



# Call for evidence

## Keep it Local: For services that transform lives

**Deadline for submissions: Friday 27 July 2018**

Please send submissions to [nick.plumb@locality.org.uk](mailto:nick.plumb@locality.org.uk)

### About our Keep it Local campaign

We know the challenges facing local authorities are unprecedented. With budgets shrinking and demand rising, many local authorities have sought savings through big outsourcing contracts.

However, we believe there is a better way: to Keep it Local.

By unlocking the power of community through local public service commissioning, local authorities can:

- Create more responsive services that transform lives
- Reduce long-term pressure on the public sector
- Ensure precious public resources invest in the local economy

For more on the Keep it Local campaign, which we're running in conjunction with Lloyds Bank Foundation for England and Wales, please refer to our [campaign briefing](#).

### Our call for evidence

As we develop our Keep it Local campaign, we are keen to ensure that is based on the very latest evidence of current practice in how our public services are provided. So we are calling for evidence from a wide a range of organisations and individuals with an interest in the future of public services, including, but not limited to:

- Community organisations
- Elected councillors
- Council officers working in procurement and commissioning
- Think tanks
- Trade unions
- Academics



We are particularly interested in hearing about:

- the latest trends which are shaping public services
- examples of 'scale fail' – where large outsourcing contracts haven't delivered the desired outcomes
- the role of local community organisations in the delivery of public services, and evidence that they can provide services that transform lives
- examples of local areas doing things differently to harness the power of local organisations

Please send submissions to [nick.plumb@locality.org.uk](mailto:nick.plumb@locality.org.uk) by **Friday 27 July 2018**. Earlier submissions are also welcome, and you do not have to answer every question.

## Keep it Local commissioning principles

This call for evidence is a key part of a wider engagement process, based around our Keep it Local Network. We're aiming to co-design a set of principles that demonstrate what it means to Keep it Local and can guide local authority commissioning practice. We're engaging with those involved in the design, commissioning and delivery of our public services; and hearing from those at the front line about their experiences, challenges and examples of best-practice.

Below is a draft set of principles informed by the previous four years of Keep it Local work carried out by Locality with communities and local authorities. These are the principles we believe underpin a Keep it Local approach to public services and are the starting point for our engagement exercise. If useful, please refer back to these principles in your submission, and we would welcome any general comments or reflections on them.

It's also important to note that when talking about 'public services' we're particularly interested in person-centred services - from homelessness to employment support, children's services to adult social care - where trusting relationships and innovation are required.



## Draft Principles

- 1. Start with the place and the person.** Rather than commissioning individual services in isolation, seek to co-ordinate services at the neighbourhood level and utilise the full range of local assets to support the 'whole person'.
- 2. Maximise local social value.** Use social value legislation ambitiously and effectively to ensure commissioning maximises the additional long-term social value that community organisations generate for the local area.
- 3. Build community capacity.** Proactively support the development of a thriving network of innovative and sustainable small local providers, who work collaboratively and have the capacity to deliver high-quality services.
- 4. Simplify processes and create a level playing field.** Move away from large contracts and bureaucratic commissioning processes that prioritise short-term cost and drive competition that favours larger organisations with greater resources. Instead fund in simple and proportionate ways that enable small local providers to participate fully in commissioning and work together to achieve long-term value.
- 5. Involve local people through co-design.** Work in partnership with local community organisations and service users throughout commissioning, using co-design to ensure that the experience of the user and the expertise of the professional combine to create the most effective services possible.



## Consultation questions

### 1. The trend towards scale ... halted?

In recent years, there has been a trend towards outsourcing services at scale: bundling up services into big contracts that go to large providers at the lowest price possible. A small number of big companies are now responsible for an increasingly large proportion of our public services. However, recent incidences of “scale fail” have led many local areas to think again – either bringing services back in house or seeking to commission small local providers.

- Have large outsourcing contracts been the dominant trend in public services over the last ten years? If so, what is the evidence to support this and what has been driving this trend?
- Do you think the scale approach has delivered what was expected in terms of cost savings for local authorities and increased choice, quality and efficiency in service provision?
- What does the evidence on scale and standardisation in commissioning say about the quality of services and how they respond to individual need?
- Are you aware of any examples of “scale fail” – where large public service contracts have either not delivered the expected benefits to commissioning authorities and/or service users; or have ended in expensive failure? If so what impact has this had on service users, the community and the local authority?
- Conversely, are you aware of large public service contracts that have delivered significant benefits to commissioning authorities and/or service users?
- Is there evidence, either at a local or national level, to suggest any changes to this trend towards scale? Are you aware of services that have either been ‘insourced’ or recommissioned with small local providers?

### 2. The case for keeping it local

At Locality, we believe that local community organisations provide the kind of responsive services that will reduce pressure on the public sector in the long run, by dealing with problems at source and preventing costs mounting up over time. For more on the Keep it Local case, please refer to our [campaign briefing](#).

- What evidence is there that services provided by local community organisations have a transformative impact on people’s lives? This could either be quantitative evidence, such as wellbeing measures, or qualitative evidence, such as case studies or user testimony.



- What evidence is there that local community organisations play a unique role in service delivery - ie their services have qualities that are not easily replicated by services provided by other sectors?
- What evidence is there that services provided by local community organisations drive down overall demand for public services over the long-term?
- Are you aware of examples of local community organisation provision not delivering the expected quality of services from the perspective of commissioning authorities and/or service users?
- Are you aware of any examples of local authorities taking an approach to public service commissioning that seeks to harness the particular strengths of local community organisations? What impact has this had on service users, the community and the local authority?
- Are you aware of any examples of services being recommissioned from a large national provider to a local community organisation and evidence on the impact this has had on service quality?
- It is often maintained that having one large contract is cheaper, simpler to manage and less risky. Others however argue that a larger number of smaller contracts will suck up fewer administrative resources to manage, increase flexibility and spread risk more widely. Are you aware of any particular evidence or examples to support either of these claims?

### 3. Social value: practice and potential

The 2012 Social Value Act was introduced to ensure 'people who commission public services think about how they can also secure wider social, economic and environmental benefits'.

- In your experience, what impact has this legislation had on the commissioning of public services?
- Are you aware of examples where consideration of social value has been decisive in awarding contracts? If so, has this been to the benefit of local community organisations and how have they done it?
- Are you aware of examples of local authorities using social value legislation in a particularly ambitious or creative way?
- How could local authorities best use the legislation to recognise the additional long-term social value that many community organisations generate for the local area when delivering public services?
- What could central government do to ensure commissioners give due consideration to the wider social, economic and environmental benefits of awarding a contract to a certain service provider?