



Better Buying

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

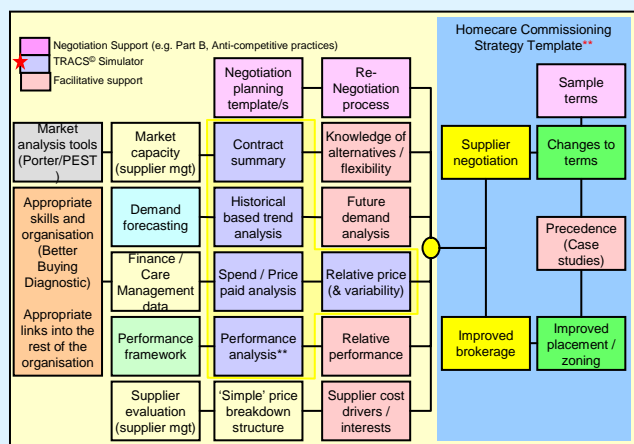
- TRACS: Tool for Rapid Analysis of Care Services;
- in-house versus External Homecare Assessment Toolkit; and
- Better Buying Diagnostic (with Solutions)

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

- a of negotiated change with the provider; and/or
- placing work with a lower cost provider (both of which are illustrated in yellow in the figure 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

How do the CSED solutions fit together?

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

- **TRACS** provides councils 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 the true 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 councils identify opportunities for improvement across the spectrum of commissioning activities – from Strategic Organisation through to transactional process improvement. It provides a basis for determining the underlying readiness of an organisation to engage on a transformation process as well as linkage to other CSED workstreams (as Demand Forecasting and Capacity Planning).

Which initiative to choose?

- A council restructuring or renegotiating home care services, TRACS is an obvious initial solution.
- TRACS can also support 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 is fragmented, then the diagnostic may assist in providing a structured overview to focus on key areas of improvement.
- The Better Buying diagnostic is also suited to assisting a council identify appropriate solutions to

Other Better Buying Products

We've worked with OGC producing 2 guidelines:

- A short document designed to introduce procurement obligations to 'buyers' who traditionally feel 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 covering advertising and contractual structures.

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