

Commissioning mental health services – early research findings

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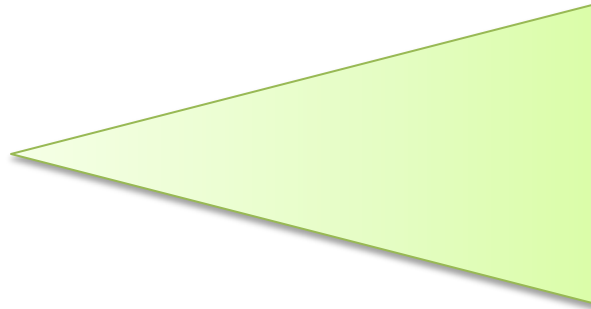
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About the research

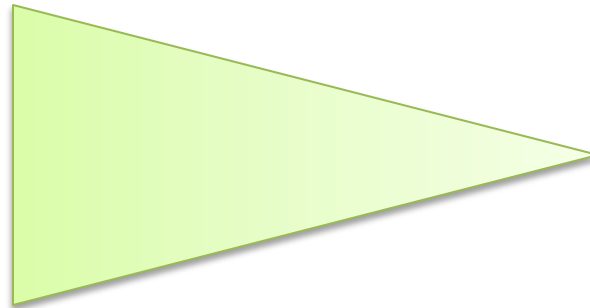
Public sector
looks 'out' and sees



- Fragmented and confusing third sector
- Lack of professionalism?

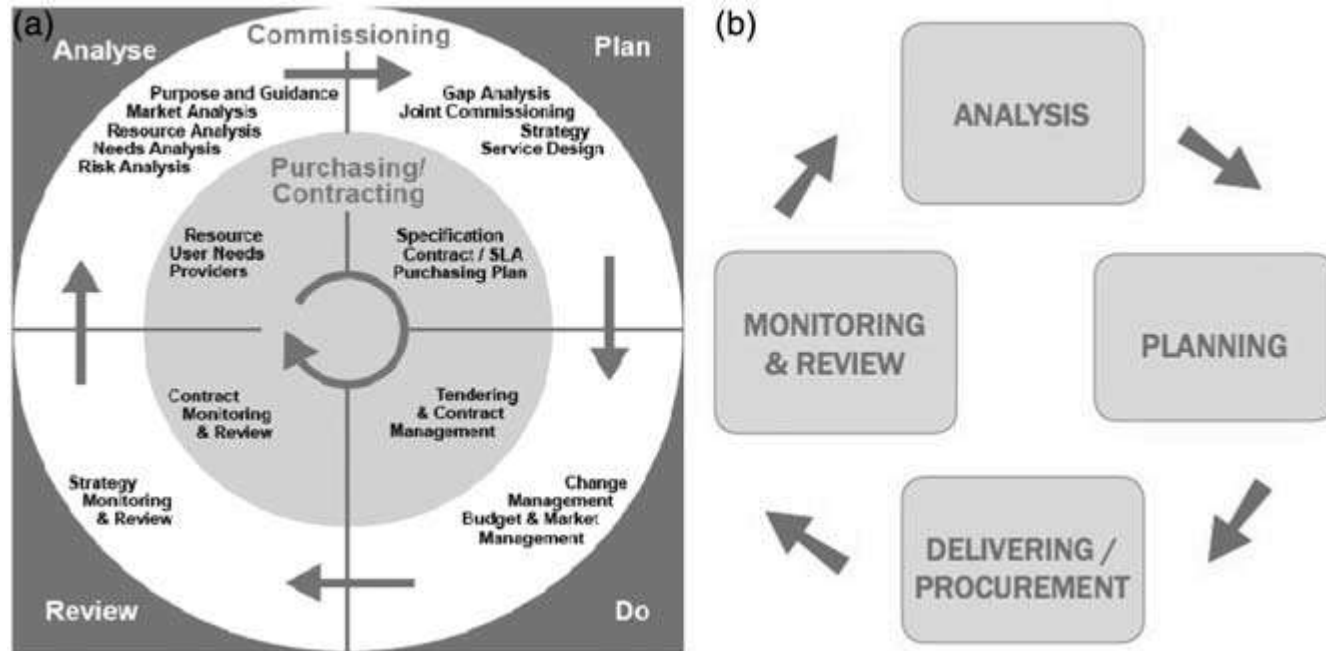
Third sector not 'commissioning ready'

- Bureaucracy and silos
- Lack of understanding of what 3S offers



Third sector
looks 'up' and sees

Public sector not 'partnership ready'



Procurement: discussion and decision about whether to ‘make or buy’, or act of purchasing

Messages from policy and academic research

- Policy shifts:
 - Outsourcing: public sector ‘steering not rowing’
 - Rise of commissioning for outcomes / PbR / Primes
- No coherent picture across different service areas, and nationally
- Confusion about the ‘cycle’:
 - Does the cycle actually operate?
 - Commissioning vs procurement
 - Perception of barrier between public and TS
- Impact on (part of) the third sector:
 - Increased competition, less trust
 - Further diminution of independence, mission etc.

Questions

- Who commissions from the third sector and how?
 - How much have TSOs been involved in the commissioning cycle?
 - What has been the TSO experience and impact on them?
 - What do commissioners think of each of the above?
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Methodology

- Literature review and scoping interviews
 - Online survey of TSOs
 - Semi-structured interviews
 - 22 TSOs, 6 Commissioners
 - Framework analysis used to understand interview and survey data with both deductive and inductive themes
 - Feb-Oct 2013
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FINDINGS



Basics

- Mapping/understanding provision
 - Few sources of info/amount of spending
 - Complex picture of old services, contracts “rolling over”; + new commissions, service reconfiguration
- The cycle – does it exist?
 - Very few perceived a cycle
 - Some felt ill-informed/unknowledgeable
 - It “goes on at a higher level” – communication!
 - Consultation seemed largely ad hoc, v mixed

Procurement and contracting

- Experience of procurement + impact on TSOs
 - Delays and uncertainty in tendering
 - Very poor experience of contract management
 - How *competent* is the public sector?: Upheaval, restructuring and redundancies etc.
- Shifts in procurement practice?:
 - Some say becoming more flexible, nuanced and outcome focused
 - Others say too prescriptive, tick boxy, too rigid – having policies in place

Continuity and change

- Great deal of variation in the extent to which TSOs felt they had been involved
 - Some reported involvement in service redesign
 - Some felt very valued (new, innovative, central); others less so (old, unfashionable, marginal?)
 - Continuity – no discernible ‘before and after’
 - Very long running contracts
 - Little apparent change in contractual approach
 - Some attempts to introduce outcomes focus later (or frustrating shifting of goal posts!)
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Competition + collaboration

- Competition:
 - Very unclear that commissioning *per se* unleashes competition
 - ill-feeling about non-local orgs. ‘coming into’ the area
 - ... fear: ‘shiny prospectus’ vs real knowledge of provision and existing infrastructure
 - But respondents also report discomfort with ‘cosy relationships’ + long standing arrangements
 - ... Trade-off: transparency and contestability vs service continuity
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Public service quality and integration

- The really big unknown?
 - Little sense of collaborative and coherent system design
 - Fragmentation?
 - Outcomes – very ad hoc, depends on service/client group
 - User voice and involvement?
 - Crisis in some parts, strain beginning to show, people falling through gaps?
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The public sector side

- Embattled? Legal challenges and risk aversion
 - Contract management, tendering etc – big complaints and big transaction costs
 - TSOs appreciate engagement and ‘eyeballing’ of services
 - Crucial role of ‘good’ individuals and communication skills
 - Relationship should be good but professional
 - Upheaval, redundancy, change, and coming cuts
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Deeper questions

- NHS commissioning more advanced and coherent, but challenging for TSOs?
 - TSOs having ‘comparative advantage’ or niche specialism, can nuanced commissioning continue to secure this?
 - Unique role of sector: Identifying needs * providing intelligence * Efficiencies * Bringing in additional resources/networks
 - But sector unable to take on full role in clinical provision? - **risk?**
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Next steps...

- Producing descriptive, policy relevant TSRC working paper
 - Academic papers focusing on:
 - Consequences for third sector
 - Mental health procurement (big gap!)
 - Integrated (or not) mental health services?
 - Commissioning's role in shaping a field of provision and securing the TSO specialist role in services
 - Commissioning is perfect lens for exploring state-civil society-private boundaries
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More info about TSRC research

Service Delivery:

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