

Education Select Committee
29th November 2012

Review of the Local Prevention Framework (DRAFT)

Purpose of the report: Scrutiny of services and review

The Local Prevention Framework has been a progressive and innovative procurement model that has presented a number of challenges in its first year and warrants a review to learn lessons for the 2013 recommissioning.

Introduction:

1. As part of a council-wide effort to implement localism, The Local Prevention Framework (LPF) proposed to devolve the budget for commissioning local preventative youth services to Local Committees (LC). In addition, the LPF aimed to help meet Surrey County Council's (SCC) social policy objectives by preventing young people from becoming NEET or offending.
2. The aim of the LPF was to establish a countywide framework of approved suppliers who would have in-depth local knowledge which LCs would be able to use to address their specific needs. A supplier's suitability to become one of the framework's suppliers was assessed via a Pre-Qualification Questionnaire (PQQ) with a subsequent stage where providers pitched for contracts.
3. The key benefits of the LPF are that it works with young people who are at risk and helps to prevent them from becoming NEET or offending. The LPF also supports local devolution, is responsive to local needs, offers greater levels of quality assurance through local commissioning, increases the role of the Voluntary, Community and Faith Sector (VCFS) and increases the involvement of young people in decision making.
4. The LPF was part of the transformation of procurement in young people's services that won an award for the Best Public Procurement Project category in the Chartered Institute of Purchasing and Supply (CIPS) Awards in September 2012. The award recognised the complexity of the procurement project and the first outcomes based framework to be adopted in this area. The nature of the services being procured were sensitive and high profile, with strong local interests, a vocal market and very challenging savings targets.

5. Alongside the LPF, Local Committees have been allocated Youth Small Grant funding to promote grass roots voluntary, community and faith organisations and enable direct, universal work with young people. In 2012/13 this fund totalled £220,000 and the developments which it has supported has ranged from outdoor youth activities such as sports and the arts, to working with disabled young people through activities such as Horse-riding. It has also been used to support other community groups such as the Scouts.
6. The next round of LPF recommissioning for delivery starting on 01 September 2013 will be getting underway early in the New Year. It is important that officers take stock of the challenges faced in the first round of LPF procurement to ensure that lessons are learned and the process improved and made more efficient. The review will highlight these challenges and make recommendations for how the process can be improved for 2013.
7. The review was conducted in October and November 2012. The review consisted of a series of qualitative face to face interviews with officers, providers and Members conducted by an experienced researcher using robust and unbiased methods for facilitation, analysis and reporting.

Findings:

8. The full review contained within Annex 1 of this report discusses in detail the findings relating to each aspect of the set up and procurement of services under the LPF. The review contained in Annex 1 discusses the seven key challenges experienced by the LPF during this first commissioning stage and the findings in this report are structured around these.
9. **Communication.** The review uncovered the perception that communication between officers and other stakeholders may have been able to do more to develop understanding and confidence in the development of the LPF
 - 9.1 While the intention was that to listen to key stakeholders and incorporate their views into the development and administration of the LPF short timelines and the amount of unforeseen officer time dedicated to facilitating the first round of procurement meant it was hard to communicate how stakeholder involvement was influencing the LPF.
 - 9.2 Concern among stakeholders emerged, that some opinions might not be incorporated and those involved had to take it on trust that their views were being included. This meant that good communication was essential to success at this stage and where these channels were not good, outcomes have been below initial expectations.
10. **Expectations.** Stakeholders have questioned whether their expectations have been correctly managed around what the LPF could offer in terms of the services that could be procured through it

- 10.1 As far as Members were concerned, some providers produced bids that were below the expected quality, frequently rehashing provision that had been delivered in multiple locations across the county and therefore, not sufficiently demonstrating the local perspective.
- 10.2 This 'copy and paste' approach was widely criticised by the Youth Task Groups (YTG), who had been set up to help make a supplier recommendation. The YTG members wondered why some providers had been selected when their offer was not aligned with the expectation that bids would be innovative and locally focused.
11. **Risk.** While some bids were perceived to not be particularly innovative, providers suggested that a short contract period that was not aligned with the academic year encouraged them to take a risk adverse position when it came to the design of these bids.
- 11.1 As the summer holiday was only three months after commissioning, young people became less accessible shortly after they were first engaged by the provider. While this cause problems maintaining engagement with young people, it created a specific issue for those young people in Year 11 who were more likely to move from being at risk of becoming NEET to NEET following the holiday
12. **Processes.** Stakeholders often questioned whether the systems and procedures that were put in place to support the LPF functioned in a way that helped or hindered the effective procurement of services
- 12.1 In recognition that many hopeful providers would not have experience of the PQQ process, it was designed to be simple in comparison to other government frameworks. Although this did not necessarily mean that providers with little or no experience of procurement methods saw it as such. It essentially sought to answer two questions: is the provider solvent and; can the provider prove their capability to engage with the target audience.
- 12.2 However, many providers still struggled with the process finding it complex and time consuming in comparison to how they had been previously commissioned. Providers also felt that the deadline for completion of the PQQ process was too short and this may have resulted in fewer completed PQQs.
13. **Inclusion.** It is the aim of SYP to put the voice of young people at the heart of everything we do. Stakeholders wondered if the method which was used to involve young people in the LPF's decision making processes was accurately representing their views.
- 13.1 Finding young people who were willing to take part in the process, was typically perceived to be a difficult task and involving them in the task group decision was perceived to be even harder. Many of those present at the task group said that young people frequently

looked bored, confused or uncomfortable or were not genuine members of the target audience.

14. **Measurement.** In some instances some stakeholders thought that the Objective Verifiable Indicators (OVIs), the measure that was used to assess the performance of providers, was too output focused and should be more outcome orientated.

14.1 Measuring whether a provider has managed to engage with a young person each week, rather than examining the quality or length of these meetings, or if the meetings occurred at intervals which suited the needs of the young person, was not thought to help providers focus on outcomes for young people. Instead it was thought to lead to an emphasis on ticking boxes in order to meet targets which would not be conducive to delivering the best quality services.

15. **Flexibility.** This was related to the issues that stakeholders perceived they had with the way success was measured. Output focused OVIs could also lead to a lack of flexibility in the way that providers approached their engagement with young people.

15.1 The Risk of NEET Indicator (RONI) list forms the basis for engagement with young people and initially, providers could only target those who were on the list. Many stakeholders felt that this restricted providers' ability to engage with the 'actual' target audience.

15.2 While engaging the wider audience was always the intention of the LPF, an anomaly in the way engagement was measured meant that providers could not be recognised for their work with these groups in the OVIs.

Conclusions:

16. The LPF is a highly innovative procurement exercise that has led to the commissioning of some excellent new providers that are delivering innovative, targeted services that are based on the views of local people and delivering value for money. A summary of LPF Performance in September 2012 is attached at Annex 2.
17. However, some of the issues discussed in this report indicate that there are a number of changes that would help to ensure that the Local Prevention Framework (LPF) builds on its initial successes and learns from the challenges emerging during this initial phase.
18. While the involvement of local Members in the decision making process has improved there is some evidence that Members may feel that their influence in this area has not necessarily improved in line with this. Local young people have also had some influence, although the value of their input has unfortunately not been demonstrated consistently across the county.

19. One of the key problems was the amount of effort that was required from officers to set up and administer the project in its first year. The commissioning of LPF required three separate processes to be synchronised including the democratic process, procurement process and local engagement / consultation. This led to a lot of delays as officers struggled to keep up with the amount of work involved.
20. The amount of officer time dedicated to the LPF was considerable and underestimated from the outset. Officers found the process incredibly time-consuming and laborious as they sought to engage with providers, Youth Task Groups and members across Surrey while providing quality control for the process in 11 separate districts and boroughs. This affected the speed at which they were able to deliver the project.
21. As part of the Transformation project, Services for Young People's budget was cut by 25% including a 50% reduction in admin resource. In line with the Transformation of Services for Young People the Officer resource allocated to recommissioning the LPF in 2013 will need to be reduced by 25-50%. Recommissioning in this context will require a different approach that is more efficient to ensure localism is sustainable.
22. Although the framework has not consistently delivered the same level of high quality services across the County, it has been nationally recognised a progressive and innovative approach to the procurement process and where it has worked, it has demonstrated the potential to deliver 'more for less'.
23. The Select Committee Report and LPF Review will be discussed with Local Committee Chairmen on 20 November and their feedback will be reported verbally to the Education Select Committee on 29 November.

Financial and value for money implications

24. The LPF could do more to deliver better value for money for Surrey by reducing the administration burden on officers.

Implications for the Council's Priorities or Community Strategy

25. The LPF has the potential to help the council deliver on its policy of localism and deliver services that are more suited to the needs of people and their communities.

Recommendations:

26. Education Select Committee are asked to scrutinise the proposed actions to be taken by Services for Young People officers in relation to the 2013 recommissioning of the Local Prevention Framework.
 - Simplify the process of tendering and reduce the volume of administration associated with local commissioning.

- Develop a neighbourhood approach to targeting need and ensure the approach to targeting at risk young people does not limit or slow implementation.
- Improve and increase the involvement of young people in local commissioning.
- Develop a personalised approach to prevention of long term NEET by implementing opportunity grants and personalised budgets for NEET young people to address the financial and opportunity barriers to their participation.
- Communicate appropriately and transparently the rationale for procurement related decisions.
- Align contract life cycle to the academic year.
- Let new contracts from September 2013 to August 2015 subject to contract variation and budget.
- Develop the local market to allow more small organisations to compete for work.

Key actions and next steps:

The key management actions in response to the LPF Review are;

1. Respond to comments from Select Committee following scrutiny.
2. Publish a stakeholder engagement and key decisions timeline.
3. Incorporate Youth Small Grants and LPF into a proven commissioning grants approach which removes the PQQ and other complicated procurement documentation and replaces it with a simple application form and subsequent presentation.
4. Run 11 local 'meet the commissioners' provider events to clarify objectives and stimulate the market.
5. Publish high level evaluation criteria and bidding statistics to ensure transparency between Officers, Task Groups and LCs.
6. Let funding agreements for two academic years from September 2013 to August 2015.
7. Engage at risk young people and services users through the Youth Engagement Contract and design new guidance for Youth Task Groups to improve and increase the involvement of young people.
8. Get rid of the centrally prescribed Risk of NEET (RONI) list and move towards a neighbourhood based approach to targeting need using locally applied criteria.

Communicate further the detail around the time line for the next round of commissioning including;

- **November 2012:** Discuss direction of travel with Local Committee Chairmen and communicate to Local Committees and providers

ANNEX C

- **December 2012 – January 2013:** Task Groups meet to review needs assessments, agree local priorities and allocate delegated budget to Neighbourhood Prevention and Personal Prevention outcomes
- **February – March 2013:** Local Committees approve their local prospectus and budget allocations
- **25 March 2013:** Bidding opens
- **March – April 2013:** 11 local 'Meet the Commissioners' events to clarify objectives and stimulate the market
- **03 May 2013:** Bidding closes
- **May 2013:** Commissioning & Development screen and score eligible bids
- **May – June 2013:** Shortlisted providers present to Youth Task Groups who inform Officer recommendations to Local Committees
- **July 2013:** Local Committees approve recommendations and funding agreements are awarded
- **01 September 2013:** Funding agreements start

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Sources/background papers: Annex 1; Review of the Local Prevention Framework, Annex 2, Local Prevention Framework Performance Summary September 2012.

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