

VCS Procurement Action Plan

The purpose of this action plan is to facilitate implementation of the recommendations of the report of the Communities Review Committee 'Supporting the Local Voluntary and Community Sector through Procurement'. The content has been developed jointly by council officers and representatives of the local voluntary and community sector. Progress in implementing the action plan will be reviewed annually by the Council's Third Sector Strategic Forum with the involvement of Voluntary Action Islington and Islington Community Network.

Key SCP: Strategy and Community Partnerships, Islington Council
 ICN: Islington Community Network LS: Legal Services, Islington Council SPT: Strategic Procurement Team, Islington Council
 VAI: Voluntary Action Islington

Recommendation 1: Forward Planning Procurement – The Council should plan procurement opportunities for the voluntary sector and grant funding intentions at least a year ahead

Ref	Action	Who leads	When	Progress / Comments	Timeline
1.1	Publish a forward plan of procurement opportunities over £100k (aggregate value), ideally a year in advance, and promote it via VAI E-News.	SPT	Updated and published quarterly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The forward plan of procurement opportunities is published on the Council's website quarterly. Next update is due in July 2014. http://www.islington.gov.uk/publicrecords/library/Procurement/Business-planning/Plans/2014-2015/(2014-05-12)-Forward-plan-April-2014.pdf VAI promote a link to the Forward Plan as part of their monthly funding updates on VAI E-News. SPT to consider including other information in the forward plan e.g. estimated contract start date (12 months ahead), estimated value and whether contract is currently provided by VCS. 	Ongoing
1.2	Use the Council's Third Sector Strategic Forum (TSSF) to encourage commissioners to plan ahead and promote procurement opportunities below £100k.	Commissioners	Every two months when TSSF meets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is a standing item on the TSSF agenda for senior departmental representatives to report on forthcoming procurement opportunities and on contracts awarded and ending. Commissioners to inform VAI of these smaller procurement opportunities so they can be included in funding updates. 	Ongoing

1.3	Promote link to the Council's Contract Opportunities web page via the VAI website and VAI E-News.	VAI	Monthly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is a link on the VAI website: http://www.vai.org.uk/services/support-for-groups/support-for-tendering/ A link to the relevant page of the Council website will be included in updates of VAI's funding booklet. When notified, opportunities are promoted on VAI News (electronic newsletter circulated to local VCS). 	Ongoing
1.4	Arrange provider events for bidders to understand more about proposed procurements.	SPT	As required	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Since July 2013 two provider events have been held. One in relation to a mental health service tender and the second in respect of offender services. SPT continue to include provider events within the procurement planning stage, where appropriate. An event relating to young people's sexual health services was held in January 2014. 	Ongoing
1.5	Identify procurement opportunities that are particularly suitable for a consortium approach and help consortia of local organisations to form to bid for these contracts.	Commissioners VAI/ICN	As required	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> VAI chaired a meeting that brought together organisations interested in an Islington Big Lottery bid to support the development of services to reduce the isolation of older people – although unfortunately this was not successful. As part of the support programme for voluntary organisations working with children Voluntary Action Islington has run a workshop on working together. SCP is researching approaches in other boroughs to inform practice around consortia development in Islington. Council provides resources for capacity building from the VCS Grants Fund. 	Ongoing
1.6	Use the Directory of Islington's VCS to help commissioners develop lists of local organisations that are well placed to deliver particular services.	VAI	Update Directory during 2013/14; review annually	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Directory of Islington's VCS is being updated and amended to provide additional functions that will support this. It is expected to be ready in April 2014. The Council will share the costs of updating the Directory with VAI. 	Ongoing

1.7	Arrange 'Meet the Buyer' events.	SPT	Dates to be published	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An event was organised for insourced Housing Repairs sub contractors. Further events to be organised during 2014, including a "design and print" provider event. Dates will be published on the Selling to the Council web pages and promoted via VAI E-News. 	Ongoing
1.8	Publicise training opportunities for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consortia Bidding Workshop Effective Bid Pricing Workshop Effective Tender Writing Workshop How to be successful at PQQ stage Understanding Terms and Conditions Workshop 	SPT	At least three of each workshop per year.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All 2013/14 sessions were publicised. Dates for 2014/15 training have been published on the Council's web page and will be promoted via VAI E-News: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <u>Consortia Bidding</u> (full day) 10 June, 11 Nov, 10 March. <u>Effective Bid Pricing</u> (full day) 24 June, 25 Nov, 24 March. <u>Effective Tender Writing</u> (full day) 13 May, 15 Oct, 24 Feb. <u>How to be successful at PQQ stage</u> (half day) 22 April, 19 September, 20 January. <u>Understanding Contract Terms & Conditions</u> (half day) 22 April, 19 Sept, 20 January. 	Ongoing
1.9	Improve consistency in the quality of commissioning processes across Council departments.	SPT/ Commissioners	As required	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Feedback from VCS at the time of the Scrutiny Review suggested a mixed experience of council commissioning. Council-wide Introduction to Procurement Training is regularly provided in conjunction with colleagues in Legal Services. The most recent session was on 12 March 2014. Further dates are being planned for 2014/15. Additional bespoke procurement training is provided as requested as part of procurement planning. The Procurement Toolkit on IZZI is accessible to all commissioners. It includes a suite of guidance, templates, etc to support the procurement process. The toolkit is regularly reviewed and updated as necessary. Debriefing on all procurements takes place to inform continuous improvements to approach/process. 	Ongoing

Recommendation 2: Long Term Planning – Council contracts and grants should be for three years, where possible, in line with the Voluntary Sector Compact

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2.1	Maintain commitment that, where possible, all contracts and grants should be for at least three years.	SPT	As per contract advert	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All contract and grant awards are for at least three years. The only exception to this is where funding is passported from central government (or other external agencies) for specific purposes over shorter timeframes. This is a commitment in the Voluntary Sector Compact. 	Ongoing
2.2	Islington Council will challenge proposed procurements for short durations as part of good practice and the work of the Procurement Board.	SPT	As required	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This is discussed at procurement planning stage and reflected in business cases. Higher value contracts can be challenged at Procurement Board. Guidance is included in procurement training sessions. 	Ongoing
2.3	Maintain ongoing dialogue with VCS organisations throughout the life cycle of contracts, and especially in the final year, so that they can position themselves to apply for future contracts or plan ahead for losing funding when contracts end.	Commissioners	As required	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This is included in procurement training for commissioners and in the Procurement Toolkit. Procurement Board maintains oversight of processes. The Third Sector Strategic Forum helps to develop and share best practice across the Council. Feedback from VCS is that some funders (e.g. the Lottery) are more upfront about whether funding is likely to be renewed and this allows organisations more time to plan ahead. 	Ongoing
2.4	Develop decommissioning guidance including template letters to notify end of contract period.	SPT	In place	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Decommissioning Guidance is now published in the Procurement Toolkit, including 'exit strategy' guidance for commissioners for the final 12 months of contracts. Template letters are available in the Procurement Toolkit. 	COMPLETE

Recommendation 3: Proportionate Procurement Processes – The Council should design procurement and grant processes to be proportionate to the amounts of money bid for

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3.1	Advise and (where necessary) challenge commissioners to achieve proportionality in procurement processes.	SPT	As required	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is Important to consider the costs of procurement relative to the value of the contract. This is discussed at procurement planning stage and reflected in business cases. Higher value contracts can be challenged at the Procurement Board. SPT have models of best practice for commissioners to use and it is included in procurement training sessions. 	Ongoing
3.2	Training session for commissioners to be provided by the Council on proportionate procurement.	SPT	As required	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This is covered as part of the Council's Introduction to Procurement Training for staff and also in any bespoke training sessions within departments. VAI/ICN to be invited to provide a third sector perspective to procurement training. 	Ongoing
3.3	VCS to bring to the Council's attention any examples where proportionality in procurement is not being achieved.	VAI/ICN	As required	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This is considered at meetings of relevant community networks. There are no recent examples to report. There is a commitment in the Compact to simplicity and proportionality in processes relative to the amounts involved. 	Ongoing
3.4	Commissioners should consider TUPE implications when awarding or reassigning contracts.	Commissioners	As required	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Guidance on TUPE is included within the Procurement Toolkit. Standard cover letters and TUPE schedules are also included. 	Ongoing

3.5	Senior management to provide effective oversight of commissioning processes and sign off decisions on contract awards.	SPT	As required	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Procurement Board which has senior officer and member involvement meets monthly. The Board challenges procurement strategies for tenders of £500k+ in line with procurement rules and value for money considerations. SPT ensures all governance arrangements are followed and include Executive sign off (over £500k) or Director approval (under £500k). Senior SPT staff are actively involved in forward planning of procurements and ensuring that contracts are recorded on the Corporate Contracts database. 	Ongoing
3.6	Timetables for procurement to be published to bidders at earliest reasonable opportunity.	SPT	As required.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Timetables are included within tender documentation. 	Ongoing
3.7	Commissioners to provide quality feedback on each stage of tender process to bidders.	SPT/ Commissioners	As required	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Feedback is mandatory at each stage of procurement. Standard templates are in place within the Procurement Toolkit and content is checked by SPT to ensure good quality responses. 	Ongoing
3.8	Proper assessment to be made whether a grant or a contract is to be undertaken.	LS	As required	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contracts need to be procured in compliance with the legal rules on procurement. Standard contract terms have been developed by LS for these. In some cases it is more appropriate to give a grant rather than let a contract. Grant agreements are outside the scope of the rules on public procurement. Standard grant conditions have been developed by LS for such agreements. The majority of agreements established between the Council and VCS organisations, even where they involve funding from identified sources referred to as “grants”, take the form of contracts with specified outputs/outcomes in return for the funding that is provided. Advice is provided by LS as required on the application of procurement rules and in choosing the appropriate standard form of agreement. 	Ongoing

Recommendation 4: Specify Community Benefit – The Council should make clear in its procurement processes what sort of benefits to the community it wants to see from successful bidders

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4.1	Prepare guidance for commissioners, procurers and contract management on the Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012.	SPT	In place	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Guidance has been prepared (April 2013) to show how social value can be considered as part of supply chain management processes. It will be subject to review, including meetings with VAI/ICN. A flexible approach, using broad questions, gives local VCS more opportunity to demonstrate social value. SCP (Policy and Equalities) is working work with SPT to introduce 'Resident Impact Method Statements'. These would need to be properly scored in the tender evaluation process. 	Ongoing
4.2	Continue to invite service users and representatives of VCS organisations to sit on tender panels and provide training to support them where appropriate	SPT	As required	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Service users/family carers/residents are involved as appropriate on a range of procurement panels. SPT works closely with the Service User Involvement Officer to ensure procurement policy and practice is kept up to date. Feedback from representatives of service users is sought on completion of a tender exercise. Over the last two years, 16 procurements have involved 26 individuals representing service users, VCS organisations or specialist advisors. Guidance on service user participation on tender panels is currently being finalised. Tender evaluation guidance has been prepared to ensure the Panel Chair addresses service user participation in the early planning stages. 	Ongoing

Recommendation 5: Demonstrate Impact – VCS organisations need help to demonstrate impact and the difference their services make to residents

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5.1	Arrange workshops to help local VCS organisations get better at demonstrating social value and the difference their services make to residents.	VAI/ICN	As required	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A workshop on describing the difference your organisation makes was included in the January 2013 children’s support programme. • Council supports through its funding for VCS infrastructure e.g. to VAI, networks and forums, and community hubs. • Introduction of ‘Resident Impact Method Statements’ will help VCS to demonstrate social value (see 4.1 above). 	Ongoing
5.2	Raise awareness of resources designed to help identify, assess and provide evidence of impact, and promote their use locally.	VAI/ICN	As required	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relevant resources brought to the attention of groups in one-to-one and workshop sessions. Further work to be undertaken on web site resources. • Examples: Social Impact Toolkit on VAI website; NCVO Code of Good Impact Practice; NEF Guide to Social Return on Investment. 	Ongoing

Recommendation 6: Gap Analysis – Islington Council should continue to map all funding to the VCS on an annual basis

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6.1	Continue to map all funding to VCS on an annual basis and publish on the VCS funding pages of the Council's website.	SCP	Annually	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First year of mapping was 2010/11. • Mapping of VCS Funding for 2013/14 has been completed and published on the VCS funding pages of the Council's website. 	Ongoing
6.2	Give detailed feedback to organisations when they fail to win tenders.	Commissioners	Already happening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Included in procurement training for commissioners and in the Procurement Toolkit. • It is a legal requirement for feedback to be provided as part of a tender process. 	Ongoing
6.3	Develop guidance on providing feedback in general on tender evaluations.	SPT	Completed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guidance is now included in the Procurement Toolkit. It was also covered in the December 2013 edition of the Procurement Newsletter, distributed to all commissioners and stakeholders. • SPT to provide guidance to VAI for inclusion on their website. 	COMPLETE
6.4	Use the annual VCS Conference and other relevant forums to assess the health of the voluntary sector in Islington, including risks facing local organisations, and to promote awareness of support services available.	VAI/ICN to coordinate	Annually	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The risks facing local organisations are discussed at meetings of ICN and issues brought up at the VCS Annual Conference are assessed and acted on. • VAI reported back at the 2013 Conference on recommendations agreed at the 2012 Conference. A report on recommendations from the 2013 Conference has been completed. • Support services are promoted using email, publicity materials and by attendance at relevant events as resources allow. 	Ongoing

Recommendation 7: Closer Collaboration – Islington Council and the funders of small frontline organisations should work together to share knowledge and information

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7.1	Islington Council and Cripplegate Foundation, as the primary funders of small frontline organisations, to work together to share knowledge and information.	SCP and Cripplegate Foundation	At least three times per year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cripplegate Foundation prepares an analysis of applications for each round of Community Chest and shares this with Islington Council. Information about Local Initiatives Fund awards is made available to members of the Community Chest Panel when they meet. The aim is to ensure that funding from Community Chest and from Local Initiatives Fund is complementary and avoids duplication. 	Ongoing
7.2	Encourage local funders to attend the annual VCS Conference in order to gain a better understanding of the needs of local organisations.	VAI/ICN	Annually	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local funders are invited to provide stalls and participate in workshop discussions. Islington Giving attended the 2013 VCS Conference. A briefing is being organised so that City Bridge can explain their new funding priorities to the local voluntary and community sector. 	Ongoing

Updated for Communities Review Committee March 2014
 Minor revisions for VCSC 21 July 2014