Working with Public Service Commissioners

A quick guide for the arts and cultural sector
Arts and cultural organisations contribute immense value to places and communities.

They help people to engage physically, mentally and emotionally, to connect with new ideas and with each other, and often to find a voice through creative expression. They also have much to offer to our public services: commissioners of services increasingly see the need to engage with people and places holistically in order to address deep rooted problems.

I welcome this guide for the arts and cultural sector. It shares learning from five localities in England where the cultural sector has built relationships with commissioners, and secured funding to provide services for communities. In Birmingham, Derby, Manchester, Torbay and York, groups of arts and cultural organisations have worked collaboratively to increase their visibility and positioning, and are now being seen as partners by leaders in local authorities and health. Many have also strengthened their links with the wider voluntary sector, to mutual benefit.

For smaller organisations, engagement in public service commissioning is not without challenge. NCVO has been working with government departments and national bodies to influence change in commissioning practices. There is more ground to cover but growth in awareness nationally, and shift in practice locally, is encouraging.

Sir Stuart Etherington, Chief Executive
National Council for Voluntary Organisations
The commissioner perspective

Boxed sections of this report give the commissioners’ perspective, drawn from the Cultural Commissioning Programme’s work:

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About this guide

This report is for arts and cultural organisations which are interested in engaging with public service commissioners. However, commissioners, policy makers and others who wish to foster partnerships between public services and the cultural sector will also find it of use.

The report documents the learning from the Cultural Commissioning Programme’s (CCP) work with five ‘Cultural Commissioning Locality Projects’. During 2015/16 these were supported to strengthen their involvement with public service commissioners. CCP is grateful to them for the learning we are able to share as a result.

From the work in the five localities and elsewhere, CCP has also gained a perspective from commissioners, and drawn this together in boxed sections of this report.

To complement this report, CCP has produced ‘The Art of the Possible’, a quick guide for commissioners of health and wellbeing services on partnering with the arts and cultural sector. Funded by Arts Council England, the Cultural Commissioning Programme’s remit is to strengthen the commissioning of arts and culture, in order to deliver better outcomes for people and communities. The Programme has undertaken research, brought commissioners together with the arts and cultural sector, and provided practical support. This has contributed to an understanding of what is needed to strengthen relationships between cultural organisations and public service commissioners, particularly in the fields of mental health and wellbeing, older people, and place-based commissioning.

However, the public service landscape has shifted in recent years. Local authorities now describe themselves as commissioning councils, securing services from other agencies rather than directly delivering themselves. In a similar vein, Clinical Commissioning Groups have been set up by the NHS as commissioning bodies for local health services.

At the same time, joint working between commissioning bodies is increasing, along with moves towards place-based commissioning which recognises that people often face complex conditions and multiple challenges, and that joined up approaches are needed.

These changes are leading to discussions between commissioners, providers and others which are more strategic and more collaborative, based on shared understanding of challenges and priorities. At their heart is an appreciation that many stakeholders can, and should, contribute to ideas and that citizens should be involved in designing services they need for the future.

As a result, the way in which arts and cultural organisations need to work if they are to engage with public services has also changed, opening up opportunity to move from piecemeal projects to strategic engagement. Central to this is the need to connect with commissioners, to understand the landscape from their perspective, and to build relationships.

The work of the Cultural Commissioning Programme has shown that it can be easier for arts and cultural organisations to do this by working in collaboration with each other and with the wider voluntary sector. This enables them to become more visible to commissioners, to bring a greater critical mass to the table, and to strengthen their strategic positioning. This guide seeks to capture the journeys of five Cultural Commissioning Locality Projects, spread across England, which have done this.

Introduction

The arts and cultural sector has a long practice of partnering with public services: it uses creativity and skills to engage with people through imagination, expression and physicality. Many public services leaders know the value of this, and many have funded discreet arts projects to support health and wellbeing, strengthen communities and add to quality of life.

High level goals

Local authorities and CCGs aim for high level outcomes for their localities, as well as service specific outcomes. The goals below are a common feature of many local authority strategic plans. For arts and cultural organisations there is significant opportunity to illustrate how their work aligns with these wider ambitions.

- Delivering fairness and supporting democracy, where services focus on the whole place and citizens work together for a better future.
- Enabling residents to live full and varied lives, where quality of life is important and where people have choice.
- Building strong communities and protecting vulnerable people.
- Tackling social isolation and loneliness.

Other goals of importance for many commissioners

Arts and cultural organisations have strong contributions to make to many of these.

- Primary prevention – enabling people to stay healthy and happy, without the need for acute interventions.
- Secondary prevention – helping people to recover, and to regain and retain independence, after an episode or diagnosis.
- Supporting people across the life course – from early years to old age.
- Narrowing the health inequalities gap and improving life expectancy.
- Better mental health and wellbeing.
- Ageing well – enabling people to live better as well as live longer.
- Supporting people with dementia and delaying its onset.
- Tackling inactivity in adults, young people and early years.
- Enabling employment and volunteering.
- Enabling people to stay at home longer, and supporting carers.
- Empowering patient and public voice to be heard within local health and social care provision.
The Cultural Commissioning Locality Projects

The Cultural Commissioning Locality Projects were initiated in response to feedback to CCP’s four-day learning programme for arts and cultural organisations which was delivered across England from 2014 to 2015. Overwhelmingly, attenders on the learning programme found it valuable. However, many requested more help with building relationships with local commissioners.

Through the Locality Projects, CCP provided in-depth support to five groups of arts and cultural organisations, helping them develop knowledge, skills and capacity. The work was tracked in order to share their learning with others. The five groups, selected through an open application process which required them to show that they were willing to work collaboratively to increase their engagement in commissioning, are based in: Birmingham, Derby, Manchester, Torbay, York. They involve a diversity of participants, including individual artists, small arts organisations and some cultural venues or organisations of regional, national and international significance.
4.0

Keys to building effective engagement with commissioners

Summary of factors which helped the five groups of arts and cultural organisations build their engagement with commissioners:

- Working at scale by coming together as a consortium or a network of arts and cultural organisations. This helped organisations become more visible to public service leaders, and easier to contact. It also enabled them to offer a broader range of artforms, skills and approaches, and to share knowledge and understanding. In some areas, partnering with third-sector organisations further strengthened capacity and visibility.

  CCP has documented some of the ways used by cultural organisations to engage with commissioners, which includes working as a consortium as well as several other approaches: www.knowhownonprofit.org/funding/commissioning/cultural-commissioning/resources-developed-by-the-cultural-commissioning-programme/models-used-by-arts-and-cultural-organisations-to-engage-in-commissioning.

- Making good use of data on the locality and its communities, enabling the arts and cultural groups to be well-informed in discussions with commissioners (see box on p9).

- Looking at their locality through the ‘lens’ of the commissioners: by showing an understanding of the perspectives of commissioners, the groups found that commissioners became more receptive, and open to innovative and creative approaches.

- Assessing how their work related to local priorities and developing striking, yet informative, narratives of their contribution to people, community and place. These ‘Plans on a Page’ are here: www.knowhownonprofit.org/funding/commissioning/cultural-commissioning/resources-developed-by-the-cultural-commissioning-programme/cultural-commissioning-locality-projects.

- Taking part in market engagement events and partnership groups: these provide opportunities for networking with commissioners and influencing their approach to service design and provision (see box on p18).

- Identifying capacity to support tasks including research and mapping, relationship building, supporting the development of the arts and cultural consortia or networks.

“We have used the Locality Project to strengthen relationships between culture and Manchester’s CCGs and NHS Trusts. Conversations have started about how we can use culture to move interventions upstream, to improve quality of life and reduce the need for costly interventions later on. As a result, culture has become a major focus and enabled new commissioners to become involved.”

Zoe Williams, Culture Lead, Growth & Neighbourhoods, Manchester City Council.
Programme of work in the locality projects

Over 2015 and 2016, approximately eleven days of support and expertise was provided to each Project by CCP’s consultant. A similar programme was followed with each Project, although tweaked in response to local situations.

5.1 Inception Meetings

Held in each locality, these brought together the arts and cultural organisations involved to explore project scope and assess the current baseline.

Baseline factors included:

- Existing commissioning relationships, contracts, partnerships and strategic positioning.
- Current situation in the local cultural sector, such as delivery mechanisms and track record, skills and knowledge, capacity, strengths and weaknesses, and opportunities.

Using the baseline each Project:

- Drew up a list of key contacts within their local authorities, health bodies - including clinical commissioning groups (CCGs) and NHS trusts - and voluntary sector.
- Developed a plan for engaging with local commissioners including: putting a narrative to the work of the cultural sector to show how it aligned with local priorities; attending partnership meetings and leadership teams; making presentations; communications plans.

5.2 Desk Research

CCP’s consultant and group members reviewed local documents to understand the priorities for local authorities and health bodies.

Documents included:

- The Joint Strategic Needs Assessment
- Health and Wellbeing Board’s Strategy and other documents such Adult Social Care Outcomes Framework, Public Health Outcomes Framework
- Director of Public Health’s Annual Report
- Strategic plans of the local Clinical Commissioning Group
- Local Authority’s Market Position Statement.

See box on p9 for further information.
Sources of data on localities and communities

- **Joint Strategic Needs Assessment:** produced jointly by local authorities and CCGs, this identifies current and future health and wellbeing needs of the local population and informs commissioning priorities. Read York’s JSNA as an example: www.healthyork.org/

- **Health and Wellbeing Board’s Strategy:** contains priorities and plans of the board. This interactive map shows details for each of the boards in England, including their strategies, outcome frameworks for adult social care and for public health, and alignment between local authorities and CCG areas: www.local.gov.uk/our-support/our-improvement-offer/care-and-health-improvement/information-tools-and-resources

- **Director of Public Health’s annual reports:** outlines health statistics for the local authority area and how public health teams are tackling issues. Read this example from South Gloucestershire: www.southglos.gov.uk/health-and-social-care/staying-healthy/health-strategies/the-director-of-public-health-annual-reports/

- **CCG’s strategic plan:** medium-term plan which outlines local health challenges and strategies. This example is from South Derbyshire CCG: www.southernderbyshireccg.nhs.uk/publications/strategic-plan/

- **Market Position Statement:** outlines the outcomes the council wants to achieve, types of partners it wishes to work with, and how interested partners can make contact. Manchester City Council’s market position statement is an example: www.manchester.gov.uk/info/200095/tenders_and_contracts/6156/market_position_statement

Commissioning approaches

Commissioners recognise the importance of relationships – with users, provider organisations and other stakeholders. At a time of shrinking budgets and workforce, these can be difficult to sustain. Nevertheless, many emphasise relationship-based approaches, and the arts and cultural sector can help with these:

- **Place-based commissioning** – recognising the value of working with people and communities holistically, unfettered by organisational boundaries.

- **Integrated commissioning** where local authorities, health bodies and others work together to support people facing complex conditions and multiple challenges.

- **Valuing and working with community-based assets and strengths** – groups, networks, spaces and cultures - rather than simply focusing on problems or deficits.

- **Developing non-clinical interventions** - many regard the medical model as disabling, rather than enabling, and prefer to consider people and communities holistically.

- **Shifting care closer to the individual**, helping people remain at home and enabling self-care where possible.

- **Personalisation of services** – ensuring services are designed in response to individual need and that people have choice over provision.

- **Co-production of services in partnership** with users, carers, staff and providers. Some commissioners involve users in the end to end process of commissioning.

- **Demonstrating value for money** and how the approach adds social value to the community.

“With a new chief executive, York has been adopting a more progressive local area co-ordination, enabling greater reach into core budgets and different ways of working with a greater focus on co-production.”

Chris Bailey, Chair, York at Large
Commissioning arrangements

Commissioners share much in common in their arrangements, although there are local differences:

- Health and Wellbeing Boards oversee arrangements, bringing together leaders from the local health and care system to work together. They have a statutory duty to produce a joint strategic needs assessment and a joint health and wellbeing strategy for their local population.

- A joint commissioning board may sit under the Health and Wellbeing board – comprising local authority, CCGs and others. There may also be service specific boards. Joint commissioning across services and organisations involves agreement of the outcomes wanted, and alignment or pooling of budgets.

- Commissioning takes place at different levels – some services are commissioned for a whole area or city, others for smaller geographic areas or for areas covered by a single CCG. Some services may be commissioned at neighbourhood level, and others developed to address local differentials and inequalities.

- Commissioning generally aims to be strategic: informed by needs assessments and forecasts for the area as a whole, commissioners work with the provider market and make investment decisions to deliver agreed outcomes. Impact of service delivery is monitored and reviewed, so that the process is cyclical. However, commissioning practice can vary widely, and not all commissioning fits this model.

- Use of personal budgets is increasing, where individuals receive Direct Payments and can use this money to choose and purchase their own care and support.

- Some commissioners use payment by results, although this isn’t universal. Bodies such as the National Audit Office have identified problems with design and implementation of these schemes.

- Commissioners may use block contracts in which a set amount of money is provided for delivery of a pre-agreed number of services and outputs. Block contracts have been criticised since they are seen as limiting user choice.

- Some commissioners opt to use grant aid to ensure that small providers are not put off by complex tendering processes.
5.5 Feedback to commissioners

A briefing note was sent to leaders and commissioners to let them know of progress within the consortia and to outline next steps, helping to foster confidence and goodwill. Next steps included:

✓ Developing a short and easy to read narrative to show how the work of the arts and cultural group aligned with outcomes for commissioners and communities.

✓ Proposals for presentations and discussions with the local health and wellbeing board and other partnerships groups.

✓ Shared sessions involving the arts and cultural group and local commissioners to take discussions forwards.

5.6 Shared sessions with commissioners and arts and cultural organisations

Commissioners and cultural groups came together in each locality for an open and creative conversation about working together. Narratives developed by the groups provided a visual overview of how their work aligned with local public service priorities, and were used as an introduction and a discussion point for these shared sessions.

Shared sessions enabled opportunities to be explored, relationships to be built and specific actions agreed to take things forwards. In some cases, the session was embedded within a wider event or meeting.

5.7 Final report and review

CCP’s consultant produced a short final report on each project. She also facilitated a review and planning session, so that each group could revisit the baseline assessment and update its plans. Since then, all five groups of arts and cultural organisations have continued to work together and to develop this field of work.
Outcomes of the Locality Projects

Challenges were experienced by all of the groups over the course of the Projects, many of these common from one locality to another. These included:

✓ Being seen as professionals by other stakeholders, and ensuring that arts and culture was represented meaningfully in local strategic plans.
✓ Building meaningful relationships with public service leaders and commissioners which allowed the cultural sector to be seen as a trusted ‘go to’ partner.
✓ Developing structure and process to support collaboration amongst the cultural organisations, and developing skills and expertise of artists.
✓ Finding ways of evaluating cultural activities which were appropriate to intended outcomes, yet proportionate.
✓ Identifying capacity to bring cultural organisations together as a consortium, and to undertake brokerage with local commissioners.

Whilst these challenges continue, the five Projects have adopted a range of approaches to address them and achieved significant outcomes, described below.

6.1 Positioning and value of the cultural sector

The groups found that, by coming together and developing a shared voice, recognition of their role and of the value of cultural provision grew. Many decision makers and commissioners within local authorities, health and the wider voluntary sector had a better awareness of the presence of the cultural sector, what it could offer and how to connect with it.

This led to invitations to present to forums where commissioning priorities and plans are discussed, such as:

✓ Health and Wellbeing Boards
✓ Joint Prevention Boards
✓ Partnership boards for specific services, eg adult social care
✓ City wide leadership groups.

In addition, cultural plans have been written into a number of local strategic documents, such as:

✓ Health and wellbeing strategy
✓ Local authority strategy documents
✓ Health sector’s sustainability and transformation plans
✓ Prevention strategy as part of devolution plans
✓ Neighbourhood plans
✓ Area-wide wellbeing specifications.
Case Study

Torbay Locality Project

The Torbay Culture Board, which convenes the Torbay Arts and Culture Network, is now represented on the Joint Prevention Board, and reports regularly to the Health and Wellbeing Board. There are references to culture in key strategy documents for Torbay and in the Sustainability and Transformation plan – the planning document for health provision in the area.

This has helped secure health funds for four ‘test and learn’ arts and health projects which the Network is delivering with health colleagues. Collaboration through the Locality Project has been key in securing significant further funding, including from Arts Council England’s Great Place Scheme, the Health Foundation and Torbay Medical Research Unit.

The Arts and Culture Network is now looking to expand its commissioning engagement to other sectors beyond health.

However, they point to practical difficulties in partnering with the cultural sector:

- Not knowing who to talk to or how the sector is organised.
- Not knowing what the cultural offer is in their locality and how this aligns with their priorities. Whilst they may know some individual organisations, this doesn’t give them the full picture.
- Lack of sector involvement in market engagement events.
- Perception that the sector has not engaged with local politicians.
- Concern that the offer of organisations may not be sustainable and its impact has not been evidenced.

Commissioners often focus efforts on engaging with the wider voluntary sector - the cultural sector could strengthen its position by connecting with voluntary sector umbrella bodies. Methods used by commissioners include:

- Community asset mapping – commissioners are often surprised by the richness of activity and opportunity available.
- Engaging the voluntary sector in the Health and Wellbeing Board to include them in the development of policy and strategy, and to share information and ideas.
- Market engagement and networking events which encourage voluntary sector involvement.
- Actively support smaller providers to enter the market particularly where there are gaps in specialist services. Commissioners can be conscious that larger providers are not necessarily interested in lower value contracts.
- Specifying that a minimum percentage of a contract must be allocated by large providers to voluntary sector organisations in the form of grants.
- Providing funding for voluntary sector development bodies to support, grow and build capacity in the wider sector.
- Collaborating on development of bids for external funding – including lottery funds. Where cultural organisations are leading on accessing external sources of funding or are a joint partner in a bid, this can lead to co-commissioning arrangements with opportunity to work together to design specifications and procure providers.
- Social prescribing schemes where community navigators or co-ordinators link people with activities that improve health and wellbeing. Although not universal practice, good commissioning will fund provider organisations to ensure sustainability, quality and best practice.
- Encouraging small providers to demonstrate their social value – public service commissioners are required to consider how they can secure wider social, economic and environmental benefits.
New relationships and partnerships

Growing understanding within the consortia of what their areas looked like from the viewpoint of commissioners has helped open doors with many leaders and commissioners in local authorities and CCGs. Some relationships have led to partnership work whilst others are looking to future potential. Some, although not all, have led to funding – public services are at a time of financial pressure and are increasingly urged to ‘work differently’, whilst budgets are being cut.

Partners include:
✓ Local authorities: public health, adult social care, children’s services, communities and neighbourhoods, age friendly teams, strategic management teams, transformation programmes.
✓ Health sector: CCGs, NHS trusts, integrated care organisations (bringing together health and social care).
✓ Others: universities, housing associations, voluntary sector umbrella organisations, new stakeholders who have become alert to the opportunity.

Examples of partnership:
✓ Arts programmes commissioned or grant aided by public services.
✓ Pilot funding for culture on prescription.
✓ Support for scoping needs of vulnerable people and developing arts programmes around these, or signposting to arts opportunities.
✓ Collaboration on bidding to other sources of funding such as health sector, arts sector, lottery funds, social impact bonds.
✓ Involvement in micro-commissioning focused on small population groups and personalised commissioning.
✓ Using cultural practitioners to facilitate consultations with patients and the public, enabling people to find a voice through creative media.
✓ Development of cultural hubs located in libraries, drawing in a range of partners.
✓ Student placements within arts organisations from health bodies.

“Relationships are key – we have approached this as being about a creative partner with skills and abilities and a commitment to working for better outcomes for communities in the city. We have not approached this as a transactional exercise and understand the importance of investment in relationships, including with each other. We believe in a canvas of mutual relationships.”

Geoff Sweeney, Development Director, Birmingham Royal Ballet.

Case Study
Manchester Locality Project

Through positioning culture within planning at an early stage, the Locality Project has fed into three strands of work:
• Age Friendly Manchester
• New health strategies which are being developed by the Council and CCGs as part of devolution: Manchester’s Locality Health Plan and its Wellbeing Service specification both reference arts and culture.
• Greater Manchester Combined Authority Great Place Scheme, ‘Live Well, Make Art’.

At a local level, the City Council and CCG are funding place-based projects which will have a cultural element. In North Manchester, the CCG and City Council are looking at a grant scheme including grants for cultural activities.

Cultural organisations have developed a Cultural Ambitions document which includes aims to use culture for prevention and wellbeing.
6.3 Stronger collaboration amongst cultural organisations

Several groups found that becoming a Cultural Commissioning Locality Project helped them better organise as a sector. Sharing the workload, articulating their offer and developing a narrative for their work provided a focus for the groups and for discussions with partners. Some consortia have given themselves a name and provided commissioners with a single contact point, increasing recognition and assisting communications.

Formality of groups has varied – in some localities, they are networks open to a wide range of cultural organisations and individual artists. In others, membership is more clearly defined. Some are now looking at governance and structure to ensure clarity of role, decision-making processes, accountability and communications.

In some localities, requests from commissioners for provision to be put in place quickly to address a need meant that group members needed to act together swiftly and flexibly in order to respond.

In other localities, the issue of artists’ skills development has been important: some group members have responded to this by collaborating with artists from other group members in order to provide exposure to new situations and support learning.

All arts and cultural organisations involved have been alert to the importance of delivering high quality work. This Paul Hamlyn Foundation publication provides a helpful perspective of conditions needed to achieve quality in participatory arts, including within a commissioning setting: www.phf.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/ArtWorks-Insights-in-facilitating-quality.pdf

“...This is not for the faint-hearted – but it also seems like exactly where we need to be.”

Kate Farmery, Executive Director, Torbay Culture Board.

Case Study

Birmingham Locality Project

Arts and cultural organisations involved in the Locality Project have improved their understanding of commissioning and procurement, and what they need to do to win the trust and buy-in of commissioners.

The group has named itself ‘One Voice’ and is drafting a partnership agreement for itself. Its offer includes participatory arts activities which impact on outcomes linked to adult social care and mental health, and on long-term conditions such as dementia and Parkinsons’ Disease.

Senior staff changes at the city council mean that much of the relationship building which has taken place needs to be repeated. However, good relationships with the Cross-City CCG and with the Director of Public Health are being maintained.
6.4 Confidence in the evidence base

Several of the Projects gained confidence in their ability to gather evidence which was relevant to outcomes, finding that commissioners were often receptive to the kinds of evidence which the cultural sector holds. In many cases, cultural organisations are able to show the benefits of participation in cultural activities on ‘soft’ outcomes, such as increase in sense of purpose, dignity and self-esteem, or in physical confidence and independence.

In some cases, the Projects found that commissioners were willing to work with them on ways of measuring outcomes. Some also found that commissioners were receptive to existing evidence – the body of evidence collated in the Inquiry Report of the All Party Parliamentary Group on Arts, Health and Wellbeing, 2017, provides a valuable resource: www.artshealthandwellbeing.org.uk/appg-inquiry/

Several Projects were interested in developing a cost-benefit analysis of their work, to help influence commissioners, although others felt that encouraging commissioners to think about interventions ‘further upstream’ which help people to be happy and healthy are more productive than conversations which compare costs of interventions at an acute stage.

Case Study

Derby Locality Project

The Arts and Health group in Derby has used its time as a Locality Project to take a broader view of the structure and context that culture operates within, in the city. It has held discussions with a wide group of stakeholders, establishing an appetite for shared initiatives and fund-raising. This has led to a partnership with the Council’s Adult Social Care team to develop referral pathways to arts activities for isolated older people, and to a successful bid to Arts Council England’s ‘Celebrating Ageing’ fund.

On a wider front, work is underway with Derby University to develop a Cultural Strategy which will look at how culture can feed into other local priorities, and a Culture Board to sit alongside four other outcomes boards for the city, enabling lateral influence and embedding of culture within their delivery plans.

Evidence of impact of arts on health has been gathered through collating case studies and drawing on national research to back these up. This has helped build confidence and credibility amongst partners.

How commissioners measure performance

A range of measures are used as there isn’t a single standard. Some commissioners co-produce measurement frameworks with providers and users. Some are aware of the challenges of measuring outcomes such as impact on social isolation, and moderate their requirements accordingly. Here are some common frameworks:

- Public Health Outcomes Framework, plus a balanced scorecard for local measures
- Mental Health Outcomes Star
- Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale
- Five Ways to Wellbeing – as a planning and measurement framework
- Collaboration with academic organisations to design and implement outcome measures
- Evidence of return on investment – although many commissioners recognise the challenge which provider organisations may face in showing this over a short time period.
Identifying capacity

“The honest broker role works very well – the Arts and Health Group feels it has given direction, made connections and is moving the agenda forward. There is a high level of trust in this role - from both arts organisations and commissioners.”

Mike Brown, Arts Manager, Derby City Council

Bringing cultural organisations together as a consortium takes time and expertise. Building and maintaining relationships also requires ongoing resource – the Projects have experienced ‘churn’ amongst commissioners and the ground often has to be covered again with new people. Financial pressures and policy changes mean that mapping work needs refreshing from time to time.

The Locality Projects have drawn in capacity and skills from sources such as local authority arts development officers, local cultural development trusts, voluntary bodies and Arts Council National Portfolio organisations. All groups had a trusted and respected local ‘driver’ acting as a convenor and representing the work of the whole team where necessary. NCVO provides useful guidance on collaborative working: www.knowhownonprofit.org/organisation/collaboration/what_is_collaboration and on how to collaborate www.knowhownonprofit.org/how-to/how-to-collaborate.

6.5 Capacity going forwards remains a concern, and CCP has fed this concern back to Arts Council England. The evaluation report on CCP recommends that:

Arts Council England should consider ways in which it can, with partners, support the development of local consortia in order to facilitate links with local commissioners and strengthen the position of the sector in bidding for commissioning opportunities.

Case Study

York Locality Project

The Council’s Public Health and Adult Social Care Services have funded the Locality Project to deliver a pilot Cultural and Wellbeing Service, and have committed funding for the following two years. The pilot has four components:

• Signposting to arts provision through existing networks and services
• Direct delivery of arts provision
• Evaluation and the development of a shared approach based on City of York indicators
• Growing capacity, including brokerage, working with York Council for Voluntary Services, building an associate network of artists, making funding applications.

Cultural wellbeing forms part of strategic thinking by the Council and partners: it is part of the Health and Wellbeing Strategy and included in Cultural Strategy being produced by the Cultural Leaders’ Group, alongside Economy and Place.

The Council is exploring how it can become an asset-based city and the term ‘cultural wellbeing’ is seen as supporting York’s newly designated status as the UK’s first City of Human Rights.
Key learning points for the arts and cultural sector

“The Cultural Commissioning Locality Projects are helping to create space for dialogue between arts and cultural organisations and public service commissioners. This is serving to raise the understanding of commissioners on the value of and role for arts and cultural organisations in meeting outcomes as well as providing arts and cultural organisations with a clearer route into commissioning processes. The projects have also helped to bring together arts and cultural sector organisations, thus establishing a degree of infrastructure that is enabling the sector to present a coherent voice and point of contact for commissioners.”


This is a summary of key learning points from the five Cultural Commissioning Locality Projects:

- Relationships are key – mutuality is at the heart of this, rather than one partner trying to gain at another’s expense.
- See yourself through commissioners’ eyes and understand that their concerns focus on how people and communities will benefit. Using the right terminology helps but it’s also important to bring the creativity and joy of the arts to discussions as well.
- Think strategically and raise your sights about what you can achieve. The cultural sector is a powerful force if it works together to engage with other sectors. Likewise, commissioners know they cannot work alone, and many are excited by innovative approaches of the cultural sector.
- Articulate your offer through putting a narrative to it which shows how your work contributes to the outcomes commissioners are looking for. Visual expression with brief text can sometimes be more powerful than too many words.
- Present as a professional body – this gives credibility and confidence in your ability to deliver.
- Connect with commissioners through attending market engagement events, partnership boards and user groups. Spend time listening and asking questions to build your understanding of stakeholder values and needs, as well as talking about what you can offer.

Market engagement events and local partnership groups

Local authorities usually announce their market engagement events through their online procurement portal and many also have provider forums. Register with the portal to stay informed.

- Voluntary Service Councils often work with local authorities to provide a conduit to voluntary organisations in their areas and can also be a source of information on routes to engagement.
- Local authorities often facilitate user forums as a way of engaging with service users, such as older people’s forums and mental health forums, to consult on needs and service provision.
- CCGs tend to have less formalised structures for market engagement, so a direct approach may be best.
Get political buy-in: this helps to elevate status, and will also help commissioners in their management of risk.

Developing relationships on your own is challenging, whereas working collaboratively helps with new ideas, shared learning and common purpose. It helps to raise profile and makes the local cultural sector easier for potential partners to contact, and can lead to work of a wider scale.

Maintain a clear focus on quality in your artistic work. Work of poor quality will affect the experience of all of those involved. High quality work requires ongoing communication across all stakeholders to ensure that the wider context supports a focus on quality.

There are implications for the arts and cultural sector in terms of skills set and approach. Some commissioning is for local neighbourhoods, some is for specialist settings or demographies, whilst some requires evidence of capacity to deliver at scale. Assessing whether you and any partners have the appropriate skills and can work to the scale needed is important.

There may be implications for organisational business models, requiring changes to budgeting and cash flow forecasts, staff roles and other resources. Consider whether you need to budget on the basis of full-cost recovery. Consider also the alignment between this type of work and your governing documents and organisational mission.

Commissioners often support pilot projects – in which case encourage them to engage with you on design, delivery and learning, so that you can jointly consider what happens next.

Engaging in commissioning requires capacity. Whilst work can be shared, it helps to have someone who understands both the cultural and the commissioning agenda, who can champion the cultural sector, act as a broker, and help turn vision and ambition into realistic plans. Some commissioning bodies have funded their local voluntary sectors to help build their capacity in this way.

Questions to help in deciding whether to bid for a contract

There are many potential ways for cultural organisations and commissioners to work together - formal tendering of a contract is just one of these. Depending on the nature of the tender, you may consider tendering alone, with other cultural colleagues or with other types of providers. Some questions to consider:

What’s the nature of the relationship between your organisation and the commissioner?

Is there a strategic fit with your organisational purpose and the aims outlined in tender documentation?

What’s the likelihood of success? Bidding takes time and resource, so focussing on those which you have a reasonable chance of securing makes sense.

Are there others you can partner with to increase knowledge, skills and capacity?

Do you have capacity to deliver a quality service – in managerial aspects as well as in delivery?

Will the contract allow full cost recovery, ensuring you recover all of the cost of delivering a service or project?

Does the contract involve capital or start-up costs? How would these be funded?

How long would the work last? Does this have a knock-on effect for your organisation?

What are the business risks and reputational risks if it goes wrong?
Organisations involved in the Locality Projects

Birmingham Locality Project

Cultural Organisations:
Craftspace
Geese Theatre
Women & Theatre
Reel Access
Ex Cathedra
Birmingham Royal Ballet
Town Hall
Symphony Hall

Commissioners and partners:
Parveen Mercer,
Head of Public Health Commissioning
Carol Herrity,
Associate Director of Partnerships, Birmingham Cross City CCG
Sam German,
Programme Director Healthy Villages, NHS Community Trust
Karen Creavin,
Head of Healthy Lifestyles, Birmingham Wellbeing Services
Mark Rogers,
Chief Executive, Birmingham City Council and Chair of Sustainable Transformation Partnership
Piali Dasgupta,
Assistant Chief Executive, Birmingham City Council
Angela Probert,
Strategic Director for Change and Corporate Services, Birmingham City Council
Alan Lotinga,
Services Director for Health and Wellbeing, Chair of Adult Safeguarding Board and Birmingham Health & Wellbeing Board
Patricia Merrick,
Assistant Director – Universal Prevention and Early Intervention, Commissioning Centre for Excellence, Birmingham City Council
Commissioners and partners:

Robyn Dewis,
Acting Director of Public Health, Derby City Council

Jenny Swatton,
Director of Joint Commissioning, NHS South Derbyshire CCG

Kirsty Everson,
Acting Director of Commissioning, Adults, Health and Housing, Derby City Council

Director of Public Health,
Derby City Council

Assistant Director of Public Health,
Derby City Council

Public Health Community Engagement Manager,
Derby City Council

Senior Public Health Manager,
Derby City Council

Chief Officer Group,
Derby City Council

Cabinet Member for Communities and City Centre Regeneration,
Derby City Council

Acting Strategic Director of Adults,
Health and Housing, Derby City Council

Service Director,
Integrated and Direct Services – Adults, Derby City Council

Director of Adult Social Care Services,
Derby City Council

Director of Commissioning for Children’s Services,
Derby City Council

Head of Service,
Mental Health and Local Area Coordination, Derby City Council

Head of Community Support,
Adult Social Care, Derby City Council

Strategic Commissioning Manager Mental Health,
Derby City Council

Strategic Commissioning Manager Dementia,
Derby City Council

Shared Lives Manager,
Adult Social Care Services, Derby City Council

Domestic and Sexual Violence Advocate,
Derby City Council

Director of Joint Commissioning,
Southern Derbyshire CCG

Commissioning Manager,
Personal Health Budgets, Southern Derbyshire CCG

Executive Housing Services Manager,
Metropolitan Housing Association

Executive Director of Care and Support,
Metropolitan Housing Association

Head of Neighbourhood Investment,
Metropolitan Housing Association

Dean of College of Health and Social Care,
University of Derby

Professor of Public Health,
University of Derby

Research & Development Lead,
College of Health & Social Care Research Centre, University of Derby

Team Leader,
Dementia Support Services, Making Space

Cultural Organisations - Arts in Health Derby comprising:

Sinfonia Viva
Hubbus Inclusive Theatre Company
Derby Theatre
Déda
Air
Opus Music CIC
Artcore
Quad

Derby City Council
Arts Manager
Manchester Locality Project

Cultural Organisations:
- Manchester Art Gallery
- Manchester Camerata
- People’s History Museum
- Royal Exchange Theatre
- Salford Museum and Art Gallery
- Small Things
- Start in Salford
- Whitworth Art Gallery
- Manchester Museum
- Age Friendly Manchester – culture offer initiative
- Manchester City Council – Cultural Strategy

Commissioners and partners:
- Nathan Atkinson – Interim Head of Commissioning, Manchester City Council
- Dr Ivan Bennett - Clinical Director, Central Manchester CCG
- Sara Radcliffe, Director of Integrated Care Strategy, Manchester Royal Infirmary
- Mags Bradbury, Central Manchester Foundation Trust
- Claire Cowell, Age-friendly Manchester, Manchester City Council
- Leigh Latham, Central Manchester Clinical Commissioning Group
- Graham Mellors, Mental Health and Social Care Trust
- Elaine Ridings, One Team Commissioning Team

Citywide Leadership Group:
- Lorraine Butcher, Chair and Integrated Director, CCGs and Manchester City Council
- Deborah Lyon, Head of Service Transformation - Community and Social Care, Pennine Acute Hospitals Trust
- Helen Speed, Programme Director, North Manchester CCG
- Joanne Downs, Head of Finance, Living Longer Living Better / CCG Finance Lead, North Manchester CCG
- Emma Gilbey, Programme Manager for Integrating Care, Manchester Royal Infirmary
- Tony Ullman, Head of Commissioning and Quality, Central Manchester CCG
- Matt Graham, Director of Strategy, University Hospital South Manchester
- Peta Stross, Head of Integration, University Hospital South Manchester
- Claudette Elliott, Deputy Chief Officer, South Manchester CCG
- John Harrop, Director of Strategy, Transformation and Performance, Manchester Mental Health & Social Care Trust
- Sam Bradbury, Deputy Director, City Wide CCG
- Nick Gomm, Head of Corporate Services, City Wide CCG
- Joanne Royle, Strategic Lead for Health Integration, Manchester City Council
- Nicky Parker, Head of Business Delivery, Manchester City Council
- Rachel Rosewell, Head of Finance, Children & Families, Manchester City Council / Head of Finance, Devo Manc
- Karen Riley, Head of Group Finance (PSR), Manchester City Council
- Paul McGarry, Strategic Lead, Age Friendly Manchester, Manchester City Council
- Dr Tracey Vell, Chief Executive, Manchester Local Medical Committee / Chair, Greater Manchester Local Medical Committees
- Andrew Southworth, Living Longer Living Better Programme Manager, hosted by Manchester City Council
Commissioners and partners:

**Caroline Dimond,**
Director of Public Health, Torbay Council

**Gerry Cadogan,**
Public Health Principal, Torbay Council

**Fran Mason,**
Senior Manager, Pioneer and Joined Up, Southern Devon and Torbay Clinical Commissioning Group

**Caroline Taylor,**
Director of Adult Social Care, Torbay Council

**Gail Roberts,**
Principal Commissioner and Projects Director, Children’s Services, Torbay Council

**Simon Sherbersky,**
Lead Officer, Torbay Community Development Trust

**Paul Hurrell,**
Head of Innovation & Quality Improvement & Chair of South Devon and Torbay Innovation Panel, South Devon and Torbay Clinical Commissioning Group

**Dr Rob Dyer,**
Medical Director, Torbay and South Devon Foundation Trust

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**York Locality Project**

**Cultural Organisations - York at Large (city’s cultural partnership) comprising:**

- National Centre for Early Music
- Converge, York St John University
- Accessible Arts & Media
- Explore York Libraries and Archives
- Pilot Theatre
- York Museums Trust
- York Theatre Royal
- Chair, York at Large

**Commissioners and partners:**

**Sally Burns,**
Director of Communities and Neighbourhoods, City of York Council

**Michael Melvin,**
Assistant Director, Adult Social Care, City of York Council

**Dr Mark Hayes,**
Chief Clinical Officer, Vale of York CCG

**Janet Probert,**
Interim Director of Public Health, City of York Council

**Julie Hotchkiss,**
Interim Deputy Director of Public Health, City of York Council

**Marion Gibbon,**
Interim Deputy Director of Public Health, City of York Council
Sources of information and support

Further information, resources and case studies are available here:

National Council for Voluntary Organisations Cultural Commissioning Programme:
www.ncvo.org.uk/practical-support/information/public-services/cultural-commissioning-programme

The Art of the Possible – quick guide to commissioning arts and cultural providers for better health and wellbeing:

Opportunities for Alignment: provides an overview of challenges and opportunities for strengthening use of arts and cultural organisations to deliver public service outcomes:

Evaluation of the Cultural Commissioning Programme:

The Art of Commissioning: documents learning from CCP’s two commissioning partner pilots, Kent County Council and NHS Gloucestershire CCG:

Cultural commissioning case studies:
www.knowhownonprofit.org/funding/commissioning/cultural-commissioning/resources-developed-by-the-cultural-commissioning-programme/case-studies

Cultural commissioning resources:
www.knowhownonprofit.org/funding/commissioning/cultural-commissioning
Video on cultural commissioning:
www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kc0nM3ZMXVY

Models used by cultural organisations to engage in commissioning:

Commissioning and procurement resources – general:
www.knowhownonprofit.org/funding/commissioning

Public services pages:
www.ncvo.org.uk/policy-and-research/public-services

Who’s who in health and social care in the English regions:
www.regionalvoices.org/whoswho

National Alliance for Arts, Health & Wellbeing:

National Alliance for Museums, Health & Wellbeing:
www.museumsandwellbeingalliance.wordpress.com/

Libraries Taskforce:
www.gov.uk/government/groups/libraries-taskforce

All Party Parliamentary Group on Arts, Health & Wellbeing, “Creative Health: The Arts for Health & Wellbeing”:
www.artshealthandwellbeing.org.uk/appg-inquiry/

Arts and Cultural Commissioning Toolkit, produced by Royal Opera House Bridge, Artswork and Kent County Council:
www.artscommisioningtoolkit.com/

ArtWorks: Developing practice in participatory arts settings, Rachel Blanche for the Paul Hamlyn Foundation:
The Cultural Commissioning Programme (CCP) works with the arts and cultural sector, commissioners and policy makers to strengthen commissioning of arts and culture, and deliver better outcomes for people and communities. Phase 1 of the programme (2013 – 16) was delivered by NCVO in partnership with NPC and NEF. Phase 2 (2016 – 17), delivered by NCVO, shares the learning which has been developed, to enable other organisations to provide support, expertise and advocacy for this field of work. CCP is funded by Arts Council England.

NCVO champions the voluntary sector and volunteering. Inspired and empowered by our 12,500 members, we connect, represent and support voluntary organisations, from the smallest community groups to the largest charities.

• We connect organisations with the people, partners and resources they need to make the biggest difference.

• We represent the voluntary sector and volunteering to government - using the best research, we demonstrate their true value and help influence policy-makers.

• We support voluntary organisations by generating and identifying the best knowledge and expertise.
Green Candle Dance Co: Older Men Moving Project.  Photo: Green Candle Dance Co

Plymouth City Council Arts & Heritage Service: ‘Arts & Minds’, commissioned by Plymouth Adult Social Care

Walnut Tree GP Practice, Gloucestershire