

# Regional Compact

## Funding, procurement and commissioning: Workshop at VSNW'09 (Conference & AGM)

Partners will develop a funding code to provide a clear framework for effective funding relationships. It will include the main principles and values summarised below.

	Draft commitment in the Regional Compact document	VSNW Workshop on developing a Funding, Commissioning and Procurement Code for the North West: implementation action or consideration
a	To make payments promptly and in advance of expenditure (where appropriate and necessary) in order to achieve better value for money.	The VSNW workshop group supported this action.
b	Partners agree to improve the funding relationships between each other, and to work together to make sure that national decisions on funding and resources are based on a full understanding of the needs of the North West. Partners endeavour to ensure that the region receives a fair share of national resources.	<p>1. The VSNW workshop group supported this action.</p> <p>2. Added principle that partners should ensure that the region's fair share of resources are drawn down to a local level - ie fairly distributed within the region with local resourcing the priority.</p>
C	Review the balance between outcome and output needs in funding relationships.	<p>There was strong consensus that in reality, the wording of this commitment lacks sufficient understanding of the issues: that funders should be clear about the expected outcome; that there should be a sophisticated understanding and use of hard and soft outcomes (that can therefore take account of social value benefits); that there should be a framework between funder and funded that has greater flexibility appropriate to the purpose of the work ie where appropriate guidance on renegotiating outcomes.</p> <p>A key recommendation of those in the workshop, and who were familiar with it, was the use of NIACE's RARPA Toolkit: " a value added toolkit to support the recording and recognition of progress and achievement in non-accredited learning", <a href="http://www.rarpatoolkit.com/en">http://www.rarpatoolkit.com/en</a> - a means to effectively measure and agree soft outcomes eg distance travelled.</p> <p>Tools like the Rickter Scale (Supporting People programme in Y&amp;H uses something very similar: <a href="http://www.rarpatoolkit.com/en/article.asp">http://www.rarpatoolkit.com/en/article.asp</a>) bring the monitoring process into the heart of the service delivery-service user relationship, so that it is not what often seems like an after the fact, secondary monitoring process more concerned with the service delivery-funder relationship and quite distant from the service user.</p> <p>The group returned to the issue of flexibility in contract arrangements and the confidence in and placed in commissioners to be flexible, and the need to address and support this.</p>

D	Make sure there are clear processes for providing funds, including equality impact assessments so that all appropriate organisations have a fair opportunity to secure funding and contracts.	Concerns were expressed about the potential "passing on", by funders, of the equality impact assessment duty without regard to the size of organisation nor to the nature of the funded organisation's specific reach. EHRC have recently issued single-group funding guidance: The Workshop felt that more of a Total Place approach to EIA process should be taken (both in terms of who delivering, who capable of delivering and who not getting an equal service).
E	Adopt best practice in managing funding programmes, including publishing assessment standards, providing feedback on unsuccessful applications and providing advice and support.	The VSNW workshop group supported this action.
F	Share information and work with other funders to reduce the amount of work that is repeated unnecessarily, streamline funding processes and develop common approaches to the benefit of applicants.	The VSNW workshop group supported this action. Particular mention was made of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. the need for standardised procurement processes (eg between PCTs in the North West)</li> <li>ii. the consideration of the National Audit Office's Intelligent Monitoring guidance: <a href="http://www.nao.org.uk/guidance_and_good_practice/toolkits/intelligent_monitoring.aspx">http://www.nao.org.uk/guidance_and_good_practice/toolkits/intelligent_monitoring.aspx</a></li> <li>iii. Community Budgeting approaches</li> </ul>
G	Where possible minimise bureaucracy associated with application, qualification, monitoring, report and audit processes, streamlining processes and developing common approaches across public bodies for benefit of applicants, review the balance between outcome and output needs in funding relationships.	As above... Particular mention was made of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. the need for standardised procurement processes (eg between PCTs in the North West)</li> <li>ii. the consideration of the National Audit Office's Intelligent Monitoring guidance: <a href="http://www.nao.org.uk/guidance_and_good_practice/toolkits/intelligent_monitoring.aspx">http://www.nao.org.uk/guidance_and_good_practice/toolkits/intelligent_monitoring.aspx</a></li> <li>iii. Community Budgeting approaches</li> <li>Plus: iv. exploring efficiencies in monitoring (e.g. where more than one funder or funding stream)</li> <li>v. use of cost release for efficiency savings, so that "back-office" type savings can benefit frontline service users (and not automatically be returned to a central pot)</li> <li>vi. see response to action c above re outcomes/outputs</li> </ul>
H	Where a decision is likely to have a significant effect on the third sector, (major policy changes for example) to consult widely, appropriately and early enough, allowing a minimum of 12 weeks.	The VSNW workshop group supported this action. Plus develop guidance on de-commissioning, especially where vulnerable service-users may be affected.
I	Where possible, regional partners will look to develop funding agreements that should last for at least three years, and preferably longer whenever possible	The VSNW workshop group supported this action.
J	To encourage full cost recovery principles in preparing project budgets and funding applications	The VSNW workshop group supported this action.
K	<b>Not included in the commitments is the need, identified by some of the workshop, for some sort of "Trade Body support".</b>	I think the main context for this was around supporting equal access to procurement and funding opportunities; not just lobbying but developmental support (consortia building, service promotion, etc)