

“Commissioning” On a Page: Creating a common message

- In the current economic climate, promoting effective competition – removing barriers to entry and incentivising dynamic efficiency to achieve value for money and support growth is vital. In addition the importance of Commissioning is likely to grow as government buys more services and provides fewer themselves. This is essential if the challenge of savings, in the order of £bn for the next 5 years, increases urgency and the importance of effective Commissioning. There are many models of Strategic Commissioning (and procurement) good practice, and most have similar characteristics: They describe a cyclical process of activities: -
 1. Population **needs assessment**
 2. Aligning **resources to meet needs**
 3. **Developing** services to meet identified needs
 4. **Monitoring performance** of internal and external systems to ensure contracts meet needs within budgetary constraints
- Effective Commissioning is fundamentally a **whole system approach** to service delivery. Whole System thinking is important because nature does not show us isolated building blocks, but rather a **complex web of relationships** between the parts of a unified whole. The importance of each component of a system **is tied to its relationship to the whole**. And the essential properties of a living system (whether an organism or community) are properties of the **whole**.
- Commissioning principles may include:
 - **Integration and Localisation of services appropriately**. Decide which services that make the most effective impact on the ground
 - **Outcomes focused** – base *all* decisions on outcomes
 - **Early intervention and prevention** – to improve efficiency and effectiveness
 - **Close the gap** – between the advantaged and disadvantaged in society
 - **Stable relationships** – between users and practitioners
 - **Transparent** – processes
 - **Lean processes** – to improve efficiency and effectiveness
 - **Contestability** – where appropriate to drive innovation and select the best in-house or external provider
 - **Challenge** – to in-house and external practitioners
 - **Value for money** – of all services
 - **Lead Professional and common assessment framework** – to integrate the whole of a delivery system
 - **Performance management** – for all services

So who or what is a “Commissioner?”

The Commissioner is the spider at the centre of a web of service delivery – as such the Commissioner **builds** the web of provision and **responds** to the day to day activities that ensure that as the web changes shape – the Commissioner at the centre redesigns the web of provision appropriately.