Guidance:

Public Social Partnerships: Lessons Learned

A guide for the Third Sector and Public Sector Service Managers, Commissioners and Procurement Professionals

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A Brief Background

Public Social Partnerships (PSP) are a model for the Third Sector to be involved earlier and more deeply in the commissioning and service design process. It is based on the principle of the Third and Public Sectors engaging in co-production to design a new, or re-design a current, service with the goal of delivering better outcomes for citizens.

The PSP model is based on the design and pilot of services before they are competitively tendered by the public authority. Through involvement in such partnerships, multiple Third Sector organisations have the opportunity to engage in and support the commissioning process, and can use this experience to build the capability, capacity and relationships to deliver effective tenders for delivering the service.

Ready for Business is currently delivering PSP support as part of the Scottish Government's Developing Markets for Third Sector Providers Programme. The RfB website has further useful information on PSPs:

http://readyforbusiness.org/ programme-offering/public- social-partnerships/

A number of organisations have successfully used the PSP approach with the support of Ready for Business since February 2012. At the time of writing this document, the PSP 'brand' is becoming increasingly prominent. Most importantly, PSP has been viewed as a positive experience by those parties who Ready for Business has supported. The programme has led to better ways of working and an increased profile in

service delivery for the Third sector. In addition, the Reducing Reoffending Change Fund and Early Years Change Fund have specified the use of the PSP model as a key condition for successful applicants.

It is clear that the PSP model delivers significant benefits for organisations from both the Public Sector and Third Sector. It is nevertheless recognised that creating and sustaining successful partnerships is not without challenge. With the appropriate guidance and understanding of the model however, these challenges are not insurmountable.

This document is a reflection of PSP experiences to date. It aims to share the successes and the challenges experienced. We believe that these will prove highly valuable to those organisations who are currently engaged in a PSP, or to those who are interested in adopting the model.

The Lessons Learned detailed in this document are the product of our experience in delivering support to a range of PSPs. They include:

• **Low Moss Prison – Prisoner Support Pathway**

• **Royal Edinburgh Hospital – including Wayfinder Mental Health Rehabilitation Pathway and Greenspace Artspace**

• **East Renfrewshire CHCP – Supported Living for adults with learning disabilities**

• **SPT – Community Transport in the West of Scotland**

• **The Life I Want – Day Opportunities for adults with learning disabilities in Glasgow**

• **The Reducing Reoffending Change Fund and Early Years Change Fund PSPs**

• **Delivery of a national PSP advice point**

This document is intended to be short and easily absorbed with 16 key lessons which those interested or engaged in using the PSP model can practically apply in preparation, planning and delivery.

Index of Lessons Learned

1. Stakeholder Balance	9. Culture Change
2. Equal Partnership	10. Procurement
3. Sustainability	11. Scale of Project
4. PSP Trigger	12. Communications
5. Scope	13. Resource Allocation
6. Leadership	14. Planning
7. Evidence Base	15. Reporting
8. Timescale	16. Managing Expectations

#	Category	Lesson Learned Headline	Mitigation
1	**Stakeholder Balance**	Ensure that there is appropriate and adequate stakeholder representation from both the Public Sector and Third Sector.	• Map and engage the stakeholder organisations that impact upon the lives of your service user cohort. • Target the outcomes that need to be improved and the organisations that provide them now • Service users and other stakeholders will need various mediums to input. Some will prefer face to face discussion, whereas others will prefer more detached options to input e.g. surveys. • Ensure that your PSP offers more than one way for organisations and individuals to engage.
2	**Equal Partnership**	Adopt an inclusive approach with providers from PSP initiation and maintain this throughout the design and pilot process.	• Ensure that relevant providers have a chance to engage in the process of PSP initiation. • Consider starting with a formal notification of an opportunity to engage with the public authority through the PSP model. Distribute this through a recognised network or forum. This could include use of a Prior Information Notice published on Public Contracts Scotland. • It is not feasible to have all potential providers involved in the core design process as managing a design group of significant size will act as a considerable overhead. This has the potential to slow or disrupt the decision making process. It is therefore recommended that PSPs have a smaller group of 'core' providers who will undertake the work required; alternatively break the PSP into smaller distinct pieces of work. • Define levels of involvement for providers which fit with their availability and the level of resource deemed appropriate for delivering the service design effectively and within required timescales. For example, consider the following approach to segmenting interested providers: • Core design group • Consulted group • Informed wider group • Ensure that the selection process for these groups is transparent. This can be enabled through use of selection criteria.

3	Sustainability	Begin to explore the future sustainability of service funding as early in the PSP process as possible. Ensure your sustainability activity is directed towards achieving a clearly defined end point.	• While the public sector is under increased pressure to approach service delivery within an ethos of partnership and preventative spend (driven significantly by the Christie report), this also comes at a time when there is increasing uncertainty around public sector funds. • Consequently, the public sector is placing greater focus on establishing clear sustainable routes for the commissioning and procurement of service delivery contracts. In addition, however, the public sector is looking to maximise the potential for creating added value through the delivery of wider social benefits. PSP is a leading approach which is supportive of these aims. • Early in the design process, it is crucial for a PSP team to start making links with key decision makers in the public sector who will ultimately fund and utilise the future service in the long term. • By bringing on-board potential funders early in the process, the PSP will have the opportunity to help shape the design to meet their requirements and ensure that it is fundable in the long term. • The outcomes of the above conversations should be reflected in a clearly defined end point, when all deliverables will have been completed, and sufficient evidence has been collated to facilitate funding decision-making.

4	PSP Trigger	Clearly articulate and evidence why the service re-design is required and why the PSP approach is the most appropriate.	• A PSP should be embarked on to achieve particular goals which have been clearly defined. Ideally, this will be in the form of an Outline Business Case which has been developed to evidence the need and viability of the service re-design process.
			
			   • As a minimum these goals should include:
			   • A set of specific outcomes to be improved for service users.
			   • A robust and equal partnership between Third and Public Sector organisations.
			   • A view to design more efficient and effective services than currently exist.
			   • A set of improved working practices with Third Sector providers.
			   • A level of benefit to be delivered and where this benefit will come from.
			   • A clear procurement opportunity at the end of the process.
			   • If the above goals do not immediately apply, then either more analysis is needed or ultimately the PSP model is not the right model of delivery of the project or service(s) in scope.
			
			• This evidence should form the basis of your approach to benefits management within your PSP

5	Scope	It is essential to clarify and agree the scope of the project and communicate this at the outset of the PSP. Ensure that the scope of work is continually reviewed and managed throughout the life of the PSP.	• Although the scope may be clear to the core design team, it is essential that others who may be impacted by the change are informed and consulted as appropriate. • PSP partners should collaboratively define a vision statement and a strap line. This should articulate the scope in a clear succinct way and provide a common identity for the project. • Disseminate this through existing communication networks and use the strap line or vision on all key documentation. • Not only will this improve communication but it will ensure the PSP team remain mindful of the service outcome(s) they are trying to address. • Be wary of scope creep – your scope should be linked to the benefits you are seeking to achieve through the PSP and if there is deviation from this, delays can occur. • Any changes to scope should be agreed by partners at a Governance level.
6	Leadership	Ensure appropriate leadership exists within all consortium organisations, and is continuous throughout the life of the PSP.	• Having the right level of leadership within each partner organisation is crucial. Their continued buy-in is necessary to show real commitment to the PSP process and to achieve sign-off quickly at key stages. • Align leadership with the PSP aims from initiation and ensure appropriate deputies are available to attend all relevant meetings, acting as a conduit where necessary to the sponsor.

7	Evidence Base	Do not underestimate the effort required to compile the baseline of current services or for completing a detailed service re-design. Ensure this is embedded in a benefits management approach.	• Capturing an evidence base of how the current service operates in terms of people, cost, processes and systems is essential. If the current evidence base isn't captured accurately, it is very difficult to design and implement an improved model with any certainty of success.
			• In addition, it is difficult to demonstrate the benefits delivered by the new services if you cannot accurately compare and contrast the old service model with the new. This needs to be underpinned with a robust benefits management approach which supports identification, achievement and management of PSP benefits.
			• As a suggestion, the current service baseline and future service design should cover:
			
			  • Process
			  • Skills/roles to deliver
			  • Service volumes/KPI's
			  • Information requirements
			  • High level business requirements
			  • Outcomes impacted
			  • Cost
			  • Benefits – financial and non-financial
			
			• Many of these elements will be monitored and measured post-implementation.

8	Timescale	Manage expectations around timescales, and in particular ensure there is a defined end point.	• A PSP is not a rapid change process due to the number of organisations involved and the level of work required to design and pilot a new service. • Currently, the average PSP lifespan from conception to pilot completion is around 2 to 3 years. • Given the average timescales, it is likely that 'PSP fatigue' may set in during the process – it is important to be aware that this may happen and to set regular 'refresher' events to ensure pace and engagement is maintained. • It is vital that stakeholders, especially those in a leadership role, are bought into the timescale and adjust their organisations workload accordingly. • Detailed weekly planning with set milestones will help articulate the agreed timescales and may prevent the project from slipping. • Strong project management can reduce overall timescales whilst experience will enable shorter timescales in future PSPs.

9	Culture Change	Joining the PSP will mean both Third Sector providers and the Public Sector will have to change their existing service models and delivery approaches.	• The underpinning ethos of a PSP is delivering service changes through stakeholder engagement and management.
			• This means that service users, their families and carers and existing staff should be fully involved in the PSP process.
			• Services are to be redesigned to deliver better outcomes for service users and to maximise the community benefit which can be derived from the delivery of public services.
			• Conduct an internal analysis before committing to the PSP. Consider some of the following:
			  • What is your experience of change?
			  • Do you have people who can lead this change within your own organisation?
			  • Can you get your staff to 'buy-in', and how do you do this?
			  • Do you have the capability to undertake some retraining?
			• If there currently is not the capability or capacity to properly drive through this change in your organisation, then a plan can be drafted to help drive this forward and put the necessary building blocks in place to allow you to participate in the PSP journey.
			• PSP provides the opportunity to re-think how your organisation can work with others, and in particular promotes consortia working.

10	Procurement	Procurement is expected to be the end point of the PSP process.	• Although procurement is not an immediate pressure at the start of the process, it should be remembered that the end goal of a PSP is an open and transparent procurement process of the services in question. However, it is accepted that if a PSP is sustained through other routes this can also be considered a successful conclusion. • It must also be noted that a PSP is not a mechanism for awarding work to the Third Sector outwith procurement regulations. The capacity and capability of Third Sector providers will be strengthened by the PSP process however opportunity must be given to any interested provider to tender for delivery of the service. This can include the private sector. • Through a PSP model, the social or community benefit from the new service model should be evidenced to ensure that this can be captured within the procurement process.

11	Scale of Project	When designing your PSP programme, it is important to choose a service of the 'right' size to ensure that achievable targets are set.
		
		This means that you must ensure the size, duration and scope of your design and pilot stages are appropriately defined to ensure success.
			• The key enabler to launching a PSP is to ensure providers are willing, able and fully committed to engage with the process.
			• Choosing a contract that has an adequate monetary value is one of the key drivers to ensuring initial buy-in and on-going engagement. It is important to remind ourselves at this point however that PSPs cannot be driven by financial gain alone. Better outcomes for service users, improved services and better partnership working are the main drivers.
			• When making your final selection of scope for your PSP, bear in mind choosing an overly complex service or a service so large that you do not have the resource to manage the overhead of provider relationships. This can negatively impact upon the likelihood of successful delivery.
			• Be ambitious, but realistic about what you can achieve and ensure you guard against 'scope creep' as your project progresses.
			• When planning your pilot, consider if you need to pilot the whole service or part of the service, for example with a select service user group or geographical location.
			• There are some key considerations when choosing the duration of the pilot:
			  • Realistically, how much funding can you access for the pilot?
			  • How long will it take to collect the evidence to prove the concept to organisations that may fund it post pilot?
			  • How long will it take to properly mobilise the service (including on-boarding staff, service users and training)?
			• Current PSP pilots have ranged between 1 and 3 years. However, consult with your stakeholders and agree what appears feasible to them.
			• When considering how best to fund the pilot a key factor is service/contract size. The public authority will need to reflect all appropriate procurement regulations when choosing the contract size (As noted, PSP is not a way to negate existing procurement rules).
			• Other options to fund the pilot include grant funding or non-public body funding. Using these routes will mean that pilot providers could be selected without a tender process.

12	Communications	Direct communication with stakeholders is key to successful delivery.	• Intermediary organisations and networks are useful for raising awareness of the creation of a PSP, or the intention to engage with providers through the model. • However, once the PSP is 'in-flight' there should a key individual identified who will hold overall responsibility for PSP communications. • The PSP, perhaps through a designated Communications Manager, should define a Stakeholder Engagement Strategy which identifies and segments those stakeholders depending on their influence and interest in the project. This will allow you to define the 'Who', 'How', 'When' and 'Why' which underpins your project communications and will form the basis of a structured communications plan. • This will ensure the messages are clear and up to date. In addition, key organisations will be properly and effectively engaged.

13	Resource Allocation	A dedicated project resource is essential to ensuring activity remains focused on delivering your identified benefits and engaging the right stakeholders.	• The PSP will require a variety of skills and experience to input to the delivery process. This is particularly important in the forming of the current baseline and future service design. • It is important to complement the blend of skills from partner organisations with a dedicated resource that will be focused on maintaining progress in line with agreed timescales and defined benefits. • A project manager who is full time (or near full time) is recommended to steer the PSP and author key documents such as the Baseline documentation, the Memorandum of Understanding and the Service Design documentation. • There are many contributors to the Service Design process; hence a lot of suggested changes and/or iterations may occur. Having a core operational lead and coordination role is crucial to maintaining a level of quality and continuity in PSP products/outputs.
14	Planning	Planning is key to delivering within agreed timescales. Taking a benefits centred approach to planning helps ensure that all activities are focused ultimately on the delivery of agreed benefits.	• Although the PSP timescale is relatively long compared to some service design projects, it is important to implement detailed planning from the initiation. • Clearly allocating tasks, deliverables, milestones and (most importantly) owners at a weekly level will ensure that you can schedule workload for the team within a feasible and foreseeable window of delivery. • Focus your planning on the delivery of benefits – this will ensure that all of your activities, deliverables and milestones are geared towards ensuring benefits are attained and will help in keeping the project focused on what was agreed right at the outset of the PSP. • Taking a co-production approach to planning with the PSP team has proved fruitful. If the PSP design team don't agree with the initial timescales, then you are likely to struggle with delivery. • Be ambitious but realistic. • Ensure regular reviews of project plans. Planning is an evolving process as it is unlikely that you will be able to define every activity or timescale at the beginning of your PSP.
15	Reporting	Regular reporting against planned activities will help you to stay on track and will support the identification and mitigation of risks and issues at an early stage.	• To properly maximise the benefit of planning, activity owners must report regularly on progress made in achieving what has been agreed in the plan. This should include identification of any risks and issues which have arisen. • Using this approach will clearly identify slippage and allow supporting measures to be taken to help those who have come off track. • PSPs that neglect the planning stage are likely to exceed forecast timescales or resource constraints.
16	Managing Expectations	Ensure all parties know their roles and responsibilities at the start of the journey.	• As mentioned earlier, the PSP is a relatively long journey, stretching up to 3 years. It is important for all organisations and individuals coming along on this journey to know what to expect in the project ahead and define what their roles and responsibilities are. • Much of this clarification can be achieved through the MOU. However, in many cases it may be beneficial to have workshops where roles and responsibilities are clarified and discussed down to an individual level. • It may also be beneficial to develop clear and succinct terms of reference for any groups created (for example any specific workstreams) and to document any reporting and/or decision making processes to ensure clarity of understanding.

For more information visit the website at

www.readyforbusiness.org

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