

Individual Budgets

These are interesting times in the world of housing and floating support. The coordination between health, social care and housing that is finally being called for is welcome, as is the fact that the Government is recognising that the charitable sector has a key part to play.

But just when all the laudable joined-up thinking begins, the Government throws in an ideological 'wild card': Individual Budgets (IBs). This initiative is currently being piloted in mental health to put people in control of buying the services they need. Direct payments have been effective; much better that a person has money to join a gym rather than attend a possibly moribund day centre, but Individual Budgets go a step further and do they really put the user 'in control'?

Tom Wilson, Chief Executive, Julian Housing looks at the possible unintended consequences of Individual Budgets

The marketisation of services?

One rationale for IB's is that people will value more something they have paid for and that the market this creates will be more fitting to meet their needs. Simplistically this appears attractive but one (possible) unintended consequence of this is that hundreds of socially committed workers in the charitable sector could be out of a job, their organisations unable to respond to the demands of such market forces. I cannot imagine the charity I work for, which is not particularly small, being able to respond to a thousand customers one day, none the next and fifteen hundred the next. Wal-Mart can do this, but the third sector as presently constituted cannot. Is this a clue to what the Government's vision for our sector really is? Are we being urged to change up and build capacity because the Government's thinking is that big is beautiful? If so, I believe this demonstrates a fundamental misunderstanding of the strength of the voluntary sector. The most effective charities are often small with a locally based voluntary board, committed to the needs of their service users and connected to their local communities.

Controlling costs?

Costs could spiral out of control. Think it through, you are assessed as having x illness, requiring y support costs, you get the cash allocation; you buy services to meet your needs. This might make sense if your disability is constant, a physical or learning disability. Mental health is different: you have good days, bad days; good months, bad months, but your allocated budget is fixed at assessment; you get it whether you need it or not, until annual re-assessment.

Flexible support

Floating Support is usually funded by block contracts. Agencies are commissioned to provide flexible support services for a number of hours of support which can be spread to provide as much service as a team can deliver according to individual need. Low level contact when things are working well, flexible higher level support when things get tough. This is cost effective and does not build dependencies. Well delivered tenancy support provides the foundation on which a user can rebuild their lives. It is best delivered by an agency which can offer brokerage, advice & enabling support to help the tenant help themselves. It is not a commodity or service like having the milk or pizza delivered. At the beginning of a service the user is often in chaos, not knowing their needs or their entitlements. Our task is to reduce the chaos, to help the user make informed choices that will help them find and sustain independent living.

IB's could create a whole new bureaucracy of social service & independent living. Organizations dedicated to assessing, allocating and monitoring. Heaven help us!



Perceived pressures mount

Formal consortia set up in the region have so far unsuccessfully bid into SP floating support tenders. It begs some questions - are providers responding smartly, are commissioners communicating clearly, or should we all despair?

DCLG have been encouraging service providers to work in partnership to benchmark costs & services, share best practice and develop consortium approaches. At the same time, an emphasis is being placed on ensuring choice and control for service users. The message from commissioners is the need to change services 'to meet changes in user need and aspirations.'

It is too early to judge the extent that some quality yet unfashionable services are being penalised by the push to review and re-model

services. We must ensure this is thought through, because as many in the sector argue, there is a growing risk that the 'inter-connectivity' across non-statutory services and their capacity to respond sometime in the future might be damaged irretrievably. Fewer agencies have security of funding for any medium to long-term period and perceptions that the (intended or unintended) pressures are mounting are real. Those tendering new services much recognise that providers can only

sustain certain levels of risk and uncertainty. Yet, diversity of provision must be a given, if service users are truly being offered choice. We must therefore acknowledge that just sometimes, the small provider managed by a handful of people and on a limited turnover might be providing a high quality, value for money, exemplary service.

Fearful perhaps of due-diligence claims or a poor understanding of the sector, some commissioning bodies continue to implement their agenda with minimal dialogue and communication with not-for-profit stakeholders. This creates unnecessary nervousness and antipathy to potentially interesting proposals. One result is perhaps a

A Regional Homelessness Action Plan

A Government Office led Homelessness Action Plan identifies the key priorities for the East of England in tackling homelessness. The first plan is for 2006-2007. Initially two small focus groups drawn from Local Authorities, voluntary organisations and other key partners with an interest in homelessness came together to draft out some ideas. These were consulted on at two regional events held in May 2006 and refined into the final plan which was agreed by the new Regional Homelessness Advisory Panel in July 2006. The plan is intended to compliment and add value to the work already in place and to provide a regional focus and profile for homelessness action which does not currently exist.

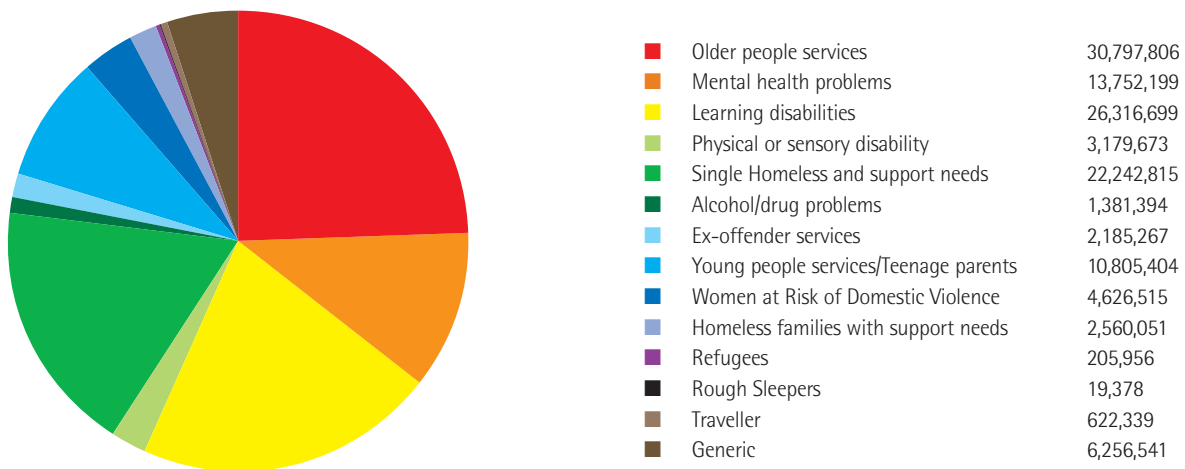
Priorities for 2006-07

Effective communication and co-ordination between agencies	RHAP is established and Action Plan published and monitored
Homelessness prevention and support for people at risk of homelessness throughout region	Educational tool focusing on needs of 16 & 17 year olds disseminated Greater use of discretionary housing payments Assessment of the impact of LHA on affordability of private rented sector Good practice on prevention identified and referenced on regional observatory
Access to permanent housing for homeless people	Baseline position on CBL identified along with good practice Regional adoption of bond guarantee schemes Phase 2 of BME research
Maximised resources to provide accommodation and support	Information paper for RHDG to input into review of Regional Housing Strategy

Longer term priorities include:

1. closer integration with Supporting People funding to deliver targets on homelessness by ensuring that people can be sustained in their tenancies and appropriate hostels.
 2. A dialogue with both the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) and the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) that recognises the fundamental role housing benefit plays in averting homelessness.
 3. To be able to make more effective use of private sector housing in alleviating homelessness and creating wider housing options.
 4. Understand the cost of homelessness provision across the region and the financial benefits of prevention and tenancy sustainment measures.
- Contact Tim Allard, who is on the Executive, for further details.

Department for Communities and Local Government - Eastern Story... SP 2005/06 Spend by Client Group East of England



lack of creative responses even where appropriate formal partnerships emerge.

One thing is certain, that those providers simply offering more of the same are finding it increasingly difficult to justify investments in their activities. Providers must be confident in their assertions that their services are appropriate, genuinely meet needs and are based on real evidence. Providers need to demonstrate innovation and creativity – attributes that many claim typify the sector. Providers must also ensure that they can listen and respond accordingly.

Commissioners would do well to look at improving longer term commitments and partnerships with the sector. Commissioners need to nurture mature relations with the sector and invest in the processes of change. It is not acceptable to assume that the sector is able to

read minds when they are not privy to the changes in the thinking of commissioners or without an opportunity for dialogue. While at the same time, suggesting that the sector doesn't get it or is intransigent! To do so commissioners must encourage change leadership strategies that tap into a vibrant and resourceful core of not-for-profit leaders at the local level. To identify and support 'ambassadors of change' and to offer support in making the case for change – where this is intelligent, necessary and appropriate. Only then might we see more transformative leadership from providers, and in turn an increase in not-for-profit engagement in for example, public service delivery.

A core group of 'critical friends' exists. A number of Space East members in the supported housing and homelessness sector in the region

have driven their services from a good idea based on voluntarism to multi-million pound turnovers. They are well placed to offer peer agencies support in reconfiguring their services and abandoning aspects of their work that are no longer relevant. These individuals can also present an attractive vision of the possible outcomes from radical changes.

Contrary to assumptions about the scarcity of not-for-profit sector leadership, the experience and professionalism of a core of such leaders has something to give to other sectors, as well as strengthening peers within it. Lets close the distance between commissioners and providers, place more emphasis on strategic commissioning skills and rise to the challenges the commissioning environment is posing for all of us.

Tim Allard

Norfolk

Greater Norwich Hostels Review

As a result of a series of meetings since July, hostels providers in the Greater Norwich sub-region have compiled a detailed response to a review of hostel provision in the area.

The response is an attempt to engage with the review in a constructive and strategic way. It is hoped that it provides for a period of substantive discussions on the detail of the recommendations made in the review. Indeed, many of the points raised with the commissioners of it, are further questions requiring thorough consideration on their part. It also now requires a period of open and extensive discussions with providers and the broader range of stakeholders in the area.

Between them, providers offer 398 bed spaces and other housing related support to a range of vulnerable homeless people. Each organisation has developed through a history of meeting unmet needs in the sector. Providers welcome the fact that the GNHP Hostels review recognises the invaluable role that they play in reducing rates of single homelessness and their flexibility of approach, innovation and clear understanding of service users which allows them to respond to 'supply and service gaps with speed'. Providers share the aim of the review to gain a better understanding of the current situation and they support the aspiration to improve access for service users. They welcome work to improve centralised data and information sharing that will enable this to happen more efficiently.

They support the vision for a more coordinated approach to temporary supported provision and an increase in available bed spaces and permanent follow on accommodation. They agree that a cooperative approach to the development of a multi agency strategy to tackle this need is productive and are willing to support the statutory sector to fulfil its obligations in this area.

Their response also provides evidence to support their view that some of the conclusions drawn in the Hostel Review do not reflect the position as they recognise it. Providers feel that there are clear gaps in the understanding of the way in which they manage risks in their schemes and balance capacity against need. There is also an apparent presumption that the voluntary sector should provide the resources to resolve a problem that local authorities actually have a statutory duty to meet.

A similar process is also being undertaken in the Rural East Anglia Housing Partnership area and across other areas of the region.

Visit our website for further information and a copy of the documents referred to in this article.

The Norfolk Travellers Initiative

Ormiston Children and Families Trust have been awarded a Supporting People grant to continue the success of their Cambridgeshire Travellers Initiative, a successful project for three years, in Norfolk.

The Norfolk Travellers Initiative aims to provide holistic, support services to gypsy/traveller communities living in Norfolk. The project aims to offer children and families support regardless of whether they are nomadic or settled.

The services are available directly to members of Gypsy/Traveller community or by referral from other agencies. If you would like to refer someone or would like to discuss how the Ormiston can effectively be of assistance to you and your colleagues, the team can be contacted on 01362-854264 or via email at norfolkadvocacy@ormiston.org

Suffolk

Increase in beds at Wilbury House

Ipswich Borough Council proposes an increase of beds at Wilbury House with a focus on project direct support to individuals with chaotic lifestyles.

They will be given a comprehensive complex needs assessment and offered dedicated tailored support. Additional support to manage beds and provide support where hostels cannot, will not or do not have provision. It aims to provide a short term facility for stability. It will require intensive planning with the individual and coordination with hostels. Maximum case load of 25 over a three month period and a maximum of 8 intensively at any one time. It is hoped to start the project in April 2007.

Cambridgeshire

Floating Support in Peterborough

Peterborough has seen substantial change in recent months and floating support is just one of the things putting Peterborough on the map.

Peterborough City Council is currently inviting expressions of interest for tenders for the provision of a housing related floating support service. It is likely that the contract will be for a 3 year period and will be awarded in August 2007. The estimated total value will be approximately £1,115,281. The contract will cover the "provision of a floating support service of generic floating support service for the prevention of homelessness and/or tenancy sustainment, with the provision of a central 'gateway' to co-ordinate service delivery". For further information register at www.delta-ets.com.

Hertfordshire

Supporting People Audit

Hertfordshire County Council was recently audited in the fourth year of the Supporting People programme to reflect the effectiveness of their current service delivery, the value for money and the subsequent outcomes for vulnerable people.

Despite the County Councils budget being

much larger than the East of England, their performance has been described as "providing 'poor', no star service that has promising prospects for improvement".

This conclusion was drawn as their five-year strategy was significantly underdeveloped, their computer systems and planning were poor and there is a lack of cooperate support for the Supporting People programme and for problems that arise. Providers also expressed frustration with administration services and the lack of readily available leaflets and information. However, it was found that there are some strengths. This includes adult protection issues being taken seriously, strong budget control, the implementation of services piloted at young people and the appropriate steps taken to improve diversity.

The audit has identified several areas that need attention for improvement. This includes the five-year strategy, the skills of staff and the need for better information on provider performance indicators. It is believed that this should be possible given the Councils history of delivery successful improvements, their actions already developed to make improvements and their robust performance management and monitoring system already in place.

Essex

Supporting People in Essex

Changes in Essex to the way Supporting People contracts are awarded have seen an end to several small organisations.

One of the victims was Colchester Quaker Housing Association who is no longer financially viable and will be transferring their assets to another organisation in 2007. The possibility that others could have the same fate has understandably caused genuine concern for similar small providers all over the country. It has been suggested that moves like this could fundamentally change the way the program is viewed.

Martin Cooper of Supporting People in Essex has stated that Hyde Group, Swan Housing Group and Family Mosaic will now be the floating support providers nationally. This move is expected to save £6 million over five years.

Bedfordshire

YMCA guides Prince's Trust

As part of the Princes Trust a team of unemployed young people have utilized their skills by completely three weeks of redecorating, painting and gardening at Barton House hostel in Bedford.

The Princes Trust Team is a 12 week personal development programme aimed at unemployed 16-25 year olds. The programme provides valuable work experience and training and helps the individuals to learn vital skills such as communication and team work. The programme was carried out with the guidance of Bedford YMCA, who is now the local delivery partner for the Prince's Trust Team Challenge.

Ruth Kelly MP and the Changing Nature of Homelessness

In her recent speech on 14th November 2006 at the Andy Ludlow Awards, Ruth Kelly made known that the PMs target to cut rough sleeping by two thirds has been successfully met with the amount falling by 73 per cent in 1998. She also mentioned that the number of new cases of homelessness is at a 23 year low.

Plans for the future include re-examining the way homelessness has changed, focusing on prevention and developing better partnerships between local authorities and service providers. Ruth Kelly wants to see hostels as a "place of change, offering more than temporary accommodation". To further tackle the issue, there are plans to build 75000 new social rented homes between now and 2007/08. A commitment has also been made that by 2010, 16 and 17 year olds will only be placed in a B&B in emergencies. Rather, there will be a focus on lodging scheme, advice services and mediation.

Places of Change - Tackling homelessness through the Hostels

The DCLG suggest that too many people are staying in the hostel system for too long. Poor physical conditions and services that don't motivate people to address their needs can reinforce rather than break the cycle of homelessness. Also many more people have been leaving hostels for negative reasons - like eviction or abandonment - than for positive ones - like finding employment and a settled home. The DCLG want to change this and want hostels and other facilities for homeless people to provide the best opportunities for their clients, opportunities that will help people to move forward into work and a settled home. Through the £90 million Hostels Capital Improvement Programme the DCLG want to demonstrate that hostels and day centres can be centres of excellence and choice which positively change lives. This publication is available free of charge from Communities and Local Government Publications. Tel: 0870 1226 236, email: communities@twoten.com. Please quote the product code when ordering.

A guide to Procuring Care and Support Services

The DCLG have produced a document based on the culmination of work by Leeds and Plymouth Councils where the best procurement practice for local public services have been applied it to certain issues around services for vulnerable people in the community. By providing an up to date document that enables councils to build on each others work rather than duplicating it, it aims to guide local authorities forward to create partnerships and

develop procurement processes.

The guide is designed to help non-procurement professionals who "need to procure (or purchase) services for people who need care and support". The guide clearly explains in step by step what procurement is, how it relates to services and how your organization will benefit. To read go to <http://www.spkweb.org.uk/>

National News

Shelters Five Point Plan to End Homelessness

Shelter has developed a plan to solve the homelessness crisis as part of their Million Children Campaign

1. More investment in affordable housing

An increased investment in new social housing for rent is required. Shelter is calling for the government to deliver an additional 20,000 social rental homes each year from 2008.

2. A more balanced housing policy

Shelter believes that there is too much focus on encouraging and assisting people to buy their

own homes rather than ensuring that the fundamentals are covered. Shelter believes that we need "a more balanced, cross-tenure approach to the housing policy".

3. A reformed private rented sector

Shelter is campaigning for more effective regulation of private landlords and more investments to improve housing and supply conditions.

4. A commitment to tackling overcrowding

The need for space and privacy need to be

considered when developing a modern definition of overcrowding to replace outdated Dickensian laws. Priority needs to be given to building the desperately required family sized homes.

5. A pledge to end Homelessness

Shelter is asking for the Government, Local authorities and the Voluntary sector to intensify their efforts to focus on the prevention of homelessness.

To join Shelters campaign <http://england.shelter.org.uk/howtohelp/>

The Housing Corporation focuses on homelessness prevention

On November 21st 2006 the Housing Corporation released a strategy, 'Tackling Homelessness', to help meet the governments target to cut the 93,000 households still living in temporary accommodation in half by 2010.

In order to succeed at this challenge the Housing Corporation has set out six objectives that focus on prevention for housing associations to implement.

These are:

- Developing Partnerships between housing associations and local government

- Working towards sustainable, balanced communities where people want to live

- Preventing homelessness by promoting "coherent and seamless housing allocation and management approaches", where eviction from tenancies is a last resort.

- Encourage housing associations to make better use of existing housing 'stock' to tackle overcrowding.

- Working with Regional Housing Boards to direct investment towards improving access to housing where there is a housing need

- Promote and learn from good practice to raise the standard of services to residents

The Housing Corporation believes that in order to effectively achieve these objectives they must be monitored and evaluated. So as not to unnecessarily increase housing associations workloads, the Housing Corporation pledges to develop ways of monitoring progress within the current system.

To read the document in its entirety, go to www.housingcorp.gov.uk

New Chief Executive arrives at CRISIS

Crisis would like to welcome Leslie Morphy as their new Chief Executive. Leslie has had a vast career in the not-for-profit sector with a strong emphasis on social exclusion and expertise in learning and skills development. Crisis feels that Leslie's skills and knowledge make her the ideal candidate to develop their nationwide services and campaigns on behalf of single homeless people.



Entrenched or Enlightened? Space East Annual Conference

The Space East annual conference was held at Cambridge Belfry, Cambridgeshire on October 2nd and 3rd. We packed a varied range of topics into the two days leaving such limited time for networking and catching up that delegates were seen late into the night and early morning in the bar!

It included dinner hosted by the Deputy Chair and Chief Executive of the Regional Assembly, a breakfast forum with Portfolio holders of Housing and a MP and a great interactive performance by Cardboard Citizens.

Highlights included:

DCLG- Supporting People, Outcomes and the Future

Jane Everton, Deputy Director of Supporting People in the Department for Communities and Local Government stated the DCLG's commitment to moving towards three-year settlements and set the scene for the future of Supporting People programmes. Funding levels remain unclear until announcements on the Treasury's Spending Review are made next year for the period 2008/09 – 2010/11. SP programmes need to ensure and demonstrate value for money from current expenditure based and to draw on the lessons learnt from Value Improvement Programmes on better procurement and service reforms.

Plans are being developed for service user engagement schemes whereby services are designed by, and focussed on, the user in ways that strengthen user choice and voice. Similarly, Older People's Housing Strategies are being encouraged to engage older people in the planning, design and delivery of housing and housing related support services.

DCLG is also exploring the potential for a firmer statutory basis for SP either through minimum standards or universal duties to for

example, the right to receive housing related support or through a duty for those experiencing or are at risk of social exclusion. Commissioning Bodies are being urged to agree to include SP in LAAs and to prioritise spending to achieve the outcomes identified in LAAs.

Lastly, DCLG is focusing on five outcome domains that replicate Children's Services', namely 'economic well being'; 'enjoying and achieving'; 'being healthy'; 'safety and security'; 'social and civic participation'. SP's overarching outcome remains "Supporting & Enabling Independence". A working group is currently developing definitions and guidance for each outcome domain. Pilots were due in late Autumn with a view to implementation in April 2007 although this timescale is slipping. It will provide a consistent framework to work for Individuals, Service Providers, Commissioners and National Government.

Supporting People Eastern Region

Martin Cooper, Chair of SPERG echoed many of these issues in a regional context. Five key themes have been identified for the new SPERG work plan.

1. Strategic Liaison
2. Operational Development (to include Cross Authority Groups)
3. Structural Development
4. Research and Policy
5. Market Management

Commissioning in Practice

Jim Bullion, Head of Planning and Strategic Commissioning at Suffolk County Council, cited Local Area Agreements as the emerging 'commissioning territory' along with the emergence of Practice Based Commissioning and the alignment of Local Authority and PCT 'strategic enabling' roles. Effective Strategic Commissioning applies to all services that 'shape lives' and is underpinned by the user voice, strong data and evaluation of outcomes. It is underpinned by strong strategic sourcing, 'category management' and

correlated with quality.

Suffolk Adult and Community Services (ACS) are re-engineering and speeding up the customer journey in care services. This implies more services will be 'drawn out' by customers; independently brokered, individually purchased and lifestyle based. It also implies that Social Care/NHS 'integration' can no longer be a 'mechanical outcome' and offers significant opportunities for efficiencies.

For providers they will experience 'heavier' (but clearer) procurement arrangements. They will be challenged by the tensions between rationalisation versus localisation and face the same 'choice and personalisation' agenda as public bodies. The changes offer new opportunities for new types of services and for 'social enterprise and ownership' models

Working Together

Richard Clarke, Office of the Third Sector in the Cabinet described how the team are focusing on working with other government departments on the areas where the third sector can work in partnership with government. Much of this is about getting the basics right: namely:

Commissioning frameworks accord with best principles for enabling the third sector to contribute to better public services

Making multi-year funding the norm

Ensuring full cost recovery becomes the rule

Developing standard contracts for some key service areas

Addressing the barriers faced when trying to gain access to opportunities to compete for existing contracts

Care Services Improvement Partnership - CSIP

Amanda Reynolds, Social Care Team CSIP, suggested the following key roles for housing in people centred public services. "What should you do?"

- Read the White Paper
- Demand the new ways of working from Health & Social Care
- Take a leadership role
- Get close to customers
- Design homes that are fit for life
- Innovate in service delivery
- Offer new solutions to local commissioners
- Be part of the contestability

Space Training 2007

Space is currently devising a regional training programme for 2007 which will include courses held in Norwich, Ipswich, Cambridge, Bedford and Luton. To receive our full training brochure, please contact Mark on 01603617299 or email mark@space-east.org. If you require training on a specific topic contact Space East and we will try to arrange an in-house course designed to cover your needs, or will provide you with information on other regional or national courses available.

Focus on the Future

COMPACT Principles likely to be Embedded in CPAs and Accreditation Programme

The newly appointed COMPACT Commissioner, John Stoker, joined Focus on the Future for some lively and informative discussions on the 15th November in Ipswich. The Commission – a team of twelve people based in Birmingham with Capacity Builders – is due in place in the New Year.

In the meantime, John wants to explore the more under-represented areas of the sector. The supported housing and homelessness sector and its relations with for example, the Department of Work and Pensions, the Housing Corporation and Supporting People programmes, have been largely neglected but are clearly areas that need attention, good research and evidence. So dialogue with Focus on the Future – the strategic forum for Chief Executives of not-for-profit agencies in the East of England – was very welcome.

So far on his travels, the Commissioner has heard about the potential for the COMPACT but frustrations from all sectors that it has not been as effective as expected. John wants to assess current practice with members. How can the Commission work to improve relationships and get greater involvement across sectors, raise awareness of what has worked and fill gaps?

Members cited the new NHS structures as an example of how COMPACT principles need to be repeatedly embedded in the statutory sector as structures and personnel continually change. Similarly, it needs also to practically address the

changing funding environment. How does COMPACT support and influence commissioning and procurement processes? Many commissioners and procurement officers remain largely poorly informed about the relevance that the COMPACT has to their work.

There is already an Advocacy Service (www.ncvo-vol.org.uk/compactadvocacy) which has had some notable successes. Taking grievances to the Ombudsman is also an option that has been used elsewhere.

John's initial role will be to assess a likely assessment framework that can be embedded in CPAs and to look at how the COMPACT moves from a useful tool that is applied sporadically and often asking questions – through mediation – about what went wrong after the event.

The next phase of COMPACT will be based on a clearer set of core commitments, greater incentives and regulations. In addition, COMPACT Plus is already in place to look at the spectrum of accreditation schemes from membership schemes to models based on for example, Investors in People.

To contact John Stoker you can send the Commissioner an email: john.stoker@thecomcompact.org.uk

Focus on the Future

An open invite is extended to Chief Executives of member organizations in the East of England.

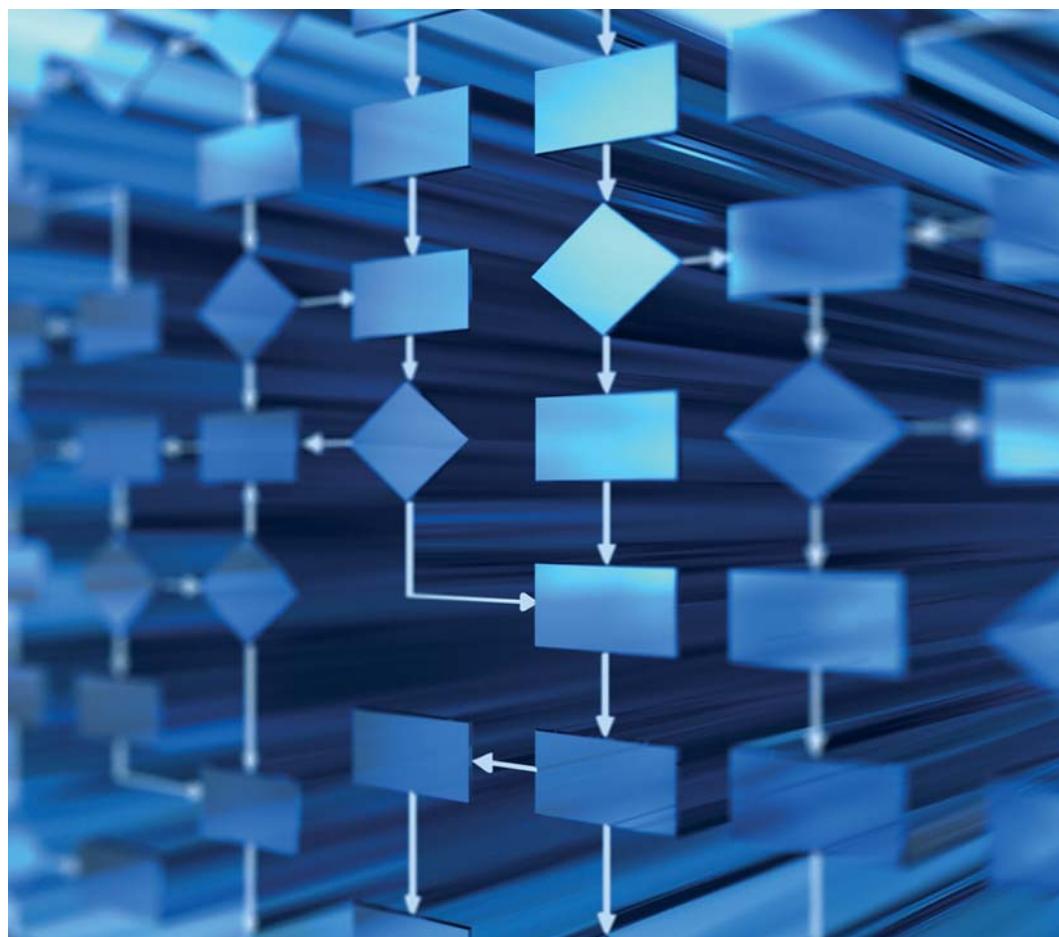
Dates for 2007, all in Bury St Edmunds, are:

Wednesday 7th February;

Wednesday 2nd May;

Wednesday 25th July

and **Wednesday 14th November 07**



Do you have something to say?

If you would like to **contribute** to the next edition of **Raising the Roof**, please email Kezia at kezia@space-east.org or telephone 01603 617299