

MODERNISING COMMISSIONING

1. This is the response of Workwise (Suffolk) Ltd to the government Green Paper. We are a social enterprise (SE) providing employment and training services to adults with mental health issues and others excluded from the labour market from our Bury St Edmunds' base to trainees throughout Suffolk and South West Norfolk. We aim to increase the confidence and skills of our trainees in the working environment and in 2009/2010, we placed over 200 people in open employment, further education or in our own businesses. We have a turnover of approximately £0.5m a year.
2. We welcome the definition of "Civil Society Organisations" as more accurate and inclusive than for example, "not for profit". As an SE, we aim to make profits to be retained and invested in expanding our employment and training businesses. We are an SME.
3. Our responses to the four main questions are: -
 - a. New opportunities to deliver public services in which Workwise could participate could include employment, education and training in public services, (currently provided by public, private and civil society organisations) and manufacturing supported by computer aided design and CNC technology. In pursuit of these opportunities, we welcome partnerships with other businesses throughout the Eastern region.
 - b.
 - i. The issues and discussion of access to markets (p.13 et al) matches our experience and we welcome the recognition that the barriers are shared with private sector SMEs.
 - ii. Without excluding new entrants to existing markets, we believe that the commercial practice of recognising successful providers as already pre-qualified should be extended to this sector i.e. sourcing providers to meet contract specifications (page 8). This should simplify and ensure the success of the commissioning process.
 - iii. We welcome what is said about simplifying procurement, working capital, and contract finding databases.

- iv. The shift of emphasis from project costs to price and value (page 15) needs to be underpinned by greater transparency on overhead and operational costs and profit margins. The historic practice of separating corporate overhead costs (funded by grants) from project activity costs (funded by contracts) is artificial and constrains the development of civil society organisations as businesses.
- c. We welcome the use of indicators of social, environmental and economic value by commissioners. Own social return on investment (SROI) showed a return of £3 for every £1 spent by Workwise. We hope that equating these three aspects of value will encourage organisations with a corporate social responsibility to invest in S.M.E. Social Enterprises like ourselves.
- d.
 - i. Provided that the processes for placing of contracts and managing performance under them are kept separate from other stages of the commissioning cycle (pages 7, 8.), we see no conflicts of interest in provider organisations like Workwise participating fully in the commissioning of service we provide.
 - ii. We see the commissioning process as the means of translating population-needs assessed policies and funding priorities into service delivery programmes. Increasingly, this will be achieved through purchase of services by individuals with personal budgets rather than through purchased block contracts. The procurement function should be the servant of the commissioning process not its master.
 - iii. With continuing contact with individuals and communities of the beneficiaries of our services, we are well-equipped both to advocate on their behalf, where necessary, and to empower them to articulate their needs and priorities.
 - iv. In this context, we welcome the discussion of local integrated services (LIS) on page 23. to maximise /optimise the health and the well being of our beneficiaries, an integrated approach to health, social, educational and employment service delivery is **vital**.

- v. We hope that the proposed area Health and Well-Being Boards will give political and strategic leadership to all the relevant commissioning processes including GP commissioning when it is established.
- 4. In conclusion, we broadly support the direction of travel of the Green Paper but remain concerned that reductions in central and local government expenditure will, in turn, reduce our own capacity to meet the pressing needs of our trainees to find satisfying and productive work. To provide real incentives to increase the role of social enterprises in public service delivery, the proposed Big Society “Bank” needs new resources of funding. We note the suggestion of Sir Stephen Bubb of Acevo that the proceeds of a tax on bankers’ bonuses could contribute.