

NAVCA Local Commissioning and Procurement Unit

Mapping local infrastructure organisations' commissioning and procurement activity

Survey findings

2009



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NAVCA is the national voice of local third sector infrastructure in England. We aim to ensure communities are well served by supporting our members and their work with over 160,000 local groups and organisations. NAVCA believes that local voluntary and community action is vital for healthy and inclusive communities.

1. Summary of key findings, actions and recommendations

NAVCA's Local Commissioning and Procurement Unit was established in 2008 to help local infrastructure organisations (LIOs) be better equipped to influence commissioning processes and support local organisations to provide the best possible services to individuals, families and communities. A mapping survey was carried out between October and December 2008 to find out what activities LIOs were involved in and the resources they were using to carry out this work.

Influencing local commissioning strategies

Seventy three per cent of respondents were involved in influencing local commissioning strategies. This work was carried out by the full range of LIOs and across a breadth of strategic commissioning activity. Sixty seven per cent of respondents stated that they required further skills and knowledge for influencing local commissioning strategies. The most common request was for knowledge about good practice in commissioning.

Action: The Local Commissioning and Procurement Unit will provide knowledge about good practice in commissioning.

Influencing regional commissioning strategies

Seven regional / sub-regional LIOs were involved in influencing regional commissioning strategies. This raises the question of whether LIOs are sufficiently aware of and involved in influencing regional and sub-regional commissioning and procurement. Fifty two per cent of respondents stated that they required further skills and knowledge for influencing regional commissioning strategies. Most respondents requested knowledge of good practice.

Recommendation: Further work should be carried out to explore the links between local, sub-regional and regional commissioning and procurement and third sector engagement.

Working with local public bodies

There was a high level of activity of LIOs working with local public bodies on commissioning and procurement. Eighty per cent of respondents were involved with lobbying public bodies to use both contracts and grants and a further 16% expected to be involved in the next 12 months. This was the highest scoring activity. Sixty six per cent of respondents said they needed new knowledge or skills for these areas of work, the greatest need being information, knowledge and understanding of commissioning and procurement.

Recommendation: The Local Grants Forum, led by NAVCA, should continue to lobby for the use of grants in commissioning and provide resources to support this, along with the Local Commissioning and Procurement Unit.

Capacity building the local third sector

Respondents were involved in a wide range of activities to develop the capacity of the local third sector to engage in commissioning and procurement. The highest responses were for delivering awareness raising events (70%), providing general information and advice on tendering (60%) and facilitating relationships between purchaser and provider (59%). Excluding awareness-raising events, the highest priority areas overall were tendering and facilitating relationships amongst local third sector organisations and between the local third sector and commissioners.

Action: NAVCA's Local Commissioning and Procurement Unit will provide information, advice and support on tendering.

Experience of competitive tendering

LIOs had variable experiences of competitive tendering. Seventy one per cent of respondents had submitted one or more tenders in the past 12 months, and 36% submitted two or more. Twenty one per cent of respondents had not taken part in competitive tendering in the past 12 months. Larger organisations (income above £200,000) appeared to be tendering slightly more often and with increased success than smaller LIOs. Skilling up LIOs and frontline organisations to write tender bids is a considerable challenge.

Recommendation: There is a need for a range of methods, such as training and mentoring, to skill up LIOs and frontline organisations to write tender bids. The Local Commissioning and Procurement Unit will provide information on this.

Human Resources

Work on commissioning and procurement appears to be concentrated at the senior staff levels in organisations, primarily with chief officers who are most heavily involved in influencing commissioning strategies. Over 75% of respondents' chief officers were involved with commissioning and procurement work. It appears that the number of dedicated commissioning and procurement workers is growing slowly overall, but is still at a relatively low level across LIOs in England.

Although it has not been possible to comprehensively map the entire range of staff who have become involved in commissioning and procurement work, it is reasonable to conclude that the amount of specialist resource for commissioning and procurement at a local level is small relative to the size and importance of the task.

Recommendation: Local authorities and other public bodies should invest in LIOs to increase their support to the local third sector on commissioning and procurement. LIOs should consider how best to provide specialist support on commissioning and procurement to the local third sector, for example in partnership with other infrastructure organisations.

2. Introduction

Background

The Local Commissioning and Procurement Unit (LCPU) was established in May 2008 to provide support to local infrastructure organisations (LIOs). This was in recognition of the growing significance of commissioning in public service delivery and the importance of this agenda for third sector organisations and thus LIOs. NAVCA's membership faced three key challenges. The first challenge was local authorities procuring infrastructure services through competitive tendering procedures so LIOs themselves had to acquire new knowledge and skills to compete in this environment. Secondly, at the same time LIOs had to help local organisations to engage with this agenda by providing capacity building support. Finally, LIOs had a key role in influencing local commissioning and procurement processes at strategic and operational levels.

The Unit was established with the following key objectives:

- to improve the local sector's understanding of commissioning and procurement
- to help LIOs to widen the involvement of local third sector organisations in service design and delivery
- to support the development of local service delivery partnerships and consortia
- to offer Government a well-informed voice on the implementation of its policies.

One of the initial tasks was to map resources and activity on commissioning in order to inform the future work programme. Although LIOs had identified commissioning and procurement as a priority work area, there was no detailed knowledge of the various types and levels of commissioning activities LIOs were involved in, the breadth of activity and how much variation there was between organisations depending on factors such as size. It was also important to find out the activities that LIOs were expecting to deliver in the following 12 months, the staff resources they had available to do this, and the new skills or knowledge they needed.

The mapping survey

A survey provided the most effective method of collecting this data systematically. In addition to the survey, LCPU staff have taken part in many discussions with LIO staff during this period, and these have also informed the picture that has been built up. The knowledge acquired through these other methods has informed the interpretation of the survey data.

The survey was aimed at any local infrastructure organisation based in England, whether generalist or specialist. It was sent to all NAVCA members and was also distributed via national and regional partners in order to access a wide range of LIOs. It ran between 20 October and 15 December 2008. In total 103 LIOs completed it, representing more than a third of NAVCA's full membership. Although the results do not provide a complete map of LIO activity, they do nevertheless provide a good general picture.

Profile of responding organisations

The respondents to the survey represent a good spread across the country and across different types of local authority structure such as unitary, county and district. About half the respondents work in unitary authorities and half in two-tier authorities. Most (83%) of the responding organisations identified themselves as 'generalist local infrastructure organisations'. Those who identified themselves as 'other' included volunteer centres, specialist infrastructure organisations in health and social care and community empowerment networks (Table 1).

Table 1. Type of LIO

Income	Number of responses
Over £500,000	46
£200,001 - £500,000	35
£80,000 - £200,000	16
Below £80,000	4
Unknown	2
TOTAL	103

Note: Some respondents identified themselves under more than one heading.

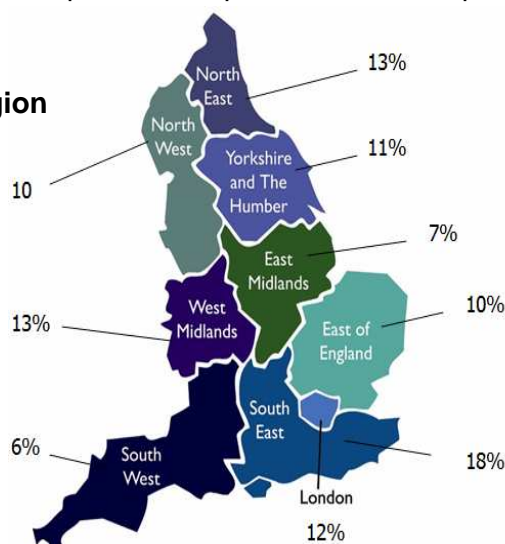
Incomes of respondents (from 2006 figures) varied, but 78% had an income over £200,000 annually (Table 2). If this is compared with data from the NAVCA annual survey 2008 ('Infrastructure for the local third sector'), a relatively high percentage of higher income LIOs have responded to the survey, a low percentage of the lowest income members have responded, and a representative percentage of middle income members. The survey data is therefore providing a fuller picture of medium and larger LIOs than smaller ones.

Table 2. Income of responding organisations

Generalist local infrastructure organisation, e.g. CVS	Generalist sub-regional infrastructure organisation	Generalist regional infrastructure organisation	Rural Community Council or other rural infrastructure organisation	BME infrastructure organisation	Other infrastructure organisation
85	10	3	3	3	9

There was a good geographical spread of respondents, with responses from each of the nine regions.

Table 3. Responses by region



3. Influencing local commissioning strategies

“Make sure this debate covers grants as well as contracts”

“We have been involved in very collaborative working partnership with borough council.”

“LA strategy developed without VCS involvement.”

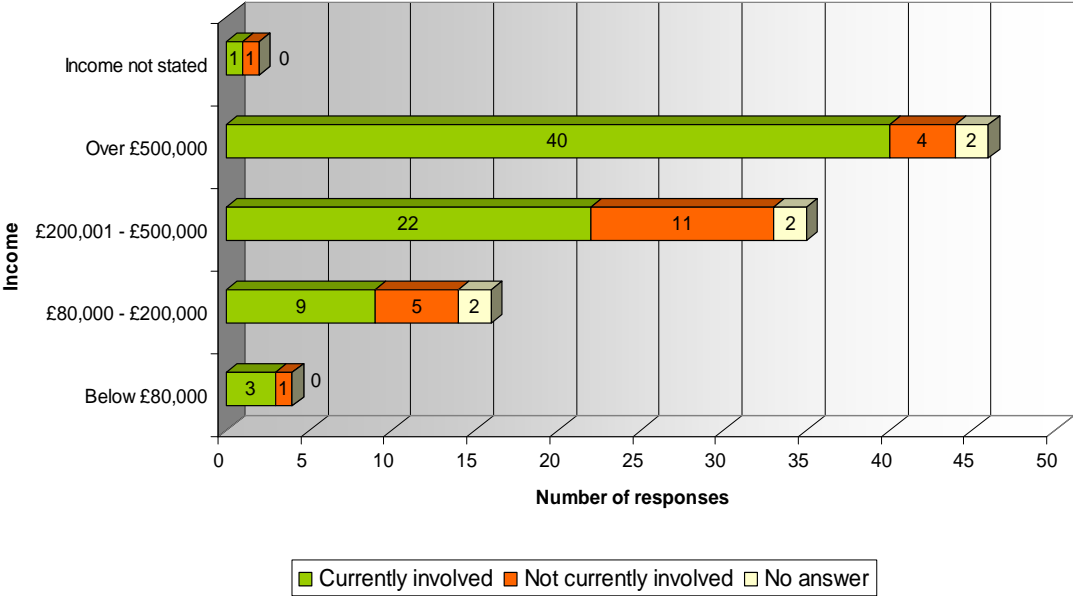
“Commissioning tendering and procurement do not seem to be part of what XXX District Council want to implement in the near future.”

The first section of the survey asked LIOs about their involvement in developing commissioning strategies with a local public body. Seventy three per cent of respondents (75 LIOs), answered that they are currently involved in this work. Generally involvement with commissioning strategies by LIOs appears to be high and is expected to remain so.

Of the remaining percentage of LIOs not currently involved in influencing local commissioning frameworks, a further seven LIOs expected to be involved in the following 12 months. Six respondents reported that they were not currently involved, nor expected to be in the next 12 months. Some of these were generalist LIOs and could therefore be expected to be involved, however the survey did not ask reasons why. One respondent stated that their local authority was not commissioning services, and this may explain why some LIOs did not expect to be involved in commissioning. For others it would not be within their role to carry out this type of activity.

It appears that medium size LIOs are currently less involved in this work (Table 4). There was a slight difference in involvement between ‘county and or district’ based organisations (71%) and ‘unitary’ based ones (76%) with 5% more ‘unitary’ areas involved in this work. Overall this suggests that there is slightly more involvement in influencing commissioning strategies from larger LIOs based in unitary authorities. It is clear, however, that this area of work is carried out by LIOs of all sizes and local authority structures.

Table 4. Involvement in local commissioning strategies by size



Although the survey did not differentiate between district and county level commissioning strategies, it was clear from the comments that some LIOs were working on influencing at both levels, or across more than one district. This multi-level and multi-district working presents additional challenges for district LIOs, particularly since they tend to be smaller, as these quotes indicate:

“The survey unfortunately does not allow for the reporting of the very different positions often found between a ‘County’ and ‘District’ Authority (for those of us working in two-tier areas). In our case, the two LA’s are at very different positions regarding their views and development on these procedures and we are trying to work with both!”

“We are indeed ‘in the early stages’ with some commissioners; whilst with other[s] we are in the dark ages ... The district/county two-tier split means that one authority speaks to us and our ChangeUp consortium about commissioning, whilst the other couldn’t spell “commissioning” if it was engraved on their foreheads.....”

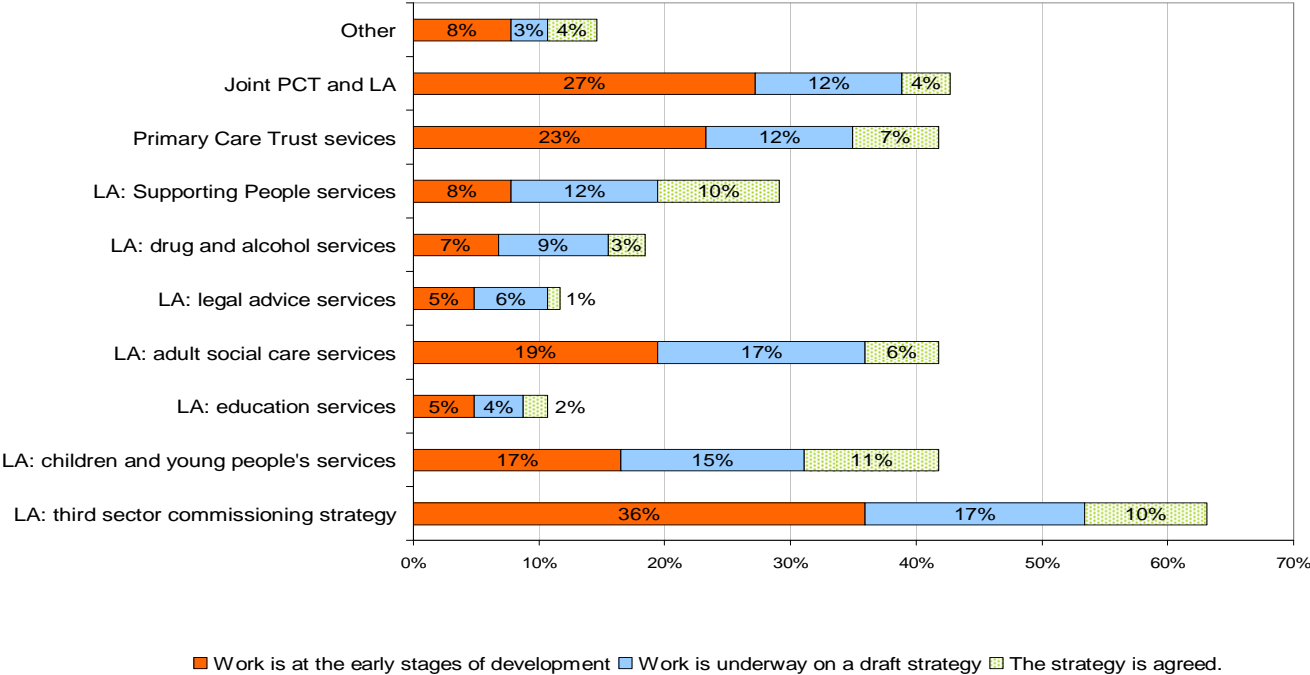
Types of commissioning strategy

Respondents to the survey worked across a breadth of activity in terms of the commissioning strategies they were involved with (Table 5). Involvement with a generic local authority third sector strategy scored highest with 64% of respondents involved in some way. Of these 10% answered that the strategy has been agreed.

After local authorities, LIOs are most involved with commissioning strategies with Primary Care Trusts (PCTs) (42%), joint PCT and local authority (43%), children and young people’s services (43%) and adult social care services (42%). There was much less involvement in education (11%), legal advice (12%) and drug and alcohol services (19%).

Children and young people’s and supporting people services have a relatively high response rate of strategies agreed (11% and 10% respectively). We know from the survey that this strategic involvement with children and young people’s services, and the third sector in general, is matched by high levels of direct support to local groups who provide these services (see Section 6).

Table 5. Involvement in commissioning strategies



Skills and knowledge

Two thirds (67%) of respondents stated that they required further skills and knowledge for influencing commissioning frameworks locally. Most respondents requested knowledge rather than skills.

“Knowledge of good practice in other areas - especially around how to protect grant funding and avoid everything being tendered”

“Improved knowledge of different models and approaches to commissioning plus pros and cons”

“Involving the sector upstream - analysing, specifying and planning protocols”

Overwhelmingly the most common request was for knowledge about good practice in commissioning, national guidelines or models and examples of good practice from other areas. There were also a number of requests for information specifically on procurement and tendering processes and EU procurement regulations. Respondents requested a wide range of knowledge from general introductory level to in-depth technical level.

4. Influencing regional commissioning strategies

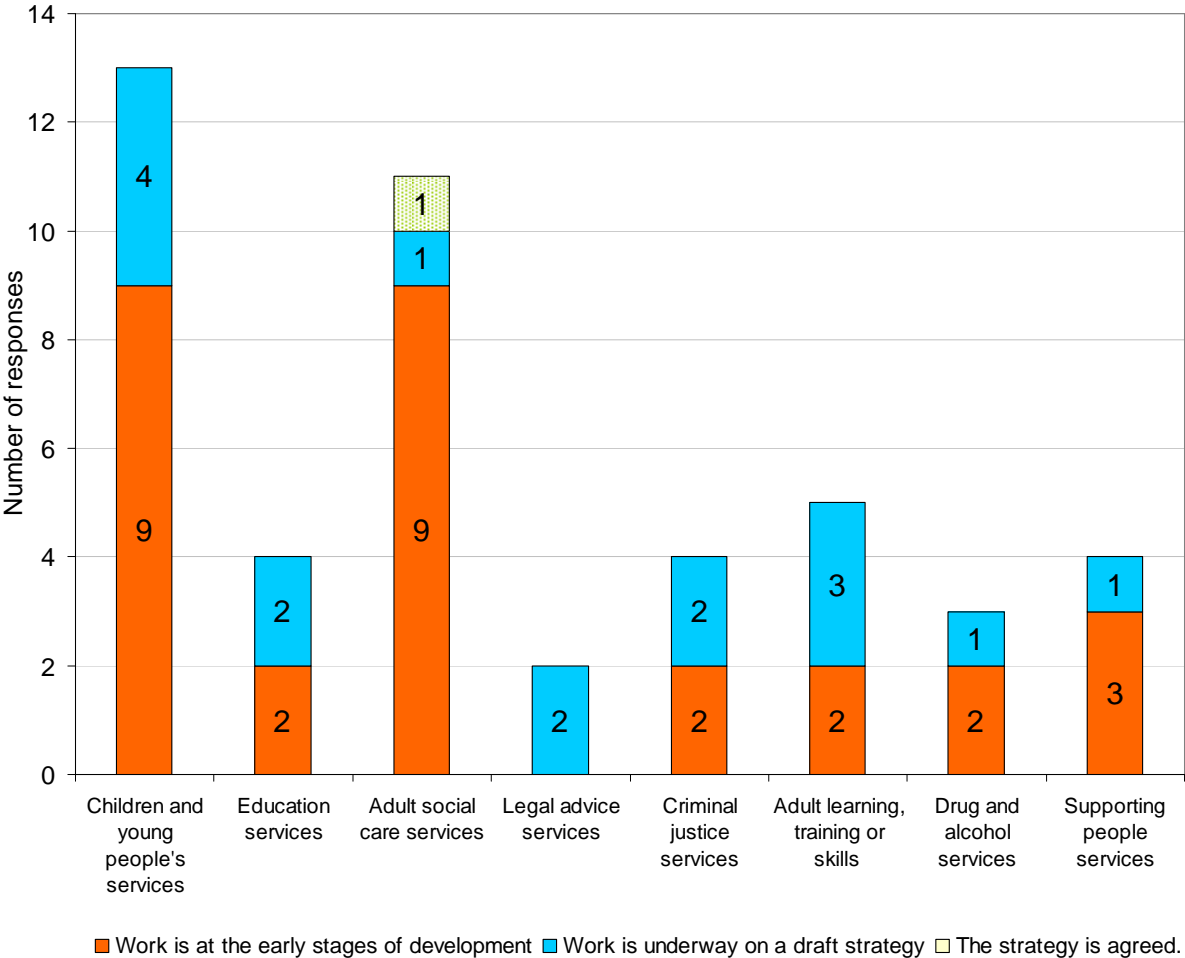
The next section of the survey asked LIOs about their involvement in influencing regional commissioning strategies. Whilst there is a high level of involvement with local commissioning strategies, there appears to be much less involvement at regional level (Table 6).

Of the nine generalist regional LIOs in England, three responded to the survey along with ten sub-regional LIOs. Of these, seven said they were currently involved in influencing regional commissioning strategies, five were not and one respondent did not answer. Of the five not currently involved, two expected that they would be in the next 12 months.

There was little current involvement on individual strategies at a regional level. The type of commissioning strategy that LIOs were involved in regionally broadly reflected the local picture. The highest figure for involvement was with children and young people's commissioning strategies (13 respondents) and adult social care (11). The lowest figures were for legal advice services (2), drug and alcohol services (3), education services (4) and supporting people services (4). Where work was taking place, it was still at the early stages of development.

We have speculated that the apparent lack of LIO involvement in regional commissioning strategies reflects the fact that most relevant commissioning activity for the third sector takes place at a level below the regional. That assumption has not been tested through the survey, however, and lies beyond its scope. This lack of LIO involvement in regional commissioning and procurement is worth noting, given the trend of increasing collaborative procurement at regional and sub-regional levels, contract aggregation, the establishment of Multi Area Agreements and development of city regions. It raises the question of whether LIOs in particular, and third sector organisations in general, are not sufficiently aware of and involved in influencing regional and sub-regional commissioning and procurement.

Table 6. Involvement in regional commissioning strategies



Skills and knowledge

Just over half (52%) of respondents stated that they required further skills and knowledge for influencing regional commissioning strategies. This compares with 67% at local level. Most respondents similarly requested knowledge of good practice rather than skills.

“What’s happening in other regions”

“Understanding of large sub-regional commissioners and large contracts”

“Good practice from around the nation on agreements on the commissioning process from input into service design, rebutting conflict of interest claims & protecting independence”

5. Commissioning and procurement work with public bodies

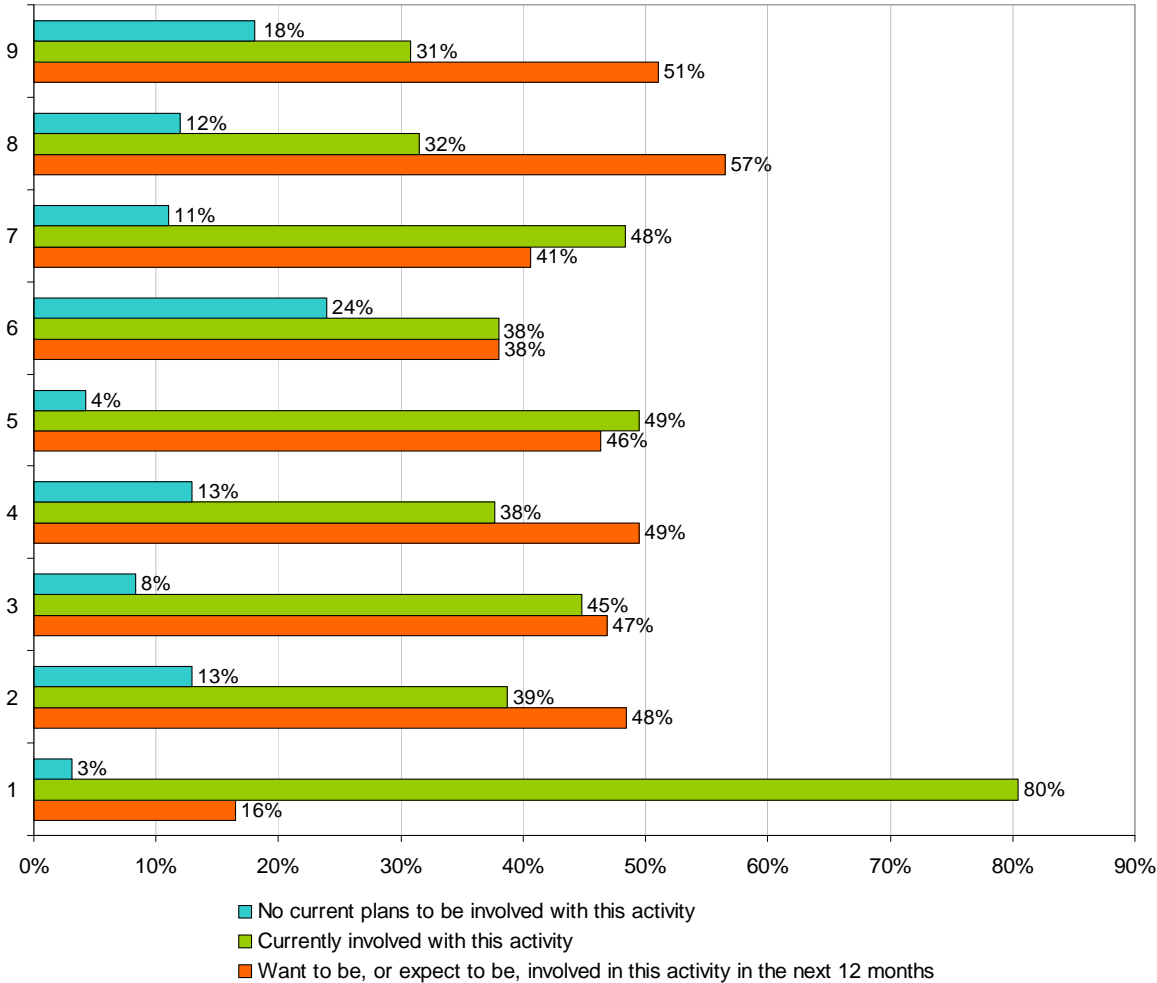
“Capacity and funding is a real issue”

“Procurement team putting on various events to support tendering. Relationship with council is quite good here. Doesn't always translate into money but translates into influence.”

“Delivery of a pilot programme commissioning service delivery from third sector organisations that contribute to Local Area Agreement priorities”

The next section of the survey asked LIOs to identify other commissioning and procurement activities they were carrying out with local public bodies. These ranged from influencing or lobbying commissioners to be more ‘third sector aware’ to practical support such as advertising contract opportunities. The responses showed a high level of activity across a broad range of themes (Table 7). Involvement with lobbying public bodies to use both contracts and grants scored highest at 80% with a further 16% expecting to be involved in the next 12 months. This figure is significantly higher than other activities and shows about twice the level of involvement of many other activities.

Table 7. Commissioning and procurement activities with public bodies



- 1 = Lobbying commissioners to use both contracts and grants to fund third sector organisations
- 2 = Embedding wider social outcomes into service contracts (sometimes called 'social clauses')
- 3 = Simplifying or streamlining tender documentation
- 4 = Influencing procurement practices. e.g. scoring of tenders
- 5 = Advertising contract opportunities so that they reach third sector organisations
- 6 = Arranging 'meet the buyer/seller' events
- 7 = Preparing specific groups of organisations for contracting e.g. mental health organisations, children's organisations
- 8 = Simplifying monitoring and reporting requirements
- 9 = Improving contract management processes

The survey identified a lot of current and future expected involvement in specific elements of commissioning and procurement such as preparing groups for contracting, advertising opportunities locally, streamlining documentation and monitoring and improving contract management processes. Other work that LIOs mentioned included embedding compact principles into practice, facilitating collaboration/consortia working and work to improve Pre Qualification Questionnaires. This high level of current involvement is particularly impressive given the limited number of dedicated workers identified through the survey. The levels for expected future involvement also show LIOs are planning more involvement with commissioning.

Skills and knowledge

Two thirds (66%) of respondents said that they needed new knowledge or skills for these areas of work. This was the greatest number of positive responses to this question from any section of the survey. Several respondents were unsure what new skills or knowledge they might need, illustrated by the comment *"Don't know what I don't know"*. Others said they needed a broad range of knowledge and skills while many specific subject areas and skills were also cited. Some of the skills required included contract management, influencing, negotiation, marketing, tendering, monitoring and evaluation, pricing for contracts and measuring impact.

Of these, the need for improved tendering skills was cited the most (12 respondents). Two organisations also stated that they lacked a member of staff with specialist knowledge and skills in tendering.

Third sector organisations are being encouraged to work more collaboratively in order to make the best use of resources and as a means of enabling smaller organisations to play a part in service delivery in an increasingly competitive context. Although this section of the survey did not ask any specific questions about this, two respondents said that they needed knowledge or skills for partnership/consortia working. Related to this, another two respondents identified challenges in "conflict of interest issues" and "managing the balance between competition and collaboration".

In line with previous sections of the survey, the greatest need was for information, knowledge and understanding of commissioning and procurement. Thirty four responses fall within this category. This ranged from knowledge about the legislative framework (7) to general knowledge of how commissioning works. Four respondents said they wanted to know more about social clauses. Case studies and good examples were again cited as useful vehicles for learning. It is noticeable that good practice examples were deemed by far the most useful.

6. Capacity-building services for the local third sector

LIOs provide a range of services to build the capacity of local organisations to both engage in the processes of commissioning and to deliver services. This section of the survey asked LIOs which services or support they were providing to frontline organisations (Table 8) and which types of organisations they had provided tendering support to in the previous 12 months (Table 9).

The capacity-building activities most respondents were involved in were awareness-raising events (70%), providing general information and advice on tendering (60%) and facilitating relationships between purchaser and provider (59%). There is a high level of expected involvement in these areas in the next 12 months as well. The areas of least activity were providing dedicated web pages on commissioning and procurement (17%), providing a lead or accountable body role for a public service contract (20%) and information, advice or other support on contract management (26%).

There is a correspondence between LIOs' current activities and those they plan. That is, LIOs want to deliver activities if they are not currently doing so. The survey shows a clear hierarchy of priorities however, with 90% of respondents delivering awareness-raising events. This suggests that awareness of commissioning should be at a high level in the sector. Providing a lead or accountable body role for a public service contract was at the bottom of the priorities hierarchy with only 63% of respondents carrying this out currently or expecting to. Excluding awareness raising events, the highest priority areas overall were tendering and facilitating relationships amongst the local VCS and between the local VCS and commissioners.

Table 8. Capacity building support for third sector organisations

Activity	Currently involved in this	Would like to be involved in the next 12 months	Total
Awareness-raising events on commissioning and procurement	70%	20%	90%
General information and advice on tendering for public services	60%	26%	86%
Facilitation of relationships between local third sector providers and public body purchasers in order to improve, support or increase service delivery	59%	25%	84%
Training on tendering or contracting for public services	51%	32%	83%
Individualised information and advice on tendering for public services	42%	38%	80%
Facilitate networks of organisations interested in tendering for public services	57%	22%	79%
Development support to create formal partnerships of providers to tender for public services	38%	39%	78%
Information, advice or other support on contract management	26%	48%	74%
Individualised support with writing tender bids	33%	39%	72%
Providing a lead or accountable body role for a public service contract and sub-contracting with local providers	20%	43%	63%
Web pages dedicated to commissioning and procurement	17%	48%	65%

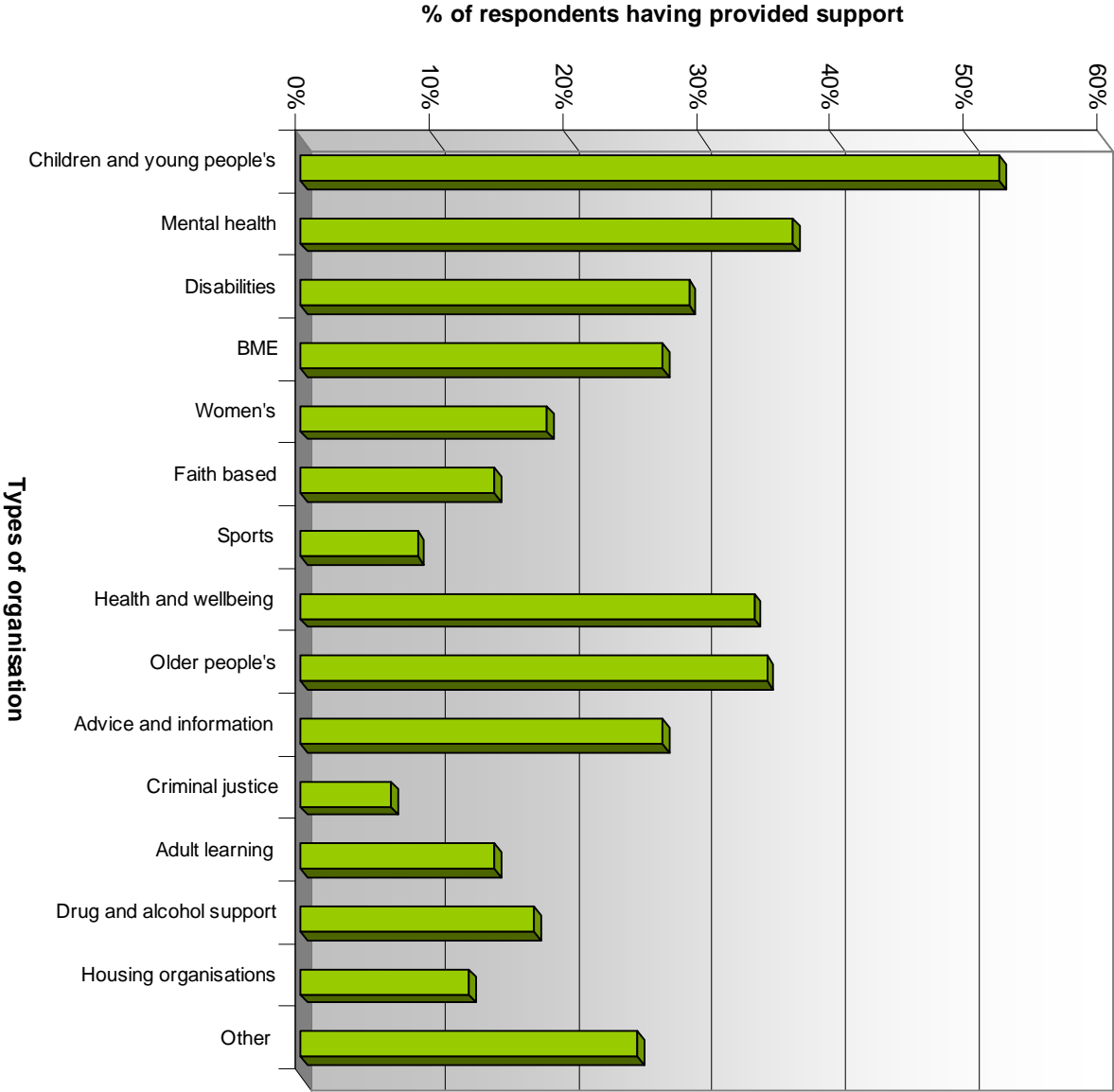
Support for tendering

The survey asked three questions about tendering support to find out whether it was provided in a general way or took a more tailored approach. More LIOs were delivering general information (60%) and training on tendering (51%) than individual information and advice (42%). Only 33% of respondents provided individual support with writing tender bids, but this ranked as the fourth highest priority for planned activity in the next 12 months.

Where support was delivered to specific organisations, the most common service area was children and young people's services (52% of respondents), followed by mental health (37%), health and wellbeing (34%) and older people's services (35%). The lowest responses for tendering support were to sports organisations and criminal justice organisations, both with under 10% of respondents. The survey also shows the levels of support in tendering with distinct equality groups such as women's organisations (5%), BME organisations (8%) and faith-based ones (4%). Responses under the heading 'other' included employment and training (4 respondents), carers (2), arts (1) and community transport (1).

The responses show a good spread of support across many different areas of service provision demonstrating the breadth of LIO activities. The 12-month snapshot suggests there is a reasonable level of tendering activity at a local level by third sector organisations.

Table 9. Types of organisations supported in tendering for services in past 12 months



7. Local infrastructure organisations' experience of competitive tendering

"How to get through a PQQ and how to compete with large private organisations who have dedicated staff who submit tenders as a job!"

"We are being turned down far more often than in the past - often for private sector or Universities. We clearly need to raise our game or we will not survive. But we want to hold onto our values like helping other VCS groups cheaply or for free ..."

"We are good at tendering but the amount of work involved is huge."

"Tendering has been a steep learning curve for everyone - we would always encourage the sharing of best practice and learning from unsuccessful tenders."

NAVCA is aware that LIOs, in common with the rest of the sector, have experienced an increasing amount of competitive tendering for the services they have provided formerly through other forms of funding such as grants. Section 7 of the survey asked LIOs about their own experiences of competitive tendering including:

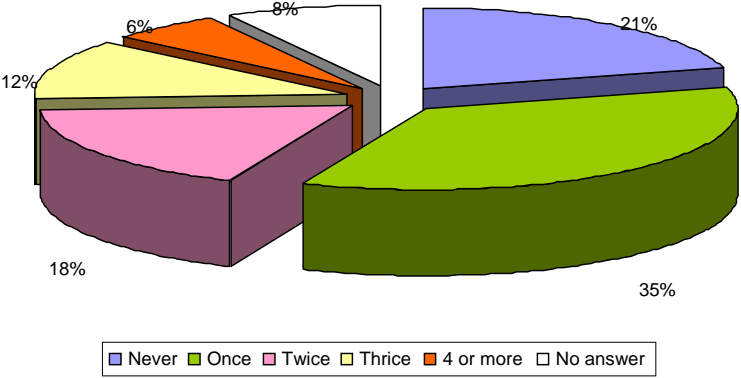
- How often they had taken part in competitive tendering processes in the past 12 months (Table 10)
- How often they had been successful (Table 11)
- Whether they expected to take part in any tendering in the following 12 months
- Whether they required any support to take part in competitive tendering.

Recent involvement in tendering

The survey showed a large proportion of respondents had direct experience of competitive tendering (Table 10). It is clear that even across the varied sample of survey respondents, competitive tendering is very much a reality. Seventy one per cent of respondents had submitted one or more tenders in the past 12 months, with 36% submitting two or more. Over 30% of organisations with an income over £200,000 had tendered at least once. However, 21% of respondents had not taken part in competitive tendering in the past 12 months.

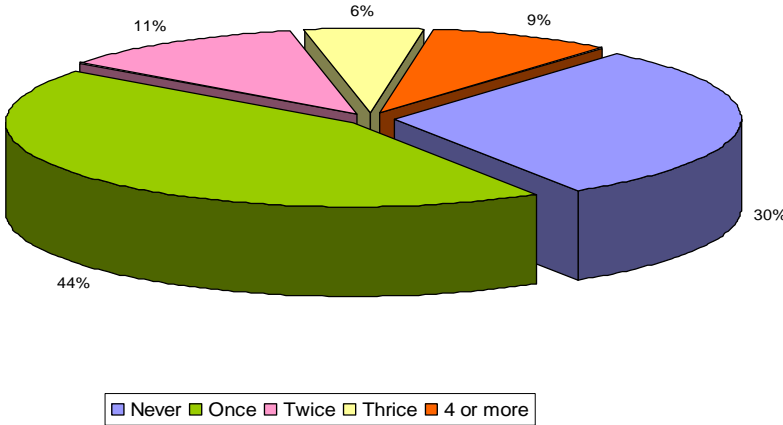
Exploring this further, 56% of LIOs (64% when 'No answer' is included) had tendered for one or fewer contracts in the past year. This suggests that a low number of LIOs are involved on a regular basis with submitting tenders, and this may well limit their experience to cascade to frontline organisations.

Table 10. Frequency of involvement in competitive tendering processes in the last 12 months



The success rate figures are even starker with 74% being successful once or less, and 30% not successful at all. The larger organisations (income above £200,000) appeared to be tendering slightly more often and with increased success.

Table 11. Success in past 12 months of those having tendered



Bearing in mind that many large organisations (private and third sector), have professional tender writing teams and submit many tenders in one year, it appears not all LIOs are geared up to deal with experienced and well resourced competition for both their services and for supporting frontline organisations. The contrasting business models of centralised and professional bid writing teams compared to that of ad-hoc responses to tenders is conceivably one reason why regular success is limited.

This is encapsulated by a respondent's comments:

"I have participated in one tender process for which we were the preferred local supplier but due to the size of the tender it went out to European tender. We got through the PQQ but did not have the skills to compete with the competition. We scored 65% but the international organisation that won the contract scored 96%. Feedback showed that we were sound on delivery but not on answering the questions in the most appropriate way."

What this shows is two things: firstly, the importance of input into the whole commissioning process and the adoption of selection criteria that will best achieve the desired outcomes, and the importance of a well equipped, knowledgeable, responsive and well resourced local third sector to successfully compete.

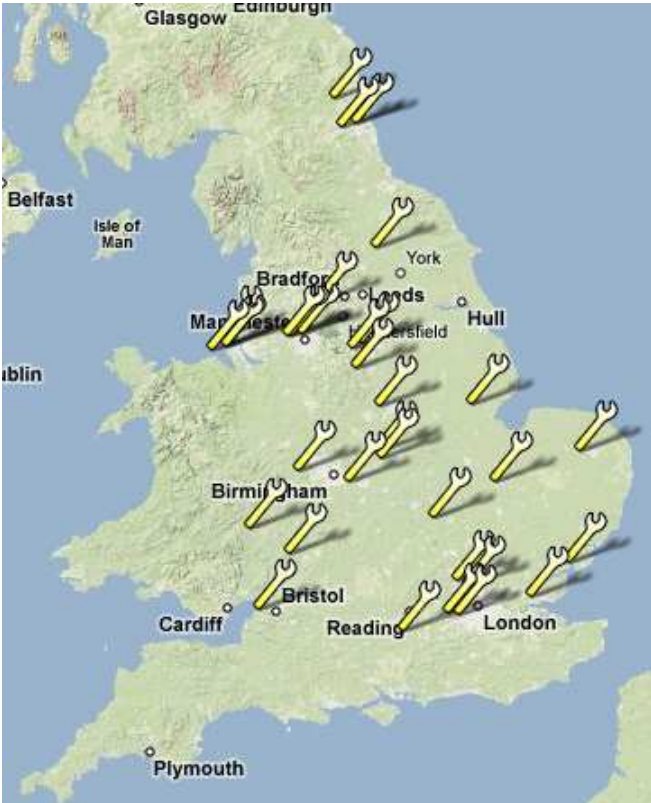
The future

Almost two thirds (65%) of all respondents believe they will take part in a competitive tender in the next 12 months, while 22% seem confident they will not. This may be a strategic decision, could relate to existing contracts and grants not being up for renewal in the following 12 months, low levels of activity or continued use of grants at a local level and other funding and income streams.

In response to the question 'do you need any further support in tendering', 42% answered 'yes' and 48% answered 'no'. The 'no' camp may well be closely related to the organisations already involved in tendering for services and relatively well equipped in this area. Of those who were not successful in the previous 12 months, 61% would like further support in tendering. Advice and support with writing tenders was most needed by those who responded yes.

8. Local infrastructure organisations’ resources for commissioning and procurement

“This is a completely new area of work for us and we currently have no members of staff or volunteers with experience of commissioning or procurement or tendering”



Map of current provision of specialist support on commissioning and procurement by LIOs.¹

The final section of the survey asked which staff members were involved in work on commissioning and procurement, and whether any of these were dedicated workers or specialists in these areas.

There appears to be little difference between staff members’ involvement in commissioning and staff members’ involvement in procurement (Table 12). There is a slightly higher involvement with commissioning, which may be indicative of good historical working relationships with local public bodies. However the difference is slight and the question may not have clearly articulated the difference.

On the whole, work on commissioning and procurement appears to be concentrated at senior staff levels in organisations, primarily with chief officers who are most heavily involved in

¹ Interactive version available on NAVCA website. - <http://www.navca.org.uk/localvs/lcp/briefings/supportmap.htm>

influencing commissioning strategies. This work is clearly deemed a high priority by respondents' senior staff members with over 75% of respondents' chief officers involved with commissioning and procurement. Where no dedicated or specialist resource exists within the LIO this work seems to be undertaken by chief officers and other senior staff. Although the survey asked whether volunteers were involved, it did not specifically ask about trustees, and it could be that this is under-reported. One respondent reported that their trustees are involved in tendering and provide tendering support to other organisations.

Specialist commissioning and procurement staff

Only a limited number of respondents have any 'dedicated commissioning and procurement workers' to provide external support to frontline organisations. A previous NAVCA survey in early 2008 ('Infrastructure for the local third sector') found that around 6% of NAVCA members had a dedicated procurement support worker, compared to over 65% having a dedicated funding adviser. This mapping survey found that only 20% (21 LIOs) of respondents had a dedicated worker to support frontline organisations on commissioning and procurement. If this figure can be taken to represent no less than 7% of the full NAVCA membership, it indicates little growth in the number of dedicated commissioning and procurement staff between the beginning and end of 2008.

A number of new specialist posts to support commissioning and procurement activity have been created since the survey, mostly using ChangeUp and Lottery BASIS funding. Some dedicated posts that were created a few years ago are approaching the end of their funding streams, and the future of these posts is therefore uncertain. Nevertheless, results from the LCPU survey and information gathered since suggests that the number of dedicated commissioning and procurement workers is growing slowly overall, but is still at a relatively low level across LIOs in England.

The overall picture

The picture of which LIO staff are involved in commissioning and/or procurement work is complex, since several staff within a single LIO may be involved. For example, about 29% of LIOs provide dedicated specialist infrastructure work for local health and social care groups and 28% provide dedicated specialist infrastructure work for young people and/or children's/family groups ('Infrastructure for the local third sector'). It is highly likely that these specialist workers are involved in commissioning, and this seems to be supported by the data from Section 7 (see Table 9) but is not fully reflected in the survey data. Other examples of LIO staff that are potentially involved in commissioning include small groups workers, Compact workers and funding advisers. It is therefore difficult to comprehensively state the overall number of staff in LIOs who work on commissioning and procurement issues.

It is fair to say that although the survey has identified a lack of specialist or dedicated staff resources for such an important area of work, it has not been possible to comprehensively map the broader range of staff who have become involved in this work as it has become an ever higher priority. Nevertheless, it is reasonable to conclude that the amount of specialist resource for commissioning and procurement at a local level is small relative to the size and importance of the task.

Table 12. LIO staff involved in commissioning and procurement

