

Commissioning Case Study

Topic : Parenting Early Intervention Programme (PEIP) 2008

This document summarises the 2008 commissioning process carried out by Newcastle Children's Services for the Parenting Early Intervention Programme to deliver services targeted at parents of children aged 8-13 years.

The study describes a way of engaging with potential providers through the introduction of a self-assessment for completion by each prospective bidder to enable them to analyse their suitability to meet the requirements of the PEIP.

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Children's Services Parenting Early Intervention Programme (PEIP)

Overview of the programme

The purpose of the PEIP was to increase parenting provision through the delivery of evidence based parenting programmes targeted at parents with children aged 8-13. These should be parents that our Parenting Support Strategy has already identified as being vulnerable because of their parenting situation (for example they are parents living in challenging circumstances or with children with particular needs) or there are gaps in the provision to meet their needs. These gaps have a number of underlying causes. They are linked either to lack of knowledge about what services are available, lack of confidence in services in engaging with parents that are traditionally seen as 'hard to reach', poor coordination of the services that exist or a service either coming to an end or being newly identified as a needed resource. We knew from our analysis of existing providers of parenting support in Newcastle that there are a number of agencies that were already working to address these gaps. This funding provided an opportunity to commission further work to achieve key outcomes which included:

- Delivery of well run, evidenced based parenting programmes by skilled facilitators as part of coordinated packages of family support to targeted parents of 8-13 year olds
- Outreach activities that engage targeted parents and lead them to attend the relevant parenting programme
- Establishment of relevant training pathway for parenting practitioners and performance monitoring data that evidences impact on agreed priorities for change in behaviour of practitioners
- Robust performance monitoring and evaluation data sets that demonstrate impact on agreed priorities for change in behaviour of parents and children

Background

We had a strong inclination that the interest for this tender would be largely generated from groups and organisations affiliated to the Voluntary and Community Sector. We also knew that their business acumen, skills and capacity to deal with council procedures was limited and that there was a possibility our formal tender process could be perceived as overwhelming and only a limited number of bidders would understand the method and it was likely these would be the larger and more experienced organisations. In seeking to secure a partner from this sector to deliver the programme we set about communicating at a level where everyone understood the processes and the regulations we were obliged to comply with. We wanted to streamline

wherever possible the process for engagement without compromising the City Council's Procurement and Financial Regulations and give a clear signal to potential bidders that the Local Authority was accessible when it comes to business relationships. We were also keen to implement a sense of proportionality to the whole process and to make it a more pleasant experience for those who wished to conduct business with us.

Process

In June 2008 Newcastle City Council Childrens Services Directorate embarked on a commissioning process that tested an innovation and marked a new way of engaging with potential providers. On occasions and particularly where an immature market place exists the specification a client provides can often be interpreted in a different way by each bidding organisation. The aim of this process was to ensure that the bidders were fully aware of the expectations NCC had in mind and that no ambiguity remained about the quality, competence and experience that was being sought. This objective needed a thoughtful and targeted approach. We decided to host an event to test ideas with service providers that had expressed an interest in bidding and engaged them in non competitive dialogue. This is the process of spelling out your requirements and seeking the input from providers, teasing-out what might be the most attractive way of scoping and packaging your requirements. It also provides you with the chance of gaining an understanding as to how the bidders might propose the delivery and address a tailored approach to particular local circumstances. It can also highlight key issues that are likely to impact on the service in future. Importantly, it gives an early insight into the likely level of interest there is from the market and who the possible players are.

The Change Process

In order to minimise the prospect of taking organisations through a lengthy tender process that may ultimately end in disappointment because they didn't have the necessary skill sets to be considered as a realistic option for appointment and to avoid them having to complete a range of tender documents, we introduced a "self assessment" that each prospective bidder was asked to complete.

We adopted a procedure where the lead client set the context for discussion explaining the background of why we were hosting the event and described the purpose of funding and what the primary objectives and outcomes were.

The principle task was to inform and outline to bidders the council's proposals for delivery of the programme. As a result of the event we hoped that all the services attending would make a self analysis of their skills and determine whether they would be suitable to meet the requirements for the PEIP. We also made a call for inventive proposals and encouraged collaborative bids as we knew there was a greater chance of success with some organisations having diverse skills that could be conjoined.

The self assessment asked several project specific questions and the more ticks the potential bidders awarded themselves the more realistic chance they had of presenting a sound tender proposal. As the event proceeded it was apparent to a large proportion of the interested parties that they did not have the necessary experience or skills to deliver the programme, they promptly left and the numbers started to reduce to the point of a virtual short-list. We had gained the desired effect by using this model which consequently made the process much easier at the formal stages.

It must be noted that the event was hosted in a non-competitive structure and we also gave an explicit message that we couldn't exclude anyone from submitting a bid if they so wished, but they had to understand their chances of success would not be high if their self assessment scored a low outcome.

As long as the invitations to these types of events are inclusive to all, the time invested in this process reaps reward.

After the event we arranged a clarification meeting with those organisations that formally expressed an interest in bidding and were confident that they had sufficient experience to deliver; this meeting was used to explain the detail of specification before they submitted their tender.

We advertised the opportunity through the usual media publications and used two further vehicles of publicity. We loaded the opportunity through Newcastle City Council's Pro-Contract which is an electronic portal that advertises all City Council tenders; we also coordinated the procedure with Newcastle Community and Voluntary Sector. They kindly communicated our tender details to their network of members. We found this method and process very useful and it helps to define the future of the service. If you wish to consider this route it must be undertaken early in the development stage of a proposal and prior to determining a commissioning / procurement opportunity.

Self Assessment used

Criteria	Personal rating
Staff with sound knowledge of adult learning styles	
Staff with sound knowledge of children's developmental needs	
Up to date knowledge of named parents with children aged 8-13 that would be likely to benefit from targeted parenting support work	
Close working relationships with a range of agencies from the statutory and voluntary sectors likely to be supporting these families	
Access to staff from your own agency with experience of delivering evidence based parenting programmes to vulnerable parents	
Evidence of existing multi agency parenting support working with adults' and children's service providers	
Experience of coordinating and administering evidence based parenting programmes	
Experience of assessing and signposting parents to relevant parenting programmes	
Track record of delivering parenting programmes as part of a Common Assessment Framework and Team Around the Family	
Evidence of staff accessing ongoing training and development opportunities to improve their work with parents	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Robust performance monitoring processes that evidence impact of your existing parenting support work on key priorities of • raising attainment, • improving attendance, • reducing anti social behaviour, • reducing numbers of children coming into the criminal justice system, • reducing numbers of children coming into the looked after system 	