware of sources of support
- Confusion about whether a grant or contract
 - Need both
 - Process needs to be appropriate to outcome!
 - Need more clarity why one or the other
- Procurement knowledge within VCS is not what it should be
- Structures – the understanding of these, what they mean, e.g. consortia or sub-contracting – clarity/advice needed
- All groups having knowledge about and ability to engage in the process – lack of support for market development
- Communication – ‘lost in translation’ commissioners know what they are looking for but not always communicated well
- Commissioners understanding of the commissioning process and VCS
- Commissioners understanding of the subject and service users
- “We inherited you” – language used with existing providers – perceived lack of credibility
- Providers don’t know who to talk to about commissioning issues
- Not always aware of tender/commissioning opportunities
- Share lessons learned

Solution post-it

- Walk through process

6.2 Proposed Actions; Expertise and Information

Expertise and Information			
Action	Lead from Workshop	By When	Why/comment
Create dynamic ‘Intentions’ list that also provides information on future strategies, tenders and key contact details. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Improvements to current intentions list - Explore potential of future improvements 	Christine Storry	June 2013 (for initial updates / improvements)	So that potential bidders can plan the activity into their schedules and begin to approach possible collaborators

.e.g. making list interactive, etc			
Establish robust training for those on evaluation panels, including ability to define and accurately assess specific criteria and interrogating claims made in tenders; i.e. can claims made in tenders be backed up with evidence? Voscur/VCS to feed into training for commissioners / evaluation panels on the role and value of the voluntary and community sector.	Jane Stone Matthew Symonds	June 2013	See also other issue areas where training is highlighted as a need
Ensure there is a communication flow between those developing the service spec and the evaluation panel	Russell Ward	June 2013	To make sure the panel are judging what is really necessary and have the priorities of the service clearly in their minds
Set up a register for those trained to be on an evaluation panel.	Jane Stone	June 2013	To maintain quality and make the panel set-up process easier
Voscur's Support Hub to identify a programme of commissioning support activity for VCS organisations and explore options for potential commissioning specific support.	Mark Hubbard	July 2013	To raise awareness and skills within the VCS community
Facilitate opportunities for VCS to engage with and inform commissioning/procurement reviews.	Paul Taylor Matthew Symonds Mark Hubbard	July 2013	
Review Evaluation Process: Create more clarity and consistency (in plain English) around the evaluation process and each evaluation exercise – on what criteria are they judged? See also 'activity' in Quality & Social Value Section re Reviewing the Evaluation Process. Section 10.2	Russell Ward	September 2013	Develop a strong and transparent evaluation process that enables bidders to write their bids accordingly and helps commissioners make informed decisions.
Tender requirements to specify type and level of expertise necessary to deliver the service/outcomes.	Russell Ward	July 2013	So that VCS can make an informed choice as to whether there is enough money in the contract for them to be able to deliver at the required level. Link to commissioner training

7 Consortia and Collaboration

7.1 Issues identified by workshop groups

- Lack of trading history as consortia
- Track record not recognised for new companies formed as consortia even if members have track record of delivery - its not recognised
- Consortia / lead partner
 - PQQ clarity needed for lead provider
 - Some market development has been good
 - Not enough onus for lead provider to be “fair”
 - Need to build relationship across sector
- (Procurement) collaboration: lack of clarity about exactly what this means ie legal, timing, PQQ etc
- Get outcome related contract but tied down by requirement for performance statistics
- Name dropping of partner organisation to get contract
- Need to change rule that all consortium members need to pass PQQ and All/None pass
- Collaborative bids
 - Better and more strategic market development needed to enable organisations to find each other
 - Need more time to make this work
 - How to protect smaller organisations eg lead provider may renege on proposal
- The risk factors for consortia are disproportionate, for example one member of a consortia not meeting the grade ruling out all of the consortium members
- Lead partner not using the smaller orgs named in their bid/tender
 - It happens time and time again
 - But contract awarded on the basis that local orgs were named
- Competition is in conflict with a thriving collaborative VCS
- Lots are too big
- Some VCS unwillingness to accept/understand/engage with the need for collaboration/fewer contracts
- Commissioning process forcing VCS into ‘competitive v collaborative’ processes
- How prescriptive (for procurement and demand)?
 - Clarity and direction Vs Innovation and responsiveness
- Commissioning does not always align with BCC policy to support and promote VCS
 - Slavish adherence to EU regulations when they don’t apply.
 - Too risk averse

7.2 Proposed Actions: Consortia and Collaboration

Theme: Consortia and Collaboration			
Action	Lead from Workshop	By When	Why
Provide clearer descriptions and definitions of “consortia” and “collaboration” etc (see above)	Russell Ward	April 2013	For joint understanding between Commissioners and VCS
Identify/notify opportunities at an early stage of the commissioning process to enable VCS to confidently put forward tenders either individually, in collaboration or as part of consortia. Notification re requirements to be supported by background detail. Any changes can be tracked back to feedback received; i.e. improve planning, consultation, engagement and use a dynamic commissioning intensions register (previously discussed).	Russell Ward (to identify any quick actions that could be taken. Jane Stone (in Strategic Commissioning Programme)	July 2013 To be identified. See Note below	To give VCS organisations time to plan collaboration and for commissioner to understand and think about the market they require at an early stage.
Create clearer communications around commissioning. To:- Review existing communications to see if any quick improvements are possible (RW) Action Quality Check Points as part of QA of Council’s commissioning process.(RW) As part of outputs from Strategic Commissioning programme through training.(JS)	Russell Ward Russell Ward Jane Stone	May / June June 2013	To attract the right bidders with the right skills and be economical with their time
Explore a more formal role for Voscur’s Support Hub in supporting VCS organisations to form consortia, including; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide opportunities for the incubation and development of consortia • Identify the key principles of partnership • Templates to identify ‘bid readiness’ of potential partners • Investigate sharing services and co-location. 	Mark Hubbard	June 2013	Opportunities for groups to get to know each other and choose good teams. To create a helpful kite mark for VCS to build partnerships and for commissioners. To let VCS orgs know whether they are ready to be bidders and what they need to do to become ready. To create efficiencies and opportunities

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8 Process and Proportionality

8.1 Issues identified by workshop groups

- The scale and size of some of the processes excludes smaller/med orgs from taking part in commissioning processes
- Proportionality of contract management requirements (in some areas)
- Consultation period shortened due to Mayoral election
- VCS capacity issue: it takes too much time/resources to write tenders
- True cost of commissioning process – human and financial
 - Council officer and legal costs
 - Bidder costs
 - Might we be shocked at actual costs?
 - Do the benefits outweigh the costs
 - Human costs – anxiety pre and post bid, staff turnover, TUPE
- Weighting given to different things eg more weighting given to policies than track record of good delivery
- But need to ensure standards and outcomes are met
- Outcome based is ok but need some framework re requirements to work with
- Portal
 - speed of response to Q,
 - QA of replies and docs,
 - allow sufficient time
- Word counts can inhibit quality submissions
- Three different word counts on PQQ in same BCC dept
- Commissioner feels hamstrung by legal and procurement regs ‘don’t kill the messenger’
- Over-specification can drive out expertise and differentiation
- Divide between procurement and commissioning practitioners leads to dilution of intent/outcomes due to process requirements.
- Repetition requirement for orgs to submit same info/docs time and time again. E-procurement was supposed to help reduce this – it doesn’t
- Lot size
- Different commissioners use different language which is complex and confusing -
- PQQ
 - Info is clear but not clear how evaluated
 - Financial assessment is it risk based? What are the rules?
 - Is the info balance at different stages right?
- At times the time-scale for applying to tenders/commissioning opportunities is very tight making it very difficult for smaller organisations to apply
- Number of procurements going on at the same time
- Concurrent processes difficult for small orgs

- Evaluation Round
 - guidance
 - training
 - conflicts of interest (within panels)
 - who makes the decision
 - composition of panels
 - Consistency through process
- Fractures routes of communication
- Inflexibility of contract arrangements ie price, procurement, contract variation
- Procurement process needs to be more accessible to VCS
- Inflexible systems in procurement/commissioning
- Confusion about whether a grant or contract – need both
 - Process needs to be appropriate to outcome
 - Need more clarity why one or the other

8.2 Proposed actions: Process and Proportionality

Theme: Process and Proportionality			
Action	Lead from Workshop	By When	Why
Co-ordinate and publish cross-Bristol partnership commissioning activity and rules, including: -Ensure BCC commissioning and procurement regulations are put on website. (RW) -Liaising with Bristol Partnership (joint procurement project) develop cross partnership approach to creating joint rules/regulations.	Russell Ward & Mark Hubbard Jane Stone	May 2013 To be identified. See Note below	To discuss minimum, timeframes, EU rules, rationale and flexibility for
Review the PQQ process to improve consistency.	Russell Ward	June 2013	To create transparency and consistency across departments and commissioning exercises
Create transparency about the financial assessment	Russell Ward	July 2013	So organisations know the standards they need to meet
Examine where VCS data can be captured and maintained on BCC systems, i.e. pass-porting. Timing of this depends on current system capability and may need new system development.	Russell Ward	To be confirmed	To avoid duplication in provision of data saving time and money for VCS orgs – needs to be well communicated with commissioners too.
Create communications systems around commissioning	Jane Stone		See also information group

related to flexibility, and rationale for changes			
Consider when 12 week consultation period applies and issue guidance accordingly. With regard to the commitment to 12 week consultation period, Compact Partners' Group and BCC's Consultation Team to consider providing guidance on engagement and consultation.	Compact Partners Group Sarah McMahon	June 2013	Ensures clarity about consultation period. Needs to be communicated to commissioners and VCS orgs
Create consistency in issues like word count across commissioning processes and departments. Communicate these in tender documents and put details on website.	Russell Ward		And share rationale on changes. To give confidence in the process and a perceived level playing field
Create a glossary of terms (to be reviewed with Voscur) to ensure common understanding of meaning of words between sectors.	Christine Storry Wendy Stephenson	June 2013	For clarity within the Council and VCS orgs
Review evaluation models to create a more transparent evaluation process, e.g. who is on the panel, what are their skills, what is rationale for criteria weighting, etc.	Russell Ward Mark Hubbard (Voscur)	August 2013	Also see Actions on 'evaluation' training under Expertise and Information
Take account of comments made in Process/Proportionality group as part of any future changes in commissioning.	Jane Stone (as part of Strategic Commissioning Programme – SCP)	To be identified. See Note below	To ensure issues of longer term strategic nature (as opposed to 'business as usual) are incorporated into the SCP
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9 Marketisation of VCS v Mission

9.1 Issues identified by workshop groups

- Some VCS still too inflexible - need to realise new world around funding, outcomes and commissioning
- Some VCS unwilling to proactively seek alternative funding sources
- Some VCS need to diversify in order to be more accountable for own security
- Organisations that were successful not able to deliver (but other groups expected to support)
- Some VCS need to be willing to collaborate
- Commissioned work can be a barrier to 'volunteers' in VCS
- Some of VCS unwilling to innovate in terms of structure, purpose, delivering to meet changing needs
- Some VCS board members mentality at times at odds to VCS front line delivering level (need mixed experience innovation)
- Marketisation is in conflict with VCS principles
- Can't be pugnacious or shouting brat... voice can't be heard
- Build in Market position statement earlier in process (ie shorten consultation)

9.2 Proposed Actions: Marketisation vs Mission

Theme: Marketisation vs Mission			
Action	Lead from Workshop	By When	Why
Promote peer learning from successful bidders including 'good governance'. Commissioning managers to provide information about successful bidders.	Mark Hubbard Russell Ward	Ongoing June 2013	Voscur core business. Makes the most of sharing 'lessons learnt' and best practice by VCS organisations that have bid successfully.
Be clear about fundamental changes that BCC has to make and changes required of the market as a result; including cultural shift of VCS	Mark Hubbard Christine Storry Tim Wye		Establish an understanding (and therefore better working) about the requirement for commissioners and providers to change in order to meet the needs of Bristol's people and places
Approach the Mayor for support and possible funding for VCS	See section on Joint Strategic Services	After May Elections	To build capacity and coherence as well as visible support
Research the impact of a major shift in provider and losing the added value of VCS provider through current commissioning and procurement processes. This can be done at: Strategic level: i.e. research	Matthew	July 2013	To understand full implications of the way commissioning is currently carried out and the benefits the 'added value' that VCS market can bring. Communicate clearly with all parties.

<p>report led by Voscur (e.g. update 'Under Pressure' report) Also propose social value measures to be incorporated into tenders.</p> <p>Operational level: Ensure BCC 'Options Appraisals' have regard to social capital issues and potential impact on VCS market.</p>	<p>Symonds</p> <p>Russell Ward</p>	<p>July 2013</p>	
<p>In response to above point, and within legal boundaries, BCC to review how to ensure the benefits of local VCS are not lost through commissioning or procurement procedures.</p>	<p>Russell Ward</p>	<p>July 2013</p>	<p>A practical step to help VCS where existing social value seen as crucial.</p>

10 Quality and Social Value

10.1 Issues identified by workshop groups

- No value seems to be placed on local providers, wider local social and economic benefits of commissioning/contracting with local providers or reducing environmental impacts
- The 'social value' is not currently considered within the commissioning process
- Ensure engagement through Pathway where contracts are linked – eg referrals
- Price over quality
- How do commissioners get what they want? Eg can bidders live up to their relevant potential etc . Great policies but don't always subsequently stick to them
- Living wage should apply to commissioned organisations as well as BCC
- Objectives and outcomes – need to be realistic and achievable. Stakeholders should be consulted
- Commissioner can't say 'just because you are doing a good service you will get the next contract'
- Incomparable commissioning processes and across public sector and within BCC
- Commissioners are detached from service delivery
- Scale of commissioning
 - Top down process can disadvantage smaller orgs
 - Small services add value at locality level
 - Loss to city therefore small orgs are more innovative
 - Loss of knowledge/data etc
- What is the aim of commissioners? Eg clarity on whether its about reducing cost bureaucracy or improving outcomes
- Incompatible methods of measuring success/outcomes in services
- Driver feels like need to make 'cuts' not best outcome for community
- Commissioning –
 - More open than old style process
 - Small orgs can be disadvantage
 - State of readiness is variable cross sector

10.2 Proposed Actions Quality and Social Value

Theme: Quality and Social Value			
Action	Lead from Workshop	By When	Why
Renew monitoring policies and procedures for commissioning	Dawn Lloyd Christine Storry	Sept 2013	To ensure quality and restore confidence
Review Evaluation model: e.g. • Pick in-house service to put through an evaluation model – testing assumptions	Russell Ward	Sept 2013	To ensure quality and restore

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with small group of commissioners to look at suggestions and devise an improved model • Disseminate findings <p>See also activity in Expertise and Information Section.</p>			confidence in the evaluation process
<p>Set up a VCS/BCC working group to identify how to prevent loss of current VCS expertise, knowledge and social value through current commissioning processes. See detail above re who could/should be involved; includes Hawks, Positive Minds (HHEAG)</p>	<p>Russell Ward</p> <p>Voscur to contact groups</p>	<p>July 2013</p>	<p>To prevent loss of VCS expertise and social value</p>
<p>Contact the VCS groups (who volunteered and/or are listed above) to find out what they are offering in terms of involvement and link them to Russell Ward re reviewing evaluation options. (Voscur)</p>	<p>Matthew Symonds (to liaise with RW re timing)</p>	<p>May 2013</p>	

Appendix 1 Participants

Joanna Holmes	Barton Hill Settlement
Dom Wood	1625 Independent People
Emma Harvey	Trinity Community Arts
peter Walker	Addiction Recovery Agency
Steve Smith	
Sandra Meadows	Play and Early Years Training Unit (PEYTU)
Sue Smith	
Helen Gunson	Hartcliffe Health & Environmental Action Group (HHEAG)
Mark Hubbard	Voscur
Kate Croucher	
Jackie Boyce	Rethink (NSF)
Stephen Dale	
Lorraine Bush	
Claire Miller	
Vicky Beckwith	Re:work
Julie Owen	
Steve Sayers	Windmill Hill City Farm
Lizanne Harland	
Margaret Firth	
Jean Smith	Nilaari Agency
Malcolm Thorne	Emmaus Bristol
Nigel Barrett	
Jan Jones	
Jane Emanuel	Advice Network
Maggie Telfer	BDP
David Glossop	The Wheels Project
Carolyn Purcell	Kwads - Supporting Drug & Alcohol Affected Families
Sue Petters	
Sandy Hore-Ruthven	
Vanessa McLean	Young Mothers Group Trust
Steve Watters	
Lara Kramer	
Carmel Brogan	
Christine Storry	Bristol City Council
Claudia McConnell	Bristol City Council - Children & Young People's Services
Dawn Lloyd	Bristol City Council
Gillian Douglas	Bristol City Council – Safer Bristol
Hywel Caddy	Bristol City Council
Jane Stone	Bristol City Council
Joanna Roberts	
Vicky Baker	Headway Bristol
Keirsten Wilson	Bristol City Council
Louise Baker	Bristol City Council DCX Arts, Festivals and Events
Nick Hooper	Bristol City Council – Strategic Housing
Penny Chambers	Bristol City Council Corporate Services
Rhiannon Griffiths	Bristol City Council
Rob Logan	Bristol City Council
Russell Ward	Bristol City Council Corporate Services
Simi Chowdhry	Awaz Utaoh
Tom Rhodes	Bristol City Council
Lorna Muffett	Avon and Somerset Police Authority

Appendix 2 Workshop Agenda and Ground Rules

Agenda

10.00 Welcome, Background, Agenda,

Introductions

Context of this meeting

Identifying the issues which need some attention

Share experiences of commissioning so far in order to learn

COFFEE

Exploring the issues

Grouping the issues

Planning group work for solutions in the afternoon

1.15 LUNCH

2.00 Working up solutions in groups

Checking out solutions with others.

Where solutions are not immediately workable, creating processes to achieve the right outcomes

Next steps

Recap and any process from here

4.30 Thank you and close

Participants chose the following ground-rules for the day

- Mobiles off
- Tweet in breaks
- Honesty and don't take things personally
- Respect each others' views
- Letting everyone speak
- Be careful with jargon
- Don't be defensive – have an open mind
- Share experiences
- Don't be afraid to be critical
- Be constructive
- Confidentiality – non-attributable (Chatham House Rule)
- Respect requests for info not to go any further
- Keep to time
- Record what you're saying

Appendix 3 About the facilitators

These seminars were designed and facilitated by Alison Crowther Associates Ltd, an independent Bristol based business with more than 17 years experience in facilitation, training, partnership working and consensus building in the UK and internationally.

The Lead facilitator was Alison Crowther with support from Liz Mitchell and the team at Voscur and Bristol City Council.