

WHAT IS SOCIAL VALUE?

In the context of this project social value is the added benefit to the community from a commissioning/procurement process over and above the direct purchasing of goods, services and outcomes.

This guide has been developed for commissioners of public sector services to help you understand your role in commissioning for social Value.

I'M A COMMISSIONER. WHAT DOES SOCIAL VALUE MEAN FOR ME?

As a commissioner, you are at the heart of the social value process: You have a clear opportunity to help grow social value through your commissioning activity.

You form the link between the need; and the solution for that need. It will be your responsibility to consider how best to commission services and goods which deliver social value.

For commissioners, engagement and communication will be key to realise social value – both internally and externally.

This is to allow your organisation to understand the specific requirements of your local community (the issues that can be tackled through offering social value); and to encourage providers to offer services and goods which also offer the social value that meets local needs.

WHAT STEPS CAN I TAKE TO HELP REALISE SOCIAL VALUE?

The Social Value Toolkit is particularly relevant to commissioners (see Easy Read Guide – Step-by-Step Guide to using the Toolkit for more information). It will allow you to consider how to identify where social value can be provided; and source the appropriate services to deliver it.

The Toolkit sets out:

- How to assess your organisation's suitability to help deliver social value
- How to identify opportunities for the capturing and growth of social value; and
- How to encourage providers to deliver social value through their traditional service offerings.

In many instances, commissioners are already realising social value – although this isn't necessarily being evidenced or measured. The Toolkit includes resources which allow you to do this – enabling you to quantify and qualify the effectiveness of your commissioning activity.

HOW DO I ENCOURAGE PROVIDERS AND SUPPLIERS TO GENERATE SOCIAL VALUE?

- Introduce key decision makers in provider organisations to social value – what it is, and how they can help deliver it
- Deliver communications which are targeted to your audience (health, local authority, private or third sector organisations), through workshops or by speaking to professional networks
- Ensure that social value is understood at all levels of provider organisations
- Includes distributing guidelines and manuals, case studies, best practice studies
- Encourage provider organisations to generate their own ideas about how they can provide social value through the core services and goods that they offer to you.
 - Providers should be asking themselves how can they build upon what they already do (and what's new that they can offer?) which in turn provides you as a commissioner with social value (and specifically, social value that meets the local need).
 - The ideal result is that providers are generating their own ideas and offering solutions, incorporating elements that deliver social value.
- Liaise with your procurement teams to ensure that when suppliers offer social value, this is measured. It is vital to ensure that providers understand that by delivering social value, they are increasingly likely to be awarded business (for example through tender processes).

WHAT DO I NEED TO CONSIDER WHEN COMMISSIONING?

There is an increasing focus on better relationships between commissioners and service providers. From a legal viewpoint, commissioners should consider the following:

- Understand the powers available and the ways these can be applied to the widest objectives possible (including working together with other public agencies to achieve even greater benefits);
- Adopt policies which enable a wider range of social, economic and environmental benefits to be accepted, promoted and delivered as being of public value;
- Use a range of commissioning routes (including procurement) as appropriate to their purpose;
- Respond proactively to proposals from social enterprises and other providers for different ways of fulfilling this purpose, where there is a good chance that this might be in the public interest;
- Adopt policies which enable the widest possible public value considerations to be incorporated into what is procured; and
- Prepare a robust business case prior to any commissioning process.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT:

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The social value toolkit, evaluation report, easy read guides and further information can be found at:

http://www.northwest.nhs.uk/whatwedo/socialvalueproject/social_value_project.html