



A common question asked of NAVCA's Local Commissioning and Procurement Unit is **'how do I find out who my commissioners are?'**

The right people to speak to do not always have 'commissioner' in their job title so it can be a struggle. Also your organisation's services might not fit neatly into any category. Here are some tips...

## If you are a local charity, voluntary organisation, community group or social enterprise

- Speak to your local support and development organisation, they should be your first point of contact:
  - Try and speak to
    - a commissioning or procurement worker
    - a funding advice worker
    - a development worker
    - a health / social care worker or
    - a children / young people worker
- Find out who are the representatives at strategic levels, for example the Local Strategic Partnership and make contact with them.
- Ask an elected member.
- If you already deliver services, you probably have relevant contacts you deal with already. If these are not the right people, they should be able to point you in the right direction.
- Think about what services you are interested in and what area of the public sector locally is responsible for these.
  - Is it the PCT, if so which area?
  - Is it the council, if so which council and which department?
  - Or is it another public body, such as a school or education establishment, an emergency service, or a quango?
- Ask other organisations
- Contact your Local Involvement Network (LINK) for health related services
- Speak to your trustees, make the most of any contacts they have
- Have a look on the council's website or the PCT's website for a commissioning strategy or commissioning framework. These often have relevant contacts in them.
- Also look out for sections entitled 'doing business with us' or 'selling to us'. These usually have links to the procurement departments who should then be able to tell you who is responsible.
- Take advantage of any 'meet the buyer', 'meet the seller' events.
  - Ask your council and local support and development organisation if there are any planned
- Watch out for consultations. These are often listed under 'getting involved' or 'engagement' or advertised and circulated locally. Networks can help you keep informed of these. Consultations are an opportunity to tell commissioners what you think.
- If it looks like it will be a large contract, consider dealing with bigger main contractors / a prime contractor who often require smaller sub-contractors.
- Be persistent!

**Local Support and Development Organisations** exist to champion and strengthen local charities, voluntary organisations and community groups.

Your local support might be called a Council for Voluntary Service (CVS), a Voluntary Action, or something similar. NAVCA is the national body of such organisations; you can find your nearest support by looking here: <http://webdb.navca.org.uk>

## If you are a local support and development organisation

- There are potentially lots of commissioners across different service areas that *could* be relevant to talk to. Not all will be commissioning services at the same time. You may have to prioritise areas to make connections.
- Consider who is responsible for commissioning which services:
  - Is it the borough, county or city council?
  - Which PCT is it?
  - Are there quangos, central government departments or prime contractors involved?
  - Are there joint commissioning arrangements across geographical boundaries?
  - Which department within the public body is responsible and who are the relevant people there? This will obviously change with different services.
- Have a look at the important documents in your area that show the local priorities. These often provide details of who to speak to, look out for:
  - The community strategy
  - Service area plans, such as the children's plan
  - Commissioning frameworks and strategies. These can be thematic specific for example health strategy or more general such as a third sector commissioning strategy
- Look out for sections on the council's and PCT's websites entitled 'doing business with us' or 'selling to us'. These usually have links to the procurement departments who should then be able to tell you who are responsible for a specific area of commissioning.
- Some councils are now publishing 'commissioning intentions' on their website which cover current areas of spend, dates of contracts expiring and future timetables of commissioning.
- Make use of consultations on services as an opportunity to meet commissioners and promote the role and influence of local organisations
- Take advantage of any 'meet the buyer' or 'meet the seller' events. Your local chamber of commerce or businesslink may be involved with these and know of them. If none of these exist then get in touch with these people and the local public bodies and see if you can arrange one.
- Speak to representatives at strategic level, for example the Local Strategic Partnership
- Work with local organisations finding out their areas of interest and build on their connections and local knowledge.
- Consider the role of elected members in a local area if you are struggling to make the right connections.

**If you've found a better route, not listed above then let others know on navcaboodle or get in touch with us.**