

A proposal for the development of a 'Preferred Provider Network' to support the commissioning of services and facilitate engagement with local private and voluntary sector agencies

This proposal is written in the context of the forthcoming appointment of the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) and the need for the Commissioner, Probation Trust and others to engage effectively with, and commission community safety and criminal justice related services from local private, voluntary and community agencies.

Local small private and voluntary agencies can provide great benefit and added value to reducing re-offending services and strategies to target the local priorities of Community Partnerships and social inclusion initiatives. A diverse and well informed supply base is likely to be much more competitive and able to meet service user's requirements. The volume, diversity and geographical coverage of such agencies can however, present challenges to engage (to and from) with those local agencies.

The appointment of the PCC presents a challenge to all community safety and criminal justice agencies to deliver more joined up outcome focussed services and the 'commissioning' element of the PCC's role means that there will need to be new ways of doing things and new opportunities created for service providers, especially local providers.

However the PCC will be just one agency and just one commissioner in a very complex landscape of statutory agencies, large and small providers and 3rd sector organisations.

The leadership that the PCC will bring provides a real opportunity to review the current partnership landscape and to develop new and streamlined ways of working. One solution to these challenges is to create a consortium of providers, a Preferred Provider Network (PPN) (for the community safety and criminal justice agenda) that works right across the Cleveland area.

Concept - The Preferred Provider Network

The Preferred Provider Network could:

- Serve as a single point of contact for commissioners of services to source and develop services
- Provide a single coordinated route to commissioning
- Enable commissioning at scale – but using local small providers
- Give a route for closed tenders of low value (under EU procurement rules)
- Provide a forum to shape and develop local solutions
- Facilitate a more structured analysis of need and provision across the area
- Minimise risk by ensuring a minimum quality standard for inclusion
- Work with existing (and developing) sector led strategic forums
- Provide advice and support (and a platform) to local providers to enable them to tender for services.

It is proposed that the Network be developed as a pilot for an initial period of one year such that by October 2013 there would be a PPN ready to support a new approach to

commissioning being part of the 2014/15 planning and budget process. It would then be for the PCC (and partners) to evaluate the success of the pilot and decide whether a PPN should be maintained and if so determine funding arrangements

The Network would provide delivery partners with:

- A route for responding to tender opportunities and to jointly bid for funding
- Enable pre-qualification for small value contracts
- Serve as a forum to jointly build expertise and increased capacity to bid for larger contracts
- Facilitate the sharing of resources and encourage the development of innovative and integrated ways of working

Fundamental to the PPN would be criteria for inclusion within the Network and Framework. Potential partners (large or small) would be invited to apply for inclusion (at no cost) on a Framework Agreement. This would be basic but provide assurance that controls are in place to mitigate against any potential risks. There are already examples of such 'kite-marks' that can be drawn from. Example of the sort of thing that would be required for 'membership' are:

- Holding or willing to work towards a quality assurance standard
- Financial standing proportionate to the size of the organisation and the nature of the business
- Holding or willing to secure insurances sufficient for the organisation
- Having or willing to adopt an environmental policy which promotes environmental issues in the Area
- Vetting standards
- Appropriate Health and Safety policies
- Equality and Diversity policies and procedures sufficient for the organisation
- Understanding of the importance of data protection and holding or willing to adopt information security procedures and processes appropriate for the level of information held and communicated

Potential partners would also be required to demonstrate relevant experience and indicate their capacity for delivery in terms of volume and geographical coverage.

Supporting mechanisms and structures

The ability to design services which the evidence base tells us are most likely to impact upon crime and disorder is crucial to the success of any commissioning arrangement. This knowledge already exists but all too often the experience of those closest to the problems is not combined with information and data held by the statutory agencies. Equally important (and this is a key role of the PCC) is the need to join up commissioning across agencies whether that be financial input into the actual commission/contract or better joined up working/thinking/planning with core resources.

The ultimate aim of a PPN would be to operate within an established community safety/criminal justice structure such as the Criminal Justice Board so that commissioning decisions will reflect the (joint) strategic priorities of the statutory agencies and be commissioned through a joined up, approach.

Governance

The Preferred Provider Network would initially (during the pilot period at least) be managed and co-ordinated by a partnership between the PCC and Durham Tess Valley Probation Trust. The development of the PPN would be overseen by a steering group made up of key members including (but not exhaustive) representatives from; Office of the PCC, police, probation, local authorities, prison, VONNE (support for the voluntary and community sector), and local voluntary development agencies, victims forum, YOS. The steering group would monitor the projects progress and provide directional guidance.

Implementation

The development of the Preferred Provider Network will follow a clear project plan with identified timeframes and key deliverables. For example:

- Information events for potential partners
- Development and publication of invitation to join PPN and framework agreement
- Development of commissioning processes and expertise
- Evaluation of applications
- Notification to applicants
- PPN operational
- Ongoing development and review of future applicants

We would propose that the development of the PPN will stimulate innovation in the design and delivery of services, contribute to a streamlined commissioning process, inform opportunities for the co-commissioning of services and shared budgets, and ultimately result in improved outcomes for the public of Cleveland.