

SOCIAL ENTERPRISE (COMMUNITY BUSINESS) : HENDON COMMUNITY CARE

Hendon Community Care provides home support services to older people and disabled people across inner city Sunderland who require assistance with their daily living needs. The organisation has been delivering contracts for Sunderland City Council since 1994, growing out of an established voluntary organisation that began operating in 1973. Hendon Community Care won its most recent contract at the end of 2005, a three year contract from Sunderland City Council to deliver 'Support Services for People at Home'.

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About the organisation

Hendon Community Care is a 'not for profit' organisation that provides a home support service across the inner city of Sunderland to people requiring assistance with their daily living needs. It employs 52 members of staff – this includes 45 care workers, an administrative team and a centre manager. The organisation also has a voluntary board of directors.

Hendon Community Care grew out of 'Hendon Care and Friendship', a stream of work delivered through Hendon Advice, Support and Care centre, a voluntary organisation that began in 1973. The scheme was originally funded by Manpower Services Commission and Urban Aid.

In 1994, when Sunderland City Council first began to tender out contracts to the social enterprise, community, voluntary and private sector organisations, Hendon Care and Friendship scheme secured a contract to deliver Home Support (along with five other organisations, four of which were part of the social enterprise, community and voluntary sector) – and in 1998 decided to become a company, Hendon Community Care Centre Limited.

Hendon Community Care, through their care workers, deliver services to over 120 service users across inner city Sunderland. The majority of service users are older people and adults with disabilities. The services provided by Hendon Community care workers to people in their homes are:

- physical assistance (e.g. helping a person get up from bed, get dressed, wash, eat, go to the toilet and go to bed etc.);
- domestic tasks;
- shopping;
- companionship and escort service (allows volunteer carers to take a break from caring from their friends and family).

Contracts acquired from the public sector

Hendon Community Care has been delivering contracts for Sunderland City Council since 1994, and is contracted to **only** provide services for Sunderland City Council Social Service Department. At present, they are delivering two contracts that fall within 'Support Services for People at Home'.

'Support Services for People at Home' provides services to support people within their own home, by providing Day Care, Home Support and Companionship to people who have been assessed as needing these particular services. Twenty-three organisations across Sunderland deliver the 'Support Services for People at Home' contract.

Hendon Community Care also deliver Home Support and Companionship, three year contracts which on this occasion, were awarded in September 2005:

- **Home Support:** through this contract the delivery organisation provides physical assistance to the service user, undertaking domestic tasks and doing shopping. The total value of the contract from Sunderland City Council is £19,900,000. Twelve organisations, including Hendon Community Care, deliver Home Support. These organisations are:
 - Wellburn Care Homes Ltd;
 - Care at Home (Wearside);
 - Care Concern;
 - Hendon Community Care Centre;
 - Care Watch;
 - Care UK;
 - Hetton Home Care;
 - Piers View;
 - St Martha's Ltd;
 - Sunderland Home Care Associates;
 - Support Care;
 - Thompson Park Homes.

Companionship: through this contract the delivery organisation provide care workers who help and support a service user, so that their usual carer (a friend or member of the family) can have a break. The total value of the contract is £494,000. Three organisations, including Hendon Community Care, deliver the Companionship contract. These organisations are:

- Age Concern;
- Hendon Community Care;
- Hetton Home Care.

Partnership Working

Hendon Community Care and the other delivery organisations work in close partnership with Sunderland City Council Social Services to deliver the service. Social Services carry out a care needs assessment of each individual to agree the support

that is needed, they then request the work from one of the service delivery organisations.

Benefits of the social enterprise, community and voluntary sector as service providers

Hendon Community Care suggest that they, as well as other social enterprise, voluntary and community organisations, are well placed to deliver services for the local authority for several reasons:

- the infrastructure of the staff within a social enterprise, community or voluntary organisation is by nature 'flatter', in as much as decisions can be made quicker, without having to refer up and up the ladder. As such social enterprise, community and voluntary organisations can act more responsively;
- there is less 'red tape' within the social enterprise, community and voluntary sector than within the local authority, meaning there is the ability for the social enterprise, community and voluntary sector to be more flexible;
- a social enterprise, community or voluntary organisation will have well-established links within the local community in the relevant field that a local authority may not have.

Barriers and hurdles Hendon Community Care have faced

Legislation

As part of an application to bid for a contract from Sunderland City Council, an organisation must provide written evidence of a wide range of legislation and policy, including lone worker policy, health and safety legislation and anti fraud policy etc. Hendon Community Care needed to acquire a good working knowledge as regards employment law, along with improved skills in writing legislation. The organisation also found it beneficial to employ a consultant to assist with writing the health and safety policy – which although adhered to on the ground, was not evidenced in the correct written format.

Changing from a voluntary organisation to a community business

Hendon Community Care felt their status as a voluntary organisation was proving to be a barrier in terms of being taken professionally by banks etc. A few years after acquiring their first contract from Sunderland City Council, Hendon Community Care decided it would be advantageous to change from a voluntary organisation to a company – however they still wished to retain their charitable ethos. Hendon Community Care received advice from the forerunner to Social Enterprise Sunderland, regarding the different types of company/ enterprise they could become – and decided that a not-for-profit 'community business' suited them best. This meant that Hendon Community Care changed their legal status and now has a management committee.

Processes of service delivery

The Procurement Strategy

Sunderland City Council have developed a Procurement Strategy to ensure procurement is used effectively to deliver their vision, strategic priorities, and underpinning of service objectives - whilst achieving Best Value. The Council recognise within the strategy the important role that the voluntary sector can play in supporting the strategic priorities and provision of services and as far as possible will maximise the opportunities for using local suppliers. In order to gain an understanding of what the local authority is looking for within their bids, it is important to read this document. For example it is made clear that in terms of best value, regard is made to price, but also to quality, delivery, professional skill, efficiency, health and safety record and reliability.

Finding out about contracts

Sunderland City Council spend over £163 million on procuring out services and advertise the wide range of contracts in national and local press, with larger ones also advertised in the Official Journal of European communities.

For contracts from Social Services, each applicant puts in an expression of interest and then receives an application pack. They then have around one month to return their final bid.

Management of contracts

The two contracts that Hendon Community Care have secured from Sunderland City Council, Home Support and Companionship (part of 'Support Service for People at Home') are for three years. The two contracts were awarded most recently these towards the end of 2005 - and thus the organisation will be delivering these services until late 2008. However, the number of service providers bidding for 'Support Service for People at Home' within Sunderland, has increased greatly over the last few years. Indeed the bidding round in 2005 saw 23 applicants apply for the contract - yet each organisation that applied was successful in their bid. With an ageing population, it is felt such services will be in increasing demand - thus Hendon Community Care are confident that their services, and those of similar organisations, will continue to be needed.

As part of contract management and to ensure that service users are receiving a high quality service that they are happy with, Hendon Community Care in partnership with Sunderland City Council Social Services Department, periodically send out a questionnaire to their service users, seeking views about how their services are delivered. In addition Hendon Community Care also employ a process of telephone monitoring, whilst Sunderland City Council monitors services externally.

It is important that Social Enterprise / VCS organisation delivering services for a local authority monitor their performance for several reasons:

- to re-shape, where necessary, how a service is delivered;
- to incorporate positive feedback into marketing and promotional material;
- to celebrate the achievements of their organisation, helping to boost staff morale
- to exploit new/emerging opportunities in service delivery that may arise from feedback;

- to highlight to the local authority in future applications for contracts – that the organisation is monitoring their performance, and also incorporate positive feedback into the application.

Lessons learned and future challenges

Maintain your profile

Hendon Community Care has a high profile and a good reputation. Although the organisation now covers a far wider geographical area than just Hendon, it has chosen to retain its original name. Hendon Community Care suggest to social enterprise, community and voluntary organisations, that even though their remit may alter slightly as result of delivering public services – they do not have to alter their name, especially if it will be to the detriment of their profile.

Do your homework

A social enterprise, community or voluntary organisation must have a good understanding of all necessary legislation, such as employment law, before applying for contracts from the local authority. There are a number of good periodicals that provide legal guidance (i.e. 'Tips, Advice, Personnel') that may be of help.

Be diligent

It is vital that an organisation adheres to the correct date when applying for a contract and also submits all the relevant paperwork. Failure to do so may result in instant rejection.

Get a Service Level Agreement

It is useful to get a service level agreement from the local authority upfront. Contact a social enterprise, community or voluntary organisation that already delivers services for their local authority to discuss what processes they went through to secure this.

Do not feel you have to expand

Hendon Community Care have purposefully chosen not to expand, so that the organisation stays manageable. This will ensure that their services retain their high quality and personal touch.

Ensure you have a dedicated staff

Wages are likely be at the lower end of the scale, thus a dedicated team who are passionate about the service they deliver is imperative.

The future for Hendon Community Care

Hendon Community Care are confident that they will continue to deliver 'Home Support' and 'Companionship' across inner city Sunderland, as they have a successful track record in both application and delivery. At present they are employed to deliver the service until end 2008.

Though some social enterprise, community and voluntary organisations are becoming increasingly worried about housing associations and national charities winning contracts to their detriment, Hendon Community Care believe experience

has shown that a management not located locally, results in a poorer quality service. Thus local organisations will continue to be supported by the local authority.

Hendon Community Care are enthusiastic about taking advantage of emerging opportunities in their sector. One idea they have is expanding into providing training. Hendon Community Care would train care workers from other delivery organisations in skills such as food hygiene and fire safety.