

WHAT IS SOCIAL VALUE?

In the context of this project social value is the added benefit to the community from a commissioning/procurement process over and above the direct purchasing of goods, services and outcomes.

This guide is intended for commissioners, procurers and providers of public sector services

1. The Social Value Toolkit is the key set of tools and guidance which allow you to undertake the relevant steps to measure all aspects of the 'social value pathway' – and identifies the opportunities for commissioners, procurement teams and providers to evaluate the benefit in real terms of capturing social value.
2. The first step in any path you take to enable social value should be to understand if and how you already help generate social change as an organisation (in addition to your core responsibilities).
3. The types of benefits that are likely to be derived as a result of social value will generally happen over the medium to longer term as the NHS seeks to make clearer contributions to non-health agendas – investing for no or little additional cost in those areas that will support the move towards 'prevention' as opposed to 'intervention'.
4. Measuring the benefit across organisations of commissioning social value; and understanding how to create progress based on this measurement:
5. Commissioners need to work closely with procurement teams in assessing the suitability of providers and how they propose to deliver social value.

It is vital that procurement teams communicate closely with commissioners to understand what they should be looking for from providers; to understand what providers are being encouraged to deliver; and to ensure a co-ordinated approach in evaluating the services and goods offered (with regards to social value) based on the actual needs of the community.

6. When assessing how providers are delivering social value; and procurement teams are rewarding providers for doing so; it is important to consider the communication that has gone on to increase awareness of the concept of social value. Has it been understood at all levels? Poor communication can lead to a failure in embedding the importance of delivering social value. Commissioning organisations should be mindful of how effectively the social value message has been delivered.
 7. In many instances, social value is already being gained by accident from commissioning or procurement activity – however it is not being acknowledged, measured or captured in a deliberate manner. The social value project aims to embed the concept into public sector culture. Measurement is key in achieving this (but importantly, not in a manner that is cumbersome or resource-intensive). Throughout the Social Value Toolkit, you are encouraged to undertake the measurement and assessment steps within existing commissioning and procurement processes – rather than increasing the amount of tasks (and workload).
- The Self Assessment Tool (Step 2 of the Social Value Toolkit) supports organisations to do this. Crucially, this Tool enables you to identify the steps to be taken to improve your own knowledge of and engagement with social value, either as an individual, team or organisation.

The Social Value Toolkit – Step 6 (Measurement Framework) points you in the direction of the guidance and tools to allow you to measure both Social Return on Investment and undertake Social Accounting.

8. Social Return on Investment is a concept that has been developed (and which has been promoted by The Office of the Third Sector) to evaluate the value of social change.

It provides a mix of narrative, qualitative and financial measures to identify what has been achieved in social change – and allows the measurement of this alongside traditional financial costs. As social value relates to the delivery of benefits which can fall outside of your traditional remit, social return on investment is one possible method to measure this as it allows you to understand the wider impact across stakeholders. For commissioners, this helps establish the full value of your commissioning activities – looking at the wider returns that can be achieved across departments and organisations. This can help establish where returns can be achieved that significantly outweigh the higher investment required to achieve them.

9. Social Accounting & Auditing is a useful way of articulating social value as it is concerned with assessing your own performance (or those of your team or organisation) against your social, economic and environmental objectives. This involves understanding your values and assessing what, and how well you have done, in meeting those values.

Evaluation can take place against criteria and objectives such as:

- The Local Area Agreement
- The national policy agenda
- Local needs assessments
- Public consultation

It will be important to refer back to what was established in the Prioritisation and Measurement Framework (Step 3 of the Social Value Toolkit) in this instance.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT:

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The social value toolkit, evaluation report, easy read guides and further information can be found at:

http://www.northwest.nhs.uk/whatwedo/socialvalueproject/social_value_project.html