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Successful Local Commissioning: Principles and Case Studies

A paper by the Business Services Association

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Foreword by Mark Fox, BSA Chief Executive



As the Chief Executive of the Business Services Association, I am pleased to present this paper, "Successful Local Commissioning: Principles and Case Studies." At the heart of this work lies the transformative agenda of localisation and devolution, a movement that is gaining momentum under the current Government. The commitment to reflect the needs and aspirations of local communities through devolution marks a new era of innovation and efficiency in local service provision.

The movement towards integrated settlements and the embrace of longer-term budgets represent a significant shift in the landscape of local commissioning. These policies, if harnessed effectively, have the power to improve the impact of public expenditure for individuals and communities throughout the country. It is within this context that this paper sets out the path forward, guided by a focus on outcomes that tangibly enhance people's lives.

We find ourselves at a juncture where all stakeholders, especially those who work tirelessly delivering services on the frontlines, must demonstrate a heightened commitment to improving outcomes. This involves a strategic emphasis on collaboration, foresight, and investment in preventative measures, all of which are crucial to cultivating what is termed Community Wealth. This paper therefore looks at what it means to deploy resources with an emphasis on sustainability and long-term prosperity.

The barriers posed by conventional procurement practices are significant, yet not insurmountable. A new model is emerging, one that champions adaptability and innovation at both local and national levels. By setting out six key principles for success in local commissioning, this paper offers a blueprint that prioritises community-centric strategies, outcome-based frameworks, and genuine partnerships.

Our focus on diversity within the market, appropriate scaling, and the nurturing of long-term perspectives sets the stage for a more equitable and effective commissioning landscape. By embracing a portfolio approach that incorporates a variety of contract types, local commissioners can enable both direct engagement with SMEs and the fostering of fair supply chains.

This paper introduces the 'West Yorkshire Model' alongside other powerful case studies of Community Wealth Building. These examples may act as inspiration for those who seek to replicate and scale these models across their own localities.

I commend the paper's authors for their analysis and I invite readers to engage with the principles and practices outlined here.



Mark Fox,
Chief Executive
BSA – The Business Services Association

Background – The BSA

Who We Are:

The Business Services Association (BSA) is a policy and research organisation. We represent all those who are interested in delivering efficient, flexible, and cost-effective service and infrastructure projects across the private and public sectors. We are based in the United Kingdom and hold meetings and events throughout the country.

Our members are key providers of service and infrastructure projects to the private and public sectors. Members include large and small businesses, charities, and social enterprises. The work of BSA members improves the lives of tens of millions every day across every region of the country; from building and maintaining our roads, energy supply, and digital ecosystem, to feeding school children and keeping our hospitals clean and safe.

What We Do:

We provide a forum for service providers to come together to discuss issues of common interest. We also have a wide-ranging policy programme which can be broken down into three interconnected core themes: inform, advocate, and engage.

How We Do It:

Inform
We ensure that our members are kept up to date with government policy and wider market trends, whilst also keeping government informed on the issues affecting the sector. This includes producing daily, weekly, and monthly political and media monitoring reports for members; conducting our monthly Economic Tracker survey and sharing the insights with relevant stakeholders across central, devolved, and local government; and arranging briefing sessions and meetings with officials on pertinent policy areas.

Advocate
We champion the good work the sector does by collating case studies and producing reports that highlight the sector's contributions to the UK economy. We also work collaboratively and constructively with policy makers on key policy areas for the sector such as procurement reform.

Engage
We arrange regular engagement opportunities to promote positive relationships between the sector and key stakeholders. This ranges from holding roundtables with government ministers and prominent members of the opposition, to arranging large summits that bring together over 100 members and stakeholders to discuss a specific theme. Recent examples include summits on Digital Skills and the transition to Net Zero.

Why We Do It:

Our sector lies at the very heart of the UK economy. Service and infrastructure providers are key innovators and growth facilitators, spearheading our transition to a green and digital economy, and operating throughout both the public and private sectors. The sector also invests in providing high-quality administrative services, facilities management, infrastructure, and IT so other businesses can do what they do best.

It is therefore crucial that the sector's voice is heard and its good work recognised.

Successful Local Commissioning: Principles and Case Studies

Key Points

- The localisation and devolution of services is accelerating under the Government, with the aim of making sure they reflect the needs and wishes of local communities.

- This is a worthy aim in itself, but devolution to Strategic Authorities is also being accompanied by two other policies, which have the potential to transform local service provision: the development of integrated settlements, which is a more effective way to spend money and moves to longer-term budgets, which enable forward planning and improved outcomes for every pound spent.

- These developments, along with other recent trends, enable - and indeed require - a laser-like focus on outcomes when making local commissioning decisions. It is therefore incumbent on all stakeholders – including delivery partners on the ground - to show how outcomes, including building Community Wealth, can be improved for every pound spent. This will be achieved in particular through more joined-up working, collaboration, planning ahead, and spending on prevention.

- However, traditional approaches to procurement can put several barriers in the way of successful outcomes. Increasingly, local and devolved commissioning authorities have, like their national counterparts, recognised the importance of moving away from these traditional approaches.

- Six key principles for success in local commissioning stand out in our discussions:

    1. Setting a clear overall strategy, based on putting communities first.
    2. Outcome-based commissioning.
    3. Genuine partnership, based on good relationships and on goals which are both clear and clearly expressed, with early supplier engagement, transparency on outcomes and equitable transfer of risk.
    4. Encouraging a diverse market, including businesses and charities of all sizes.
    5. Getting the right balance on scale.
    6. Encouraging long-term thinking, for example through pipelines of work, which is especially the case when it comes to Community Wealth Building, because building wealth in communities takes planning and time.

- Long-term thinking and behaviour can be encouraged through the commissioning process in many ways. These include: ensuring the length of contracts themselves are sufficient; setting out a clear pipeline of work; embedding a single procurement strategy across an organisation; and adopting a programmatic approach to project procurement and delivery.

- A portfolio approach, with contracts of different size, duration and character, will enable both direct commissioning with SMEs and the development of equitable supply chains.

- This note looks at a ‘West Yorkshire Model’ for achieving Community Wealth and social value along these lines, as well as other case studies.

Introduction

The BSA – Business Services Association – brings together large and small businesses, professional services firms, charities, and social enterprises delivering service and infrastructure projects across the private and public sectors. The work of BSA members improves the lives of tens of millions every day across every region of the country - from building and maintaining our roads, energy supply, and digital ecosystem, to feeding school children and keeping our hospitals clean and safe.

The BSA has organised several discussions with local authorities on best practice in local commissioning, partnering with members and third parties in doing so, often with a particular focus on social value or Community Wealth Building[2].

It has also organised ongoing discussions with local government representative organisations, regularly meets Strategic Authorities, and has a series of workstreams looking at particular service areas, from construction and infrastructure to ICT to employment support.

Several important themes have emerged, and this note seeks to capture some of them, with particular reference to the outcomes local authorities are looking to achieve in general, and the objective of maximising value – including social value and Community Wealth Building - in particular.

Local Commissioning: Context

Devolution and Localisation

The localisation (to local authorities) and devolution (to Strategic Authorities)[3] of service provision is accelerating under the Government, with the aim of making sure services reflect the needs and wishes of local communities to a much greater extent.

This is a laudable aim in itself, but devolution in particular is also being accompanied by two other Government policies, which have the potential to transform local service provision:

- the development of integrated settlements, which provides local discretion to join up funding streams and transfer resources between what would otherwise be budget silos. This is a far more effective way to spend money in order to deliver results; and

- moves to longer-term budgets, which enable forward planning and improved outcomes for every pound spent.

[2] Examples of discussions:
- July 2024 discussion in Leeds on Commissioning for Social Value with Northern Powerhouse Partnership and DWF LLP: https://www.bsa-org.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/Social-Value-seminar-write-up.pdf
- December 2023 discussion in Manchester on Community Wealth Building with DWF LLP and CLES: https://www.bsa-org.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/NW-Community-Wealth-Building-Seminar-Write-Up.pdf
- March 2023 discussion in London on social value, with London Councils and Sharpe Pritchard LLP: https://www.bsa-org.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/Social-Value-London-seminar.pdf

[3] English Devolution White Paper - GOV.UK

Devolution can also be used to help break down the barriers which have existed between economic and social infrastructure. Services such as employment support, skills provision, and health and social care provision not only improve people's quality of life but help provide a healthier, more skilled and more productive workforce.

The aim should be to produce a virtuous circle of local service delivery which will help generate inclusive growth. This, in turn, then generates the income that funds the service provision.

Further Developments

The trend to devolution and localisation is combined with several other long term and immediate trends, some positive and others having a negative impact on local areas. These include budget constraints, incentives for growth through business rate reform, rising demand, technological advance and changing expectations.

These in any event will lead to radical service redesign, a focus on targeted services accompanied by discussions on digitisation, a big focus on Place shaping and investment in prevention and behaviour change.

Bringing this together requires Place-based strategic leadership. Place leaders will therefore be key in enabling communities to drive response, providing leadership so those needs and wishes can evolve into strategy, and drawing together stakeholders in putting it into effect. The voices of local communities themselves, as well as their local and devolved government representatives, should be at the heart of the decision-making process going forward.

The gearing of the Procurement Act 2023 and the National Procurement Policy Statement[4] to a mission-based approach should lead to further, beneficial, changes. The Act emphasises public benefit, and moves commissioners to accept the Most Advantageous Tender rather than the Most Economically Advantageous Tender. It also encourages both long-term thinking and collaboration by ensuring pipelines of work are published.

All these trends enable - and indeed require - a laser-like focus on outcomes when making commissioning decisions.

Community Wealth Building

It is in the above context that the importance of 'Community Wealth Building' – strengthening organisations and people in local communities – has been growing for some time.

The aim of the Community Wealth Building agenda is to enable communities themselves to enjoy the benefits of economic growth, and a central part of that is about giving them more control. These communities are best able to determine their strengths and weaknesses, the limiting factors to inclusive growth in their area, and how these can best be addressed. That in turn is why the devolution of powers, including commissioning, is so important.

[4] National Procurement Policy Statement - GOV.UK

The Role of Stakeholders

It is therefore incumbent on all stakeholders – including delivery partners on the ground - to show how outcomes can be improved for every pound spent. In particular, this will be achieved through more joined-up working, collaboration, early co-design, planning ahead, and spending on prevention. This is especially the case when it comes to maximising social value and Community Wealth. The work of service and infrastructure providers in this regard may include:

- if there are local labour market needs, employment of local workers or priority groups, such as young people, long-term unemployed people, or those who may be further from the labour market, making use for example of 'patient employers' or job carving to help such groups;
- specific work to break down barriers in the labour market, so everyone has the opportunity to fulfil his or her potential, especially if there are groups which are under-represented;
- if links between business and young people need developing, work with schools, colleges and universities to offer work experience;
- making it possible for SMEs to win contracts directly from commissioning authorities and, if local economic capacity needs developing further, larger companies working in partnership to help scale up SMEs, making full use of the external expertise and supply chain management which they can bring to the table;
- if there is a need to strengthen community-based organisations, work to build VCSE capacity, with third sector organisations working with the private sector and each benefiting from the other's strengths and experiences;
- measures on social wellbeing, including fair work practices and opportunities for Good Work, including through supply chains;
- measures to ensure there is a sustainable impact on the local environment, and a positive legacy impact if there is need in this area; and /or,
- support for wider community initiatives.

Local Commissioning: Achieving Intended Outcomes

For the reasons outlined above, aligning services with need, and achieving value – including wider value and social value - for communities for every pound spent, is now more important than ever. The principles which need to be put into practice for this to be achieved are now widely recognised. The challenge is often being able to do so.

Traditional approaches to procurement can put several barriers in the way of successful outcomes. These include:

- late supplier involvement (with suppliers introduced at the end of the planning stage). This inhibits innovation and may encourage unrealistic expectations, which then either needing to be scaled down or lead to cost overruns;
- price-driven procurement;
- transactional relationships with single short-term schemes;
- little real drive to deliver social, economic, and environmental value; and
- little time for long-term impact.

Six Principles for Success

Increasingly, however, local and devolved commissioning authorities have, like their national counterparts, recognised the importance of moving away from these traditional approaches.

At national level this is seen in publications like the Cabinet Office Playbooks. At local level, the LGA's National Procurement Strategy incorporate many of these points. They are also reflected in the experience of BSA members.

Six key principles for success stand out in our discussions:

1. Setting a clear overall strategy, based on putting communities first
2. Genuine partnership
3. Outcome-based commissioning
4. Encouraging a diverse market
5. Getting the right balance on scale
6. Encouraging long-term thinking

1. **Setting a clear overall strategy, based on putting communities first.** The starting point for local commissioning is the needs and wishes of the community, as expressed by local democratically elected leaders working with the community concerned and with external stakeholders who can help assess the outcomes required. Individual commissioning decisions need to be based on a wider strategy which looks at the main limiting factors to inclusive growth and how people's wellbeing can best be improved, including through analysis of up-to-date data. Crucially, that strategy then needs to inform, and where possible determine, the decisions of procurement professionals on the front line.

2. **Genuine partnership**, based on good relationships and on goals which are both clear and clearly expressed, with early supplier engagement and transparency on outcomes so solutions can be co-designed early on, and with equitable transfer of risk. The evidence from areas which have pioneered successful projects achieving a lasting long-term legacy in inclusive growth and social value is that they were open and honest about the outcomes required and looked for partners who were innovative and proactive in offering ways to achieve those outcomes. This means suppliers and commissioners can be aligned, and innovative solutions and best practice from elsewhere adopted. It also means partners can help scale and replicate innovation and change, not only in the delivery of the services concerned but also in sustainable outcomes and social value.

3. **Outcome-based commissioning**, once the overall strategy, and the outcomes required to achieve it, have been set. That applies at every stage from initiation and co-design through the tender process to ongoing contract management and beyond.

4. **Encouraging a diverse market**, including businesses and charities of all sizes contracting directly with government and also jointly with each other:

i. Making Procurement Opportunities More Accessible for SMEs

The Government has strengthened rules on direct contracting with SMEs and will consult on further reforms[5]. It also rightly emphasises that one way to make it easier for SMEs to bid is to cut red tape and streamline the bidding process.

There are other ways in which the procurement process can be improved to encourage a healthier and more diverse market with more SMEs, and also more charities and social enterprises. These reflect the principles for successful commissioning more widely, as they impact SMEs in particular. They include:

- through equitable transfer of risk in the contract itself, for example making sure that SMEs are not threatened with bankruptcy by being asked to take on unlimited liability or shouldering disproportionate risk from changes in law, policy or inflation rates;
- by encouraging early engagement with the market, so SMEs are able to demonstrate innovative approaches to achieving value including social value; and
- by ensuring genuine partnership and collaboration in service delivery, rather than a transactional approach.

Crucially such policies require the development of commissioning capacity and capability. This is also required in contract management: a larger number of suppliers necessitates a contract management capacity. Without such capacity there is a danger of reversion to a box-ticking approach, especially when challenges are encountered on either side in the course of contract delivery; in turn this leads to sub-optimal outcomes for both the public sector and the SME supplier.

ii. Enabling SMEs to be built up through Equitable Supply Chain Opportunities

In parallel to enabling more SMEs to bid directly, an explicit goal of policy can be to foster equitable supply chain relationships. If designed and operated fairly, in the right circumstances such arrangements can be effective in building up SMEs, just as direct award of contracts can be. This is because larger organisations have the capacity and reach to help support and build local SME capacity in their supply chains. They can help to shoulder the risk and provide the up-front finance which are often necessary parts of contracts with public and private sectors alike. They can also help their supply chains with business and financial planning, use their expertise to support them on the path to Net Zero, and assist with reporting and regulatory requirements in areas like modern slavery. Furthermore, by both showing how suppliers can maximise social value and other delivery, and, crucially, demonstrating this to commissioning authorities, working as part of supply chains can improve SMEs' capacity to win contracts directly in future.

Smaller organisations bring their strengths and innovation so that the two learn from each other. Different sizes of businesses have different strengths they can draw on, and collaboration can help them do so.

[5] Thousands of small businesses to benefit from new government buying rules, boosting local jobs, growth and innovation - GOV.UK
Written statements - Written questions, answers and statements - UK Parliament

However none of this will happen by accident. It involves a fair treatment of supply chains, prompt payment of bills (by both the commissioner and the large supplier to its supply chain) and a fair allocation of risk and reward, all of which can be encouraged (for example through the Sourcing Playbook) and mandated both in regulation (for example through the Fair Payment Code) and as an explicit part of the procurement process[6].

There are also moves to streamline and standardise the reporting data that large suppliers require from their supply chains, as a result of themselves needing to report information on, for example, carbon emissions.

A survey of 27 BSA member organisations revealed that they support 37,773 SMEs and 481 (identified) VCSEs as direct suppliers, and thousands more as Tier 2 suppliers or below[7].

5. **Getting the right balance on scale.** There are sometimes issues of scale in relation to more complex services. That means Strategic Authorities or clusters of local authorities are often commissioning authorities. Where they are not, voluntary collaboration between councils has also increased.

   This helps balance the objectives of (i) understanding and responding to local need, ensuring democratic accountability, and ensuring contracts are attractive to local SMEs with (ii) ensuring scale and sophistication in commissioning. It also promotes both innovation and the sharing of best practice through attracting a range of suppliers of all sizes. Many devolved authorities have also worked together on issues like good employment charters and principles for public procurement, to make sure that, where such common themes exist, it is easier for UK-wide companies to respond to requirements in different areas.

6. **Encouraging long-term thinking**, for example through pipelines of work, which is especially the case when it comes to Community Wealth Building, because building wealth in communities takes planning and time (see below).

[6] Fair Payment Code: New Fair Payment Code
New plans revealed to save small firms £22,000 a year and improve access to cash - GOV.UK
Cabinet Office PPNs on prompt payment:
PPN 018: How to take account of a supplier's approach to payment in the procurement of major contracts - GOV.UK
PPN 021: Payment Spot Checks in Public Sub-Contracts - GOV.UK
Guidance documents: https://www.gov.uk/guidance/prompt-payment-policy
[7] Page 12: The-Business-Services-Sector-in-the-United-Kingdom-BSA-Report-Updated-June-2024.pdf

Three Routes to successful commissioning for Social Value and Community Wealth

In the BSA's meetings with local stakeholders, as well as discussing ways in which outcomes in general can be maximised, discussion has focused on ways in which social value and Community Wealth in an area in particular can be promoted. These three routes to success for social value and Community Wealth reflect the six principles for overall success listed above. They need to be deployed together.

1. The development of social value policy and frameworks which maximise social value outcomes in communities, based on an overall strategy. Whatever the model chosen, such as TOMs frameworks and other metrics, it is important that local priorities are co-ordinated through an overall strategy, and then that they are clearly expressed by the commissioning authority. This maximises return and avoids suppliers each attempting to identify what those priorities may be and then trying to address them in isolation, which duplicates effort. Using data properly to monitor outcomes also ensures continuous improvement.

2. Embedding commissioning and partnership practices which maximise the delivery of these social value outcomes, in particular by encouraging long-term thinking and behaviour.

3. Taking advantage of these businesses and charities being embedded in the long term, by developing 'anchor' and other networks of businesses large and small.

A portfolio approach, with contracts of different size, duration and character, will enable both direct commissioning with SMEs and the development of equitable supply chains. The case studies in this note focus on the second and third of these points.

All of these behaviours – and therefore Community Wealth Building - take time. This includes the time necessary:

- for SMEs to prepare for the opportunities available;
- for larger companies to identify, onboard and build up local SME supply chains, so they are left in a better place at the end of the contract or series of contracts than they were at the start;
- to provide training and employing apprentices in the expectation there will be employment for people to go to at the end of the training; and,
- to identify and employ groups who are further away from the labour market, for example because of health needs, and giving them the support required for sustained employment.

Such long-term thinking and behaviour can be encouraged through the commissioning process in many ways. These include:

- ensuring the length of contracts themselves are sufficient;
- setting out a clear pipeline of work, so service and infrastructure providers can plan ahead and invest, including through Frameworks. Multi-year settlements enable this;
- embedding a single procurement strategy across an organisation, based on the needs of the community and the strategic direction of the democratically elected authority, so suppliers are clearly aligned to local need and priorities and can adapt resources accordingly; and,
- adopting a programmatic approach to project procurement and delivery, under which one or more contractors are appointed to deliver a programme of works. This can ensure opportunities for efficiencies in design and delivery are identified early and with a "whole programme" perspective. A consistent workforce will then ensure extensive knowledge of the requirements of the whole programme. Flexibility in the programme enables resource to be dedicated to projects as they are ready or in need, rather than individual teams potentially experiencing downtime or being diverted away from the programme. This achieves many of the aims outlined above, such as genuine collaboration and early contractor involvement.

Building Community Wealth: The West Yorkshire Model

Civil engineering contractors in particular report that, in the case of Leeds and Bradford Councils, building strong, transparent and, trusted relationships has been a priority in recent years.

Suppliers are involved more in planning, and work collaboratively at outline business case stage. This approach enables a greater scope and timeframe to deliver social value, with the contractor really ingrained in the city.

There are also multiple projects, so closer partnerships can be formed over time. Cost and risk are both reduced, as collaborative design means the contractor has more information on which to base the price.

There are some key ingredients for success - notably trust on all sides; a collaborative culture, seen in both Bradford and Leeds, involving an integrated team; clearly defined goals and desired outcomes, set from the top down, which are clear to all; and KPIs being set, measured and continually reviewed.

Contractors report that councils and contractors have been on a journey:

- Phase one was social value delivered through single projects – including through local supply chains, school and college visits, community volunteering and donations, and employment for apprentices and ex Service personnel.

- Phase two was short programmes of work, which increased knowledge and awareness of what was needed in a community and enabled relationships to develop over time, including relationships with students themselves including longer-term mentoring in schools.

- Phase three, longer programmes of work, had enabled all of the above plus long-term shared ambitions and goals, including collaboration on apprenticeships and long-term employment at the end of the apprenticeship, and local authority supply chain social impact groups such as the Leeds Business Anchors and Building Bradford Supply Chains.

Many of these extra enhancements have happened organically due to the opportunities being unlocked by the procurement.

This then enables the development of anchor and other networks which embed businesses and charities in communities. These include:

- Bradford Council's Building Bradford's Supply Chain Partnership Board, which aims to bring together the public and private sectors in recognition of the fact that collaboration and partnership working are key to success. The Board comprises top private sector contractors, along with the Leader of the Council, and will initially put in place a new social value framework for the Council ahead of growing the engagement with other public bodies and anchor organisations to explore and deliver a district-wide approach. The aim is to secure the most social, environmental, and economic value when public funds are spent locally, and to contribute to creating healthy, thriving, and resilient communities in Bradford District by embedding sustainability (through social value provisions and other approaches) into all public sector activities. It is recognised that strengthening the business-to-business local supply chains and ecosystems is essential in order to keep as much public funding circulating and adding value for the district. The work will also build better supplier-community relations and improve how they deliver services.

- Bradford Council's Skillshouse Careers and Technical Education Partnership, a multi-sector district-wide approach involving businesses and education to benefit young people.

- The Leeds Business Anchors Network[8], through which businesses are invited to work together, and with other partners in the city, to understand and unlock their potential. The Business Anchors Progression Framework[9] is a tool to help businesses understand what inclusive growth means in practice and to self-assess how they are contributing and where they can go further. Businesses can use the tool to guide internal reflection on their current and potential future impact in four areas: Employment, Procurement, Environment and Assets, and Corporate and Community.

Oxfordshire County Council

Contractors report OCC are keen on working in partnership with key supply chain partners, and have set up a delivery group. This group developed a Charter which aligns all partners to Oxfordshire's objectives, with a particular emphasis on collaboration and how partners work together to maximise their positive impact.

Working to develop a 'one team' approach allows the development of closer working relationships between suppliers and OCC with shared values and drives best delivery outcomes for project programme, environment and value for money. This has led to a longer term view of the pipeline and procurement to realise the benefits from the delivery group approach.

Coastal Partnership East

Contractors report CPE operate under a slightly different model again. They drafted an agreement to use SCAPE and Balfour Beatty to deliver all their flood and coastal protection schemes for the next 10 years. This has resulted in a constant flow of schemes throughout each year, with a clear sight of the pipeline so the supplier can resource and plan accordingly.

Achieving Work and Health Programme Outcomes: The South London Partnership

In January 2018, the South London Partnership (SLP) launched its devolved Work and Health Programme, delivered by Reed in Partnership in the London boroughs of Croydon, Kingston upon Thames, Merton, Richmond upon Thames and Sutton, under Reed in Partnership's customer-facing brand 'Better Working Futures'[10].

The service was funded by a grant from the Department of Work and Pensions to the SLP, which then used a contract for services to commission the support for its residents. Croydon Council led the work to commission the service on behalf of the five London boroughs. So far, it has supported more than 3,000 people into employment.

The SLP set an expectation of strong partnership working from the very start, wanting to see a hyper-local approach to reaching residents experiencing exclusion from the labour market, with local reporting on engagement and outcomes. Integration and collaboration with other local provision was seen as critical to the service by the commissioner.

[8] Leeds Business Anchors | Inclusive Growth Leeds
[9] Business Anchors Progression Framework_Nov 2021_1.pdf (inclusivegrowthleeds.com)
[10] About us | Better Working Futures South London | Reed in Partnership

This was reinforced by the London-wide No Wrong Door campaign, which focused on supporting Londoners disproportionately affected by the pandemic, including disabled Londoners, women, refugees, young people and older Londoners. This initiative funded four integration hubs to boost coordination and partnership working across the Capital.

The aim is to connect people to the right support at the right time for them, whatever their starting point or what service they access first. The South London integration hub has seen services and providers come together to engage local employers in promoting inclusive employment, for example.

This approach to commissioning, based on sustained partnership working, has enabled the service provider to develop mutual and increasingly deep working relationships not just with the commissioner but with a diverse range of anchor employers, community and voluntary sector organisations, specialist support services, and local further education colleges. As Ursula Johnston, Better Working Future's Integration Manager, says: "Everything we do is designed with an eye to supporting the participant to sustain the progress they have made in finding or getting closer to employment. If we can fully align with local community, health, skills and family support and then we can both support better outcomes for the individual and help them to sustain the life changes that they have made."

The approach to commissioning has also enabled a programme of integration to be developed to ensure that each element of Better Working Futures support is fully aligned to the wider social and economic goals for the SLP area. On skills, the supplier’s internal Skills Academy matches participant job goals and needs to the priorities in the Local Skills Improvement Plan and collaborates with the GLA’s construction and social care academies, with recent joint sessions being held with the social care academy to encourage participants to explore social care careers, for example.

Close collaboration with the local Integrated Care System includes supporting participants to benefit from using the ICS’s getUbetter app. This helps people with musculoskeletal conditions to self-manage, helping individuals to overcome health barriers to work, at the same time as supporting the wider population health goals of the local health system.

List of BSA Members, April 2025

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AutogenAI
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