



Age UKs in Kent Consortium

The Age UKs in Kent Consortium was set up in 2013 to ensure consistency of service provision for older people in Kent.

The founding members are organisations that have delivered high quality services for older people for many years including day support, Information and Advice, bathing, advocacy, befriending and community meals services.

We are committed to working with statutory partners to ensuring that services are of a consistently high quality and centred on our older people's needs and requirements.

Process of commissioning

We have been pleased that commissioners have engaged with us during the last year in an effort to co-produce a county – wide offer for older people. This has involved several meetings and has led to a series of focus groups with our clients and staff to ascertain how older people access services and support. We have all felt that this is a positive way forward for developing services that meet the needs of older people and is to be commended.

However, this has not been matched by the method for advertising interim arrangements for additional support services via the online portal. These “opportunities “ appear almost randomly with no prior discussions and the tight deadlines have been a challenge for smaller organisations with lack of capacity.. This has been exacerbated by a lack of communication during the process.

Outcomes

We are also pleased to hear that commissioners are moving towards an outcomes based focus for new contracts but again, the interim “opportunities “ do not match this aspiration and are numbers and service based rather than outcomes focussed. It would be good to have some consistency of approach.

One of the consortium members was disappointed that a pre tender quality audit was a paper based exercise rather than an outcomes based audit and felt that this was a missed opportunity.

It would be useful to have an open discussion about how outcomes can be measured to show true value for money for KCC.

Timing

We all understand that KCC has to make some difficult decisions and welcome the opportunities that have been afforded to us to help in this process. We also have some difficult decisions to make and some indication from KCC about timescales would be welcome. Our current grant funding runs till March 2015 and we will need to make staff and clients aware of any changes to employment and services in plenty of time to abide by employment legislation and our moral obligations to our clients.

Diane Aslett

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