



Response to OTS Consultation

Third sector innovation and personalization

Submitted: 25th September 2009

This is COVER's response to the OTS consultation on the role of the third sector in the personalisation agenda, focussing particularly on innovation. COVER is a representative body for the Voluntary and Community Sector in the region. Our Vision is of a just and inclusive society for the East of England that recognises and supports the value, and values, of the community and voluntary sector. Our Mission is to increase voluntary and community sector regional influence, activity and recognition.

On 7th September 2009 we sent an email to all our members, associate members and partners, informing them that we were coordinating a response to this consultation, and requesting their input. The document that was sent out is attached as an Appendix. Unfortunately we only received four responses in total. This response therefore only looks at Priority 1 of the OTS consultation.

Some of our member organisations and networks may be responding separately.

General comments

The Voluntary and Community Sector in general is comprised of organizations which operate in their particular sphere because they value individuals and are working to improve their lives. The change of focus that the personalization agenda entails is therefore welcome – subject to consideration of the work that needs to be done to make it successful.

One of the responses received expressed this particularly fluently:

“Throughout the consideration and public consultation on this subject ... we have stressed that treating individuals as individuals is worthy and long overdue.

Notwithstanding any concerns about the quality of the preparation or proposed delivery we remain of the view that, as part of the voluntary sector, our duty is to make a system work efficiently and with dignity for the end user.

[However], fundamental concerns, in our view, remain un- addressed.”

The VCS has a unique and valuable role to play as established providers of a whole range of services, working locally and individually, and in partnership. At the same time there are some issues that we face. Although we have only been able to respond to Priority 1 of the consultation, we feel that our response highlights several key concerns.

Any queries about this consultation response can be directed to:

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Response to consultation

Priority 1: How can the third sector offer real choice to citizens?

Our response to this question is in three sections. First we provide two examples of small voluntary and community sector organizations providing personalized services.

The second section highlights some key issues that we believe need to be resolved, in line with the consultation requirement for specific needed interventions to be listed.

Finally we highlight the work that has been done by an organization in Norfolk around service user perceptions and concerns about the personalization agenda.

1. The Voluntary and Community Sector can offer quality personalized services

Two case studies of small organizations delivering personalized services

People First of Norfolk

People First is a self advocacy organisation run by people with learning difficulties for people with learning difficulties. One of their activities is provision of tenancy training for support staff and tenants. The training talks about rights and responsibilities involved in renting a home to help tenants be in control, and to be well supported.

Part of the reason for the success of this program has been the local connections. Ian Hubbard who works for People First said “We can do this well as we know people who are moving [home] as we are linked to many groups.” They have a good relationship with care providers as well. They feel that they can be more successful at delivering this service than public bodies could be, because they know how to communicate information in a way that people with learning difficulties will be able to understand and remember. They also deliver personal budget training to help people think about how they want to control their money and their lives.

People First have also supported individuals with learning difficulties in applying for their free bus pass, as the service delivered by the local authority would have prevented them from being able to access this entitlement. Since this work the council has improved their processes to help people with learning difficulties.

A third area where they have been championing individual rights is in challenging care providers who were restricting the activities of those they were caring for in order to avoid risks of contracting swine flu.

Ian said “I think we have time to build relationships with people and see them in many different places they go in their life so build up trust.”

Alban Neve Deaf Association (ANDA)

ANDA's aims are around providing support for people with a hearing loss and providing a range of services that will help with empowerment and social inclusion, providing representation and advocacy services that will enable deaf people to challenge issues concerning equality and discrimination, and addressing issues equality of access to services in Bedfordshire, Luton and surrounding areas.

ANDA is the UK partner in EuroPol, an 8-nation European project whose main aim is to create teaching and learning materials to enable people to understand politics (with a small p) better. People will understand how to relate to traditional politics without fear or disgust, how their belonging to a community gives them both political rights and duties, how these rights and duties can be exercised and why they must be taken seriously. This in turn means that individuals are more able to make a difference in their communities and influence policy changes for permanent progress. Involving Deaf people in testing the teaching materials widens their accessibility to other minority groups.

This empowerment of individuals is closely related to the personalization agenda. By working with Deaf people on an individual basis, they become more able to engage in society in general, and have a say on the way services they receive are run.

2. The Voluntary and Community Sector needs support from the public sector

- a. Personalisation will create a retail market of services for individuals to choose from.
 - Clients can choose from the diversity of services available on a short term basis, and choose provider as they see best. **The provider market needs support to stabilize so that it is able to deal with sudden surges or drops in demand.**
 - While diversity of options is healthy, those which are more established or publicly funded may be more able to promote their services, leaving others who may be able to provide a better service unable to compete for clients. **The Voluntary and Community Sector needs support to level the playing field**
- b. Individuals making choices may need support to do so, particularly if they have lived with a disability for much of their life.
 - There may be lack of understanding of the implications of choices that are made, and individuals may be vulnerable to exploitation by organizations employing hard sell tactics. **There needs to be an established complaints and regulation system to protect against this.**
 - The additional advice and support that is implicated is a cost that the Voluntary and Community Sector will find it hard to absorb from within their current resources. Provision of individually tailored advice can be time consuming and therefore costly. **The public sector needs to be willing to fund these costs alongside service delivery costs.**

- Additionally, it would be a good idea for more content around disability and caring to be included in the national curriculum, so that people are equipped for the situations that they are likely to face later in life.

3. There needs to be more clarity about what personalized services is going to mean for individuals

The Norfolk Specialist Partnership commissioned some research earlier this year (attached), looking particularly at perceptions of service users about personalisation, in order to be able to give guidance to local organisations about the way forward. They found that despite efforts to provide information about personalisation to service users, it appears that many remain unclear and uneasy about what to expect. Concerns were expressed as to whether service users would be worse off under the new system because of, for example, reduced funding, which was cited amongst other difficulties. Having clear, up to date information was identified as a high priority. **Many organisations were waiting for clearer guidance from the statutory sector before approaching their service users.**



Supporting Information sheet

Request for input to COVER response to an Office of the Third Sector consultation: Innovation and personalized services

September 2009

Summary of consultation

Office of the Third Sector research

The Office of the Third Sector is gathering evidence about the contribution that the Third Sector can make to personalized services, particularly in terms of innovation. The two sectors they are looking at are Health and Social Care, and Crime and Re-offending. The four overarching questions are around how the Third Sector can:

- offer real choice to citizens;
- deliver personalized early interventions;
- overcome organizational barriers to personalization; and
- improve outcomes through service user participation

Full details about the consultation can be found in the following document:

 [The Role of Third Sector Innovation](#)

COVER Response

COVER is putting in a response to the consultation based on the evidence we gather from our members and partners. We will frame the response around the contributions received. Instead of asking each of the questions posed in the consultation (approximately 20), we are simply requesting our members and partners to consider whether they have an example to contribute to one of the four areas.

We are looking for examples of any of the following:

- a small VCS organization providing greater choice and flexibility to service users; or
- a positive example of a personalized early intervention in the VCS or
- a change in working that was required in a VCS organization in order to deliver a personalized service; or
- an example of how participation of service users resulted in an improved outcome.




It would be helpful if examples could roughly cover the following three areas:

- outline details of the situation and the service being described;
- any comments you have about the advantages that third sector organizations have in delivering personalized services; and
- any comments about difficulties faced

Contributions

Please send all contributions to our response to abigail.patience@cover-east.org by Monday 14th September 2009.

Resources

-  [Personalisation: A Rough Guide](#) (October 2008)
-  [Using Person-Centred Information for Commissioning](#) (June 2009)
-  [Changing Social Care: An Inclusive Approach](#) (April 2009)