

From: **Karen Sharp, Head of Public Health Commissioning**

To: **Select Committee – Commissioning and Procurement - January 2014**

Subject: **Public Health Commissioning and Procurement**

1. Overview

Public Health has responsibility for commissioning a range of services which aim to improve the health and wellbeing of the people of Kent and reduce health inequalities across the county.

KCC assumed responsibility for commissioning public health services in April 2013 and inherited several different contracts with a range of organisations including NHS Trusts, voluntary and community sector (VCS) providers as well as private companies. Public Health is committed to further work with small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) and with the voluntary sector and community sector (VCS) to improve public health outcomes.

2. Commissioning Programmes

Since April 2013, Public Health has initiated a number of commissioning and procurement projects that have aimed to use best practice in commissioning. These have included:

- A large scale re-tendering exercise for **sexual health services** in Kent. These services have historically been provided by three NHS trusts in Kent. The commissioning process has included a detailed market engagement exercise with two *Meet the Market* events for potential bidders which were attended by representatives from 20 different organisations from across the public, private and voluntary sector.
- Significant investment in preventative mental health services a many of which have been delivered by SMEs. Two key examples are:
 - An innovative programme to develop twelve small scale projects to promote wellbeing among Men in Kent. These projects, known as Men's Sheds will be supported by a lead organisation, commissioned by Public Health to help get the projects off the ground and helping as many people as possible. The Dartford Shed group will be predominantly focused on involving the large population of Veterans in the district, with an intention to improve the overall support in the local area.
 - Joint project with KCC policy called asset mapping to understand and promote the voluntary and community sector and its impact on social and economic development.
- Working collaboratively with Families and Social Care to commission community based **postural stability classes** to support delivery of the Kent Falls Framework

3. Key Issues

Costs of entry and barriers – we have been proactive in reducing barriers to entry for commissioning and procurement processes and encouraging new providers into the market for public health services.

As an example, the procurement of sexual health services are currently underway and have been broken into seven individual lots to enable a wider range of potential providers to bid even if they are not able to provide the full range of services across all lots.

Breaking potentially very large contracts into smaller, more manageable contracts is a key method of reducing barriers to entry especially for smaller organisations. We manage the risks of increased contract management overheads with this approach by managing contracts effectively and constantly reviewing transaction costs. Public Health has a small commissioning team of 3 people with responsibility for managing the commissioning budget.

Voluntary and Community Sector – we recognise the contribution and benefits that value that the VCS bring to the people of Kent. The VCS have a key role to play both as direct providers of public health services and also in supporting vulnerable people to help them live longer with better quality of life.

We seek to engage with VCS as well as other potential providers throughout the commissioning process and seek to avoid imposing unnecessary requirements which might discourage VCS providers from bidding for contracts. We do consistently apply the same standards of robust contract management to VCS providers as to those from the private or public sector to ensure best value for money whoever the provider happens to be.

Social Value Act and Social Benefits – we believe that a key mechanism for discharging our responsibilities under the Social Value Act will be the needs assessment and service planning/design stages of the commissioning cycle. Giving consideration at this stage to any social or environmental factors will ensure that the relevant policy outcomes are incorporated into the specification and implementation of the service.

We are keen to further explore the potential for using the commissioning and procurement processes to deliver wider public health benefits. This will include promotion of the Six Ways to Wellbeing programme and workplace health initiatives.

4. Commissioning Skills & Standards

Public Health has a good range of commissioning and contract management skills with experience of NHS and local authority commissioning. Public Health have demonstrated effective commissioning practice and contract management over the course of 2013/14 and will be working with FSC colleagues and the Institute of Public Care to embed the Commissioning Operating Framework across the full range of public health programmes.

5. Contact Details

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