

CSED's Better Buying Initiatives

The CSED Better Buying work-stream has focussed on creating a suite of pragmatic solutions to assist councils in achieving efficiencies in commissioned home care services:

- TRACS[®] : Tool for Rapid Analysis of Care Services;
- In-house versus External Homecare Assessment Toolkit; and
- Better Buying Diagnostic (with Solutions)

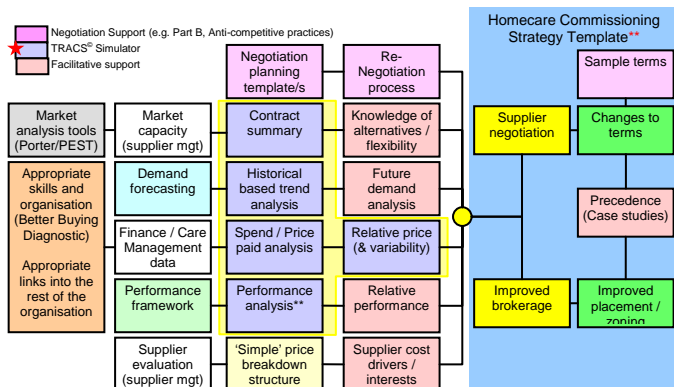
In addition there are published guidelines covering general procurement obligations within social care and 'Type B' service acquisition.

The Better Buying Initiatives in Context

The CSED Better Buying initiatives have been developed on the premise that, regardless of whether internal or external, reduced unit costs are achieved by either:

- some form of negotiated change with the provider; and/or
- changing who performs the work (e.g. in-house versus external)

The conceptual framework is illustrated below:

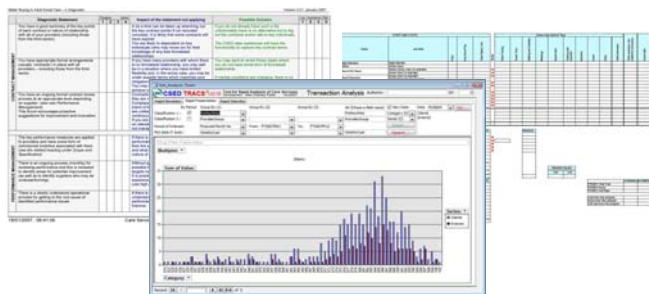


It is widely recognised that effective preparation is usually key to a successful outcome when making such changes (the boxes in light purple and blue):

- a robust process (involving the right people);
- knowledge of alternative options;
- future requirement trends;
- knowledge of relative price and performance; and
- a good understanding of cost drivers

Experience suggests that good preparation is facilitated by an appropriate organisation and effective processes and systems.

How do the CSED solutions fit together?



The Better Buying solutions work on different aspects of this framework:

- TRACS[®] provides a council with the ability to analyse care costs in some detail very quickly. It also provides the ability to test ideas for improvement equally quickly. It may be used to test restructured

pricing arrangements, evaluate trends and investigate brokerage options;

- The **In-house versus External Homecare Assessment Toolkit** provides a structured methodology for capturing equivalent service costs. This takes into account service, quality and performance differences as well as how indirect costs are allocated. This feeds into the 'available alternatives' dimension of the contextual diagram.
- The **Better Buying Diagnostic** lends itself to situations where a council is considering improvements to the commissioning function. It is designed to help a council identify and/or justify opportunities for improvement across the spectrum of commissioning activities – from Strategic Organisation through to Transactional process improvement. It thus provides a basis for determining the underlying readiness of an organisation to engage on a transformation process as well as linking to other CSED activities (such as Demand Forecasting and Capacity Planning).

Which initiative to choose?

- If a council is considering restructuring or renegotiating home care services, TRACS[®] is the obvious initial solution.
- TRACS[®] also lends itself to supporting brokerage optimisation and/or zoning since it can help analyse existing patterns as well as model future ones.
- If a council is under council member pressure to explain the high costs of in-house home care or a council is considering restructuring or refocusing in-house services (on, for example, re-ablement) then the In-house versus External Homecare Assessment toolkit is an appropriate solution;
- If an organisation currently has limited strategic commissioning capability, or it is fragmented, then the Better Buying diagnostic may assist in providing a structured overview and help focus on key areas of improvement.
- The Better Buying diagnostic is also suited to assisting a council identify appropriate solutions to improve transactional efficiency.

Other Better Buying Products

In addition to the core solutions described above, CSED have worked alongside OGC to produce two guidelines:

- A short document designed to introduce procurement obligations to those 'buyers' who traditionally may have felt such obligations are limited; and
- A guide designed to clarify the requirements on EU 'Part B' services and address commonly raised issues concerning EU procurement rules which apply to Social Care.

For more information on CSED's Better Buying solutions contact:

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