



SOCIAL CARE

Capacity Building in the Care Sector - Procurement Workshops

Summary

A national Supporting People programme was recently introduced to help commissioning authorities cut costs and improve quality in the procurement of housing-related care services.

The East Midlands Centre of Excellence, in partnership with local Supporting People Teams and Business Link Nottinghamshire co-ordinated the delivery of a tailored programme of training and business support in response to the national programme.

The training programme was specifically designed to build the capacity of local providers and was targeted at existing suppliers of Supporting People services and suppliers operating in similar social care markets. This will ensure that all suppliers are equipped to engage more effectively in forthcoming procurement opportunities.

Quote

"The East Midlands Centre of Excellence is pleased to have sponsored the Supporting People Workshops. Bringing together providers, carers and local authorities helped in the examination of efficiency opportunities in the Supporting People agenda."

Chris Allison,
Regional Director,
East Midlands Centre of Excellence

Improvement through efficiency



East Midlands

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Project background

Social Care Commissioning is a huge market within the public sector with approximately £170m spent annually in the East Midlands alone.

Procurement in this field has historically been very fragmented and a clear and cohesive approach to purchasing is needed if the aims of the Government Efficiency Review are to be realised in this sector. To enable this, there is a need to engage more effectively with the market place and to explore more innovative ways of working if significant year-on-year savings are to be delivered without compromising quality.

Objectives

The Supporting People training programme is designed to build the capacity of local service providers and to help 'level the playing field' and ensure smaller suppliers are equipped to engage effectively in forthcoming procurement opportunities.

The key objectives of the programme are to:

- Assist Supporting People Teams in the delivery of their National Procurement Strategy outcomes and Efficiency Review targets
- Promote strategies to address the national agenda concerning social care
- Examine innovative ways of providing services to vulnerable people by engaging key stakeholders and suppliers
- Connect Supporting People Teams across the East Midlands through the sharing of best practice and provide a platform to exchange information and encourage collaboration
- Enable SMEs, particularly existing suppliers, to compete with organisations experienced in formal procurement with the public sector
- Provide new opportunities for SMEs within the East Midlands, securing the opportunity to retain the diversity and value offered by local organisations
- Aid local organisations in the preparation and presentation of their bids.

Benefits achieved

Over 100 Social Care providers from Lincolnshire, Northamptonshire and Nottinghamshire have already completed the training programme. Derbyshire Providers are scheduled to receive the training in late 2006.

Historically, social care providers have not gone through a competitive tendering process for the provision of care services, and consequently the majority of providers had no awareness of procurement processes and the knowledge required to submit successful tenders.

The training programme enabled:

- 92% of delegates to have an understanding of the procurement and tendering process
- 84% of delegates to feel knowledgeable enough to complete a tender.

Critical success factors and lessons learned

It was essential to maximise the input from the Supporting People teams themselves to localise the content of the training being delivered, in order to make it completely relevant to the delegates. The Supporting People teams will be responsible for the services being offered and the people they are servicing, therefore it was imperative that they communicate their exact requirements to the current and potential service providers.

As procurement procedures were new to a number of providers it was essential that representatives from the commissioning authorities were there to personally inform on the timetable for tendering opportunities, answer questions and alleviate concerns. This worked extremely well, particularly in Nottinghamshire, where Nottingham City and Nottinghamshire County Supporting People teams worked in partnership to deliver their workshops to providers, some of whom offer services to both teams.

Risks

As some of the companies attending will be competing against each other in a tendering process, there was a risk that the levels of interaction, needed to make the workshops a success, might not happen. This risk was minimised by holding the training in advance of any opportunities being advertised. The training also offered information, where appropriate, on opportunities for collaborative working and consortium bids.

Transferability

The training programme was of generic content, and can be tailored to support specialist content, such as the Supporting People Programme. This ensures transferability across numerous projects and workstreams.

Contact

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