

Social value:

Where we are and looking forward

Social value roundtable discussion events:

- For the social enterprise sector 12th October 2017
- For strategic partners 15th November 2017

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More information:

For five years' worth of material on social value under ten topic headings go to <http://bssec.org.uk>

Click on 'Policy Issues' on the top menu bar → Choose 'Public Services & Social Value'

Also see nearly 100 blog posts tagged 'social value': <http://bssec.org.uk/category/public-services-social-value/>

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Where we are now

- Four years since the Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012 came fully into force.
 - Intended to enable public service commissioners in all relevant public authorities to consider how the services they were procuring could deliver additional social, economic or environmental benefit.
 - Good progress in utilising the legislation amongst local authorities but less traction in health (although some strong examples of good practice), central government departments, housing.
 - But social value has also been enacted against a backdrop of the deepest austerity measures in a generation – its use has not been as inventive or creative as we once all hoped...
 - Perhaps not even always benign – it has become part of a more-for-less agenda.

Awareness & understanding

- Many commissioners are still unclear about the kind of social value they wish to achieve and how best to build this into procurement practice.
- Many social enterprises continue to be confused and unclear about social value – some even unfamiliar with the language of social value.
- Some are under-reporting the social value they are achieving.
- Some SEs are frustrated by commissioners' lack of interest in fully and seem to have given up trying to use the legislation to their own best advantage...
 - Social value has become too identified with 'commissioning' – the sector has lost sight of the fact that social value is core to do what they are and what they do!
 - Proactive reporting of SV.
 - Publicising SV achievements and being advocates for social value.

It isn't just about 'commissioning'



- Even in the relatively short period that the Act has been in force we have seen the landscape of social value change significantly:
 - The legislation has in effect opened social value up to competition – the private sector is often a key player in social value, especially in construction...
 - Especially significant in Birmingham given the BBC4SR.
 - Social value now has a currency that goes beyond the narrow confines of public sector commissioning...
 - Social investment marketplace.
 - Social Impact Bonds.
 - Philanthropic funding.
- All of which reinforces the view that the sector needs to be doing more to proactively use social value – to stop seeing social value as something that is 'done to the sector' **and reclaim it as something the sector has pioneered.**

Social value 'measurement'

- Measurement of social value has taken something of a backseat...
 - Now apparent that there is no single dominant methodology for 'measuring' SV and no magic bullet solution.
 - We have advocated a simpler mix-and-match approach – financial or 'social return' proxies where they exist (e.g. savings to other public services; reduced demand on other services; savings from prevention); narrative 'headlines' highlighting key social value outcomes where these make more sense...
 - It doesn't have to be complicated!
- Our guidance on identifying social value and thinking about ways to report it has been popular: *'Are you under-reporting your social value? How to identify social value in your contracts and services'* <http://bit.ly/2xmtBvj>

Social value & health

- A huge subject in itself...
 - Very patchy progress.
 - Hindered by financial crisis, structural upheaval.
 - Complex environment – increasingly fractured.
 - Split between clinical and public health commissioning.
 - Inflexibilities in national commissioning frameworks.
 - SV seems better suited to non-clinical, community-based, early intervention and preventative services – but hard to demonstrate this and take innovative, creative approaches in a period of crisis.
 - Inadequate understanding/adoption of the legislation in health.
 - Lack of health sector guidance – leadership on SV needs to come from within health.
 - Good report by SEUK confirms this view: <http://bit.ly/2xhwewW> ('Healthy Commissioning: How social value is being used by CCGs') – only 13% of CCGs making 'highly committed, active use' of legislation.

Where next?

- Reclaim social value.
- Report proactively in whatever ways make best sense and are most do-able.
- Be advocates for social value.
- Recognise that social value landscape is changing – it isn't just an arcane debate about 'commissioning': social value has currency amongst funders, investors, stakeholders, supporters, users, SIBs, impact reporting...
- Work together to maximise influence the sector can have to protect and extend social value.