



Project Salus submission to KCC Commissioning and Procurement Select Committee

Project Salus has submitted a number of tenders to both Specialist Children's Services and Integrated Youth Services. The company has enjoyed success and experienced disappointment across both commissioning teams.

Issues to explore

Approaches to commissioning: KCC and the services it commissions, may benefit from a unified and corporate approach to commissioning. While all commissioning processes we have engaged in have been rigorously managed, the experience when dealing with the various commissioning teams in terms of the structure, timescale and nature of the process varies greatly. There may be benefits to both KCC and potential providers if a consistent, centralised approach was adopted.

TUPE: TUPE is nationally recognised as a significant barrier for organisations when deciding whether to submit a tender. Currently however, the information made available, the advice offered and practice in this area can be inconsistent. In some cases detailed information is supplied before submission allowing the tendering organisation to fully consider the cost implications and include in its submission; Other times the TUPE implications are only shared once the tender has been 'won' and this leads to delays in implementation and frustration on all sides.

Prescriptive tender specifications: KCC have frequently stated that they are keen to adopt an outcome based commissioning model. In our experience however, a number of specifications are prescriptive about the service to be delivered rather than the outcome to be achieved. This could potentially remove the tendering organisations ability to be innovative and could reduce outcomes.

Barriers to smaller organisations entering the market: The sheer volume of work required to complete a submission often puts off or rules out a large number of very good providers. This is especially true of the smaller voluntary organisation. While a number of positive measures have been put in place to counter the effects of this e.g. subcontracting, community grant funding etc, this is still worthy of note.

Commissioning processes: Commissioning in KCC, at its best, is collaborative and enables all parties get the most value out of the contracts. While we recognise the need to critically evaluate applications and exercise rigour in implementing the process, on a small number of occasions this has felt adversarial. For an inexperienced provider this can be a deterrent from participating and also may cause reputational issues for KCC.

Quality of feedback: The feedback we have received has been invaluable and it would be useful to have some consistency in the way in which this is provided.

Summary:

Project Salus Directors have participated in numerous commissioning processes in KCC and other Local Authorities. Overall, our experience at KCC has been very positive and the partnerships forged will undoubtedly result in improved services and outcomes for the people we serve. The points made here are thoughts about how the range of providers could be supported more fully and the commissioning processes enhanced further.