

**Response to Cabinet Office's Green Paper 'Modernising
Commissioning: Increasing the role of charities, social enterprises,
mutuals and cooperatives in public service delivery'**

by Southampton Centre for Independent Living

Southampton Centre for Independent Living is an organisation, founded in 1984, run and controlled by Disabled People which provides advice, information and support to Disabled People wishing to live independently.

For over 15 years, we have provided support to Disabled People using Direct Payments and have been heavily involved in both Hampshire County Council and Southampton City Council's plans to transform to a more personalised adult social care system.

As a civil society organisation and more specifically a user led organisation, we welcome many of the Green Paper proposals. We particularly agree that user led organisations have a key role in empowering Disabled People in using personal budgets. For the last 2 years, SCIL has provided a brokerage role to Disabled People and Older People to assist them in support planning and then implementing their support plan. One of the key findings from a series of research focus groups we conducted before Christmas found that users derived great benefit from the broker being independent from the local authority and being able to provide peer support e.g. the broker being a fellow Disabled person. We firmly believe that Brokerage and other Support Services to personal budget users should be provided by civil society organisations. Furthermore these organisations should be local peer-led organisations that are embedded within the community they are working.

SCIL, in partnership with Southampton City Council, has been involved in the Support, Advocacy and Brokerage pilot project run by the Office of Disability Issues for the past 2 years. We believe the report is about to be published but we hope this will provide further compelling evidence that user led organisations offer a viable and valuable alternative to the local authority in providing some care management functions such as support planning and brokerage.

SCIL have also encouraged users to aggregate their budgets to purchase services jointly. One example of this is SCIL facilitating a group of users with mental health issues to pool their Direct Payments in

order to hire a pottery studio and teacher for 1 afternoon a week in order to learn pottery. Local user led organisations are well placed to assist users in finding innovative ways to meet their needs which are more appropriate than traditional services.

One of the major barriers that SCIL and other user led organisations face is the bureaucratic and time consuming process of competitive tendering. SCIL would welcome proposals to simplify the system and ensure that the prohibitive cost of writing tenders both in time and resources is tackled and the process is proportionate to the costs of a contract. In a recent example SCIL had to submit 3 totally separate tenders dealing with slightly different aspects of the same project and the contract was for a very small number of hours and was only for 6 months in duration. This showed the local authority's total lack of awareness of the capacity of user led organisations to spend the time preparing tenders. Certainly a standard Pre Qualification Questionnaire across both local and central government would be welcome, but much more needs to be done to ensure a level playing field.

The Local Integrated Services concept sounds a very interesting idea and SCIL would support initiatives that promote coproduction between statutory services and civil society organisations and service users. SCIL has worked closely with Hampshire County Council on encouraging service users to assist the local authority on co-designing their new personalised approach to adult social care. With other local user led organisations, we set up a Personalisation Expert Panel which brought together Disabled People and Carers, as 'experts by experience', to work alongside local authority officers on a number of different work streams regarding personalisation e.g. Personal Assistance Training, Peer Support facilitation, Care Governance.

SCIL has also worked in a co productive manner with stakeholders from the NHS and the local authorities on the Common Assessment Framework project run by the Department of Health. We cite these as examples of good practice which show that user led organisations are key to empowering local citizens to get involved in projects. We believe that the spectre of competitive tendering and the fear by some local authority commissioners of giving user led organisations an 'unfair' advantage, often stifle this kind of constructive and valuable way of working.

Payment by Results may appear to be a good idea however SCIL would be concerned about how it would work in practice particularly when delivering services where the outcome is more qualitative than

quantative. It may inadvertently discourage user led organisations working in a personalised way and encourage a more 'sausage factory' approach to services such as support planning or advocacy. In the financially precarious world that most civil society organisations exist within, the variability of the Payment by Results method may endanger the survival of those organisations. We would urge great caution in proceeding along this route without a thorough analysis of both the intended and unintended consequences of this approach.

In summary, SCIL believes the Green Paper offers some interesting ideas on how commissioning can be modernised to support smaller civil society organisations such as user led organisations to be more involved in running of public services. In our response, SCIL has focussed particularly on Support Services in the arena of Adult Social Care although we believe there are many areas of public service that civil society organisations could play a significant role.

Contact Details:

Robert Droy
Independent Living Team Leader
Direct Dial Tel: 023 8020 2639

Southampton Centre for Independent Living
Unity 12, 9-19 Rose Road, Southampton SO14 6TE
Tel: 023 8033 0982 Fax: 023 8020 2648
Text (Minicom): 023 8020 2649

Email: Robert@SouthamptonCIL.co.uk

4th January 2011