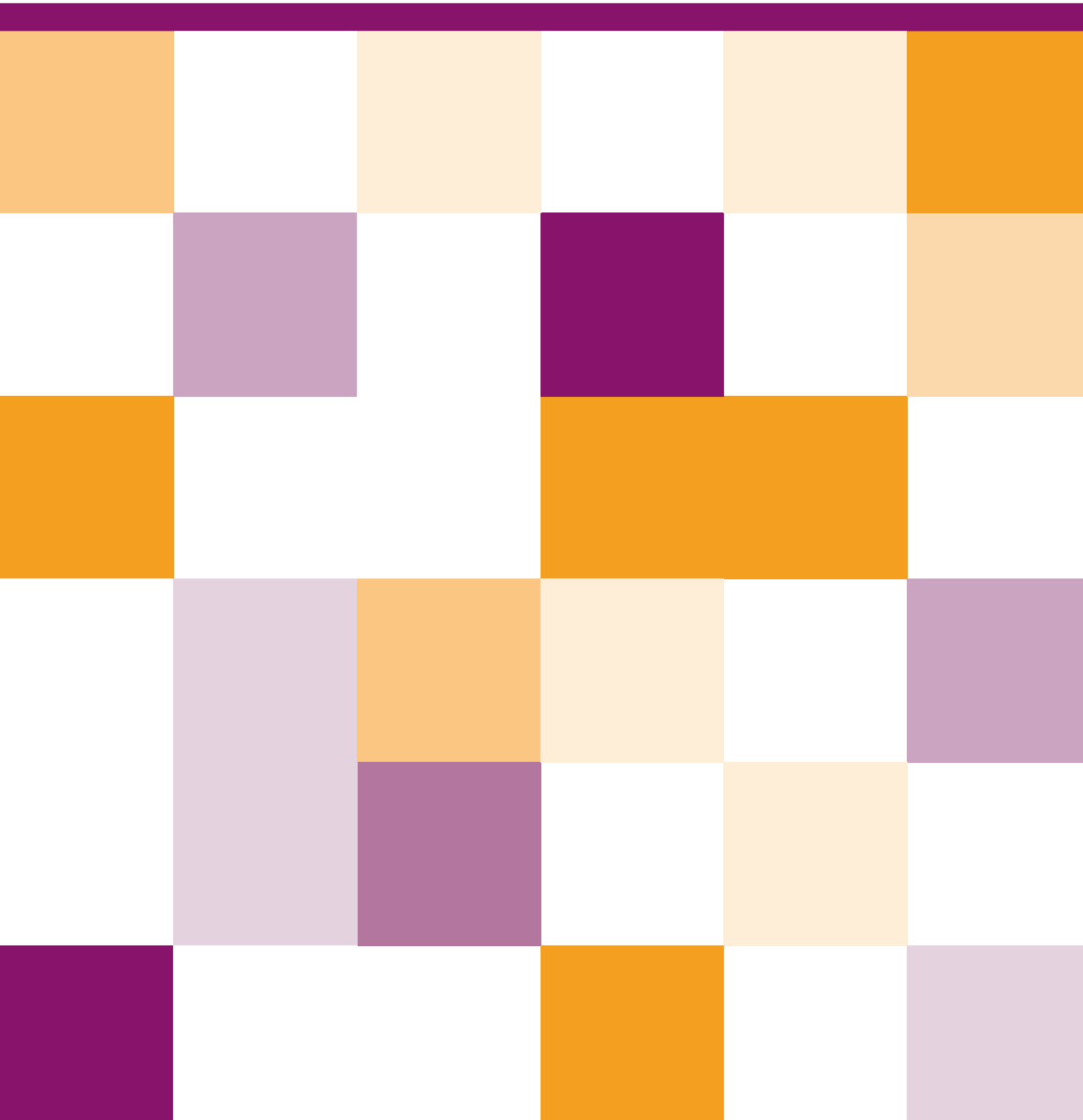




Partnership in Public Services: the public services action plan Two years on



Foreword

Kevin Brennan,
Minister for the Third Sector



As Minister for the Third Sector I know what an important and growing contribution third sector organisations make to the design and delivery of public services.

It has been two years since the Public Service Action Plan was launched. It committed us to a series of actions to reduce the barriers to third sector organisations being involved in delivering public services.

It is right that we celebrate what has been achieved to date. Working with the sector, with commissioners, and across government departments and local authorities, the landscape for third sector organisations involvement in public services is being transformed.

As we face up to the challenges of these difficult economic times we must continue to build on the progress made towards a thriving third sector, fully engaged in delivering services that people value and that change lives.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kevin Brennan".

Kevin Brennan, MP
Minister for the Third Sector

December 2008

Introduction

The action plan was launched in 2006 to help facilitate an increase in public service delivery by the third sector. The actions were focused on four areas:

- Commissioning
- Procurement
- Building on the sector's capacity
- Innovation

The principles of the action plan are being implemented across government departments and the sector is increasingly more involved in developing and delivering public services.

This report gives an overview of what has been happening to deliver the action plan.

"Third sector organisations have an excellent track record of involving people in designing services and providing care"

Bob Ricketts, Director of System Management and New Enterprise, Department of Health

Capacity building



The Community Assets fund was set up to enable third sector bodies to take ownership of and refurbish local authority buildings, to make them the centre of their communities. £30 million is being distributed via the Big Lottery Fund in grants from £150,000 to £1 million.

The first grant went to The Pelton Fell Community Resource Centre in Chester-le-Street.

"The community centre is the final piece of the jigsaw puzzle in regenerating the village of Pelton Fell"

Linda Ebbatson, Leader of Chester-Le-Street District Council and Roy Templeman, Chief Executive

Improving commissioning

For the third sector to be able to take advantage of the opportunities available to deliver public services, commissioners need to understand what the third sector offers and how they can work with them.

To deliver this, the National Programme of Third Sector Commissioning was set up.

The programme:

- Is engaging with up to 2,000 commissioners working across the public sector to increase awareness of the contribution the third sector can make in commissioning of public services
- Has set up an online community of practice to share good ideas
- Has worked with business schools and universities to provide third sector modules on their accredited training

Those taking part in the training are acquiring a better understanding of work in partnership with them. The programme will continue into 2011.

"I took away a great deal of information and ideas and have an improved awareness of dealing with the third sector"

Commissioner

Case study



SCA Group is a social enterprise based in Southampton. They started by delivering a small number of transport and day-care services and have grown hugely in response to local need, winning contracts from local councils.

Their services include high quality, affordable training for carers and through contracts with local PCTs they now also provide dental surgeries.

Through their close links into local needs and local

resources they have been able to build a diverse and sustainable organisation.

Eight principles of good commissioning

- Understand the needs of those using the service
- Consult provider organisations when setting priorities
- Put outcomes for users at the heart of the process
- Map the fullest practical range of providers
- Consider investing in the provider base
- Ensure contract processes are transparent and fair
- Ensure long term contracts and risk sharing
- Seek feedback to review effectiveness of the commissioning process

Fostering innovation

At its best, the third sector's close links with local communities enable it to create innovative approaches to delivering services that best meet the needs of service users.

To support the development of these innovative ideas the Innovation Exchange was established. The project provides third sector innovators with access to the people and potential capital they need to develop their ideas and use their innovations to inform improved public service delivery.

Case study

East London Food Access Ltd delivers fresh fruit and vegetables to residents on local housing estates, establishing sustainable food co-operatives.

They also use their high quality relationships with customers to do more to promote independent living.

"East London Food Access is the best thing that's ever happened to me"

ELFA Volunteer

The organisation plans to expand its services through contracts with local public sectors services and businesses and want to grow the project beyond Hackney, with the help of the Innovation Exchange.

Case study



Speaking Up supports disabled people across the UK to have a voice and take control over their lives.

Their **Life:Unlimited** project aims to enable disabled people to have a voice, more choice and

control, by delivering advocacy and information in relation to personal budgets, using a range of successful peer support and empowerment models. They are having a positive impact on the people involved:

"I feel much more confident since being on the courses. I now have much more confidence to talk to people than I did before. I think my new confidence will help me a lot more in the future"

Speaking Up will work to develop and evaluate this project in partnership with commissioners in the public sector with a view to scaling it up across their service hubs.

Changing the landscape; actions across government

The Office of the Third Sector works with other government departments to embed partnership working with the sector. For example:

- **The Department of Health** Third Sector Partnership Team acts as the strategic focus within the DH for promoting the Third Sector, and volunteering, in the context of health and social care policy and service development and delivery, including embedding the Compact.

"By working closely with the Department of Health, the third sector is able to influence the policy, planning and commissioning environment within which services can be delivered in partnership"

*John Adams,
Voluntary Organisations Disability Group*

- **Ministry of Justice** launched their Third Sector Strategy 2008-2011 in June 2008 - aimed at improving the way they work with the third sector. In 2008 the Ministry and NOMS jointly launched "Working with the Third Sector to Reduce Re-offending 2008-2011" which set out the principles and actions for working in effective partnership with the third sector to reduce reoffending and protect the public.
- **Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra)** recognises the vital contribution of the sector to Defra's strategic objectives. Defra's Third Sector Strategy was launched on 3rd November 2008 and signals the Department's commitment to working with the third sector
- **The Department for Communities and Local Government** continues to work closely with the third sector to deliver many of its programmes and strategic objectives, and are working to strengthen our social enterprise unit and develop clearer links with the existing third sector team.

Case Study

Eaves Housing for Women is funded by the Government to run the Poppy project for trafficked women. They work with a range of national and local statutory and third sector partners to provide these particularly vulnerable victims with comprehensive support. The project also plays a significant role in raising awareness of the realities of trafficking amongst the wider public and front-line professionals.

Overview of actions from Partnership in Public Services

Simplify commissioning using the 8 principles of good commissioning and template contracts	The eight principles of good commissioning are being embedded by individual departments into their commissioning frameworks, for example the Department of Health and the Ministry of Justice . Template contracts are also being developed.
Establish National Programme for Third Sector Commissioning	The programme was established in 2007 and will run until 2011. 2000 commissioners will be trained in this time and accredited training is being provided by business schools and universities
Provide information to the third sector on working in a consortium	A guide to working in a consortium has been produced for third sector organisations.
Provide information on social clauses for commissioners and third sector providers	A report on a social clauses project has been produced. The Office of Government Commerce also has information on including social issues in commissioning.
Identify and promote the impacts of the third sector	Capacitybuilders is using £13.8m to fund National Support Services to give the sector support to develop skills in key areas such as communication. Commissioner training is highlighting the value of the third sector. Social Exclusion Task Force has worked with partners to develop a tool to use research for commissioning improved services that provide value for money.
Streamline performance monitoring	OTS are working with the Quality Measurement Framework to develop a system to simplify and reduce legal, administrative and cost burden.
Measure and work to reduce the administrative burden contracts put on the third sector	Using the findings from a New Philanthropy Capital study, the OTS is working with the National Audit Office and the treasury to provide guidance and to champion across departments the lowering of burdens on service providers The Better Regulation Executive is leading work by all departments to reform regulation.
Use sector knowledge to feedback experiences of commissioning process	The Centre for Third Sector Research has begun to provide an evidence base for the sector. Surveys of the sector through the Local Government performance framework will ensure the sector's voice continues to be heard
Create Innovation Exchange for the third sector	The Innovation Exchange encourages innovators across the sector, and works to make this innovation sustainable. Intensive support is given to incubate, develop and implement ideas
Establish Community Assets Fund so third sector bodies can refurbish and take over local authority buildings	The Community Assets Fund is up and running, distributing £30m to communities
Open Futurebuilders to all third sector organisations	Futurebuilders is now open to all service areas, providing loans, grants and capacity building support to organisations that deliver or want to deliver public services



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