The Strategic Commissioning and Procurement Service at Bristol City Council (BCC) has incorporated many aspects of the Bristol Compact into its work.

The department’s service function helps standardise commissioning practice and supports the involvement of voluntary and community sector (VCS) providers.

What Happened

The Strategic Commissioning and Procurement Service (SCPS) plays an important role in commissioning in Bristol. Some BCC commissioners take advice from and use the services and tools produced by SCPS.

Many aspects of the department’s work are integrated with Bristol Compact principles as follows:

Enabling Commissioning Framework (commissioner toolkit)

- Consultations (for 12 weeks, with various methods) is a standard action in the ‘Plan’ stage for all commissioning processes that involve the voluntary and community sector
- Guidance on market analysis and designing lots/smaller contracts in response to the market’s potential
- Development of guidance on TUPE to help standardise commissioning practice

Co-development

SCPS has led on the co-development of Bristol’s responses to new government policies, including the Right to Challenge and Social Value Act. The department has worked to involve voluntary and community sector stakeholders from the early stages (with, for example, roundtable events) so that BCC policies are informed by and are appropriate for Bristol’s voluntary sector.

Market facilitation

SCPS supports and helps commissioners to engage earlier and more meaningfully with the provider market. Examples include guidance on collaboration and working with VoScur to facilitate VCS-led partnerships in Big Lottery programmes.

Openness

SCPS has led on the publishing of a new BCC Commissioning Intentions website. This will help the VCS providers choose, plan and respond to future commissioning opportunities.

The department has incorporated many aspects of the Bristol Compact into its work. The department’s service function helps standardise commissioning practice and supports the involvement of VCS providers.

Continued...
Impact

All of the SCPS activities shown above have contributed to improved relationships and have helped commissioners work better with their provider markets.

The work on the Enabling Commissioning Framework has helped the VCS to avoid some difficult discussions with commissioners. Combined with the market analysis guidance and designing contracts into lots, this means that smaller VCS organisations are not automatically excluded from commissioning processes.

Combined with extensive market facilitation at an early stage, this ensures that VCS organisations are part of the commissioning process and are considered as valuable assets to the city in terms of service delivery. The TUPE guidance will help the VCS to understand and implement TUPE better and more consistently.

This is an area that has often been fraught with difficulties for both commissioners and VCS organisations, and it is hoped that the guidance will go some way to mitigate the areas of difficulty.

The co-development activities have enabled VCS organisations to have a voice in the development of several policies, which in turn, helps to ensure that the VCS understand them and are able to work to assist BCC to fulfil them.

The wide variety of activities that the SCPS undertakes illustrates that they have a commitment to dialogue and improvement in their relationship with the VCS and the Compact. This is evidenced by the Bristol Compact being integral to a commissioning/VCS event held in early 2013. The resulting action plan has led to several aspects of the Compact being built into the work plan of this team.

Quote

Judges at the 2013 Compact Awards said:

“Bristol City Council’s Strategic Commissioning and Procurement Service is leading the way in involving the local voluntary sector in the design and development of policies from an early stage.

This level of engagement recognises the unique ability of the voluntary sector to reach service users and ensure that Bristol City Council’s services are responsive to the needs of the local community. There are clear benefits for the Council, the voluntary sector and most importantly, for the wider community.”

Related links

- Bristol Compact: [www.bristolcompact.org.uk](http://www.bristolcompact.org.uk)
- Voscur: [www.voscur.org](http://www.voscur.org)
- Bristol City Council: [www.bristol.gov.uk](http://www.bristol.gov.uk)

This project was Highly Commended in the Leadership category at the 2013 Compact Awards. Pictured: Sarah Vibert, Head of Development and Policy at Epilepsy Society, presenting the Award to a Gus Hoyt, Assistant Mayor of Bristol City Council.