

AG/LSM/603

20th October 2000

Mr Billy McKenzie
Scottish Executive
Development Department
Area 3-J
Victoria Quay
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Dear Mr McKenzie

BEST VALUE IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT: THE NEXT STEPS

Many thanks for your invitation to comment on this document. Community Care Providers Scotland (CCPS), the association for voluntary sector providers of care services, has taken a keen interest in Best Value since its inception, particularly in relation to the application of Best Value principles and processes to human services.

We would wish to offer the following brief comments on the document:

1. *'Best Value demands new attitudes, especially towards partnership with others like the private and voluntary sectors. Some councils have identified significant savings this way.'* (para 12)

Providers working within the 'mixed economy' for community care have struggled for some time to understand the concept of 'partnership' with local authorities. We have found that the term is often used to describe straightforwardly commercial contractual relations which, in our experience, are weighted heavily in favour of the purchasing authority as the 'senior' partner. We are particularly concerned that 'partnership' with the voluntary sector is apparently promoted here as a means to achieve 'savings'; we would wish to see an equal emphasis placed on quality considerations, in accordance with Best Value principles.

We note from paragraph 51 that Best Value will promote a mixed economy, with services being provided *'in partnership, outsourced, or contracted'*. We would wish to see precise definitions of these terms, and how the processes they describe differ from one another. For your interest, I enclose two of our publications which set out some of the difficulties we have encountered in this area.

- *'We propose to develop guidance through...creating a Best Value advisory body similar to the Task Force'* (para 30)

As we have pointed out on a number of occasions, Best Value was developed without the involvement of the voluntary sector in spite of the significant implications for voluntary organisations as providers of publicly-funded services. We would hope that voluntary sector interests will be included in any new advisory body.

- *'there has been a natural reluctance in some councils to encourage competition... especially in those areas of council activity where social values and aims are of the greatest significance, eg. education and social work'* (para 47)

CCPS welcomes the Executive's recognition that councils have experienced difficulties in this area. We are disappointed, however, that the document does not go on to suggest how these difficulties can be remedied. We are very firmly of the view that competition must be used extremely sensitively, if at all, in relation to community care services.

Thanks again for the opportunity to comment.

Yours sincerely

ANNIE GUNNER
Development Co-ordinator

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