

# COMMISSIONING – what it is... and isn't



It is a commonly held belief that commissioning means bidding for contracts to run public services. Actually, commissioning is much bigger and better than that. Put simply, it is an improved approach to evaluating, planning and delivering public services, with a couple of key objectives:

## **1. Finding out what local people need and designing services to match**

Commissioning is about putting an emphasis on what the local community's priorities are today, rather than just doing what has always been done. It means focusing on the outcomes that are important for people, and will make a difference to their lives.

In practice, this means going out to local people and finding out about their needs. What matters to them right now? What works, what doesn't and what would really make their lives better?

It also means speaking to the broadest range of people possible, so that when decisions are made about what services to provide and where, they represent the best interests of the whole of the community.

## **2. Finding the right organisations to deliver those services**

This is the part most people are familiar with – public service contracts going out to tender and a range of organisations bidding to run them. New contracts are appearing all the time, presenting a real opportunity for Third Sector organisations to run public services, boosting the great work that is already going on, and providing a means of diversifying income.

## Commissioning – why the Third Sector?

Our voluntary and community organisations are recognised as having a vital part to play in the commissioning process because they represent the community on the ground. They know what the priorities are, what the problems are and where the opportunities are.

This is important for both designing and running services – when you are tapped into the needs of the local community, you can do a good job of informing decisions, as well as delivering a really valuable service.

For your group, running a commissioned service can form part of a more sustainable approach to funding – a complementary mix of service delivery, trading income, corporate support and traditional fundraising.

If you would like to know more, contact Claire Milican, Sector Development Manager on **0121 711 3148** or [sectordevelopment@solihull-sustain.org.uk](mailto:sectordevelopment@solihull-sustain.org.uk)

## Is your organisation commission-ready?

Major changes are taking place right now in the way public services are being delivered to ensure the best possible long-term outcomes for the people of Solihull. Government policy is pushing for more Third Sector organisations to run public services, and Solihull Council and Care Trust are keen to encourage more local organisations to bid for their contracts. There has also never been a better time to inform the design of services, with the new Third Sector Network providing direct channels of communication between decision makers and voluntary and community groups.

**After all, who knows the community and what is needed in Solihull better?**

