

Press Release

THIRD SECTOR CRUCIAL TO CREATING 21ST CENTURY PUBLIC SERVICES**3 March 2009**

Third Sector organisations have been exhorted to “boldly go” and grasp the opportunity before them to transform public services in the UK.

Mark Johnson, managing director of TPP Law, a specialist firm which supports the development of successful public service partnerships, told a national conference today (Tues) that charities, housing associations and social enterprises were in the vanguard of change.

But, as TPP Law’s own survey last November revealed social enterprises have to work hard now to strip away the obstacles and barriers they encounter with service commissioners to be able to realise their potential.*

“I believe passionately that the third sector has a crucial role to play in re-designing public services for the 21st century: who better to tackle tricky social problems, the immense challenges of demographic change, globalisation and social diversity and the rising expectations of our citizens,” Mr Johnson told delegates at the NCVO’s Public Service Delivery Network annual conference in London.

“The total value of the market for outsourced public services in the UK in 2007 was said to be worth £79 billion. In the same year, NCVO’s almanac reported income from statutory sector contracts for the third sector was £7.8bn. There is ample scope for the third sector to grow its 10% share of the market significantly.”

Mr Johnson, whose firm was a sponsor of the NCVO event, which focused on ‘Transforming together - innovation, public services and the voluntary sector’, added: “This Government has committed itself to public service reform on a grand scale. New opportunities are opening up in offender management, employment services, children’s services and education, health and social care and local government services.

“At a time when public trust in private sector institutions has been badly dented, and in spite of the economic gloom, I believe the third sector is uniquely positioned to be in the vanguard of public service delivery. Their independence, local accountability, and freedom to innovate, coupled with their sheer energy and enthusiasm, are distinctive and compelling advantages in public service delivery. The tide is most definitely turning - and now is the hour to catch the wave.”

Mr Johnson used examples of three innovative and successful projects upon which his firm advised to highlight what could be achieved.

- The new integrated health and social care campus in Malmesbury, which is run as a highly successful partnership between leading care charity The Orders of St John Care Trust, the PCT and a private sector developer of extra care housing- this was an innovative way to keep services local by reinvigorating a former community hospital site;
- Secure Healthcare, a social enterprise mutual society set up by two psychiatric nurses who believed passionately that the way to stop prisoners re-offending and reintegrate them into the community, was to give them a quality healthcare service to deal with addiction and mental health problems: they had the courage of their convictions and last year won their first contract at Wandsworth Prison, which is working brilliantly;
- Edmund Waller School Services, a new charity TPP Law helped to establish in Lewisham which runs breakfast- and after school clubs and holiday play schemes thereby enabling parents and carers to return to work or pursue further study; so successful has it been with the first school, that it now runs these services under contract to two other neighbouring schools bringing in additional income streams.

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