

Social Firms UK Annual Conference
Shaping The Future: Supportive Employment, Successful Businesses
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WORKSHOP A: Externalisation In Practice
Facilitated by Bill Hande, Geof Cox & Helen Lockett

Notes by: Andy Beaton

Background:

It's happened, and it's set to continue: the externalisation of employment-related services and Social Firms from public authorities is actually taking place. Bill Hande from the PLUSS in Devon shares the highs and lows, challenges and joys of 'coming out', Helen Lockett describes experiences in Surrey from the NHS environment, and Geof Cox consults on the framework for a public authority guide to externalisation.

Key Points:

PUBLIC AUTHORITIES (PA) ISSUES

- Cost of Externalisation in context of prevalent cuts agendas, Saving long-term, cost short term
- Risk Averse
- Lack of understanding of benefits
- Catch 22 – the service is not seen by PA to have a financially viable future outside, proves it can operate in a business environment, then gets told that they can't be externalised because "if it's not broken, why fix it!"
- Need for key PA players to "buy in" – e.g. Directors of Finance, Directors of Social / Adult Services, politicians.
- Important to have good "business champions"

STAFF ISSUES

- TUPE issues critical, approved status for externalised company to enter PA pension scheme a crucial factor in getting staff on board.
- Need to establish business culture, move away from care focused culture.
- Need for business training for managers
- Potential for incentivising staff within externalised company.
- Risk Averse relatives / carers

PROJECT MANAGEMENT

- Need for clear action plan for all stages of process
- Need for good project management.
- Need for good communication at all levels
- Advantage of quick decision making (shedding of bureaucracy)

- A threat to the future of the “unexternalised service” may actually act as a catalyst towards successful change.
- Need for clear service specification
- Value of having a major SLA in place immediately upon externalisation.

STAKEHOLDERS

- Need for shared vision which stakeholders sign up to.
- Need to “take everyone with you”