



Halton Strategic Partnership

Commissioning framework

June 2004

Introduction

The Halton Strategic Partnership uses a commissioning approach in its allocation of Neighbourhood Renewal Fund. Other streams of regeneration funding in Halton, past and present, have used a bidding approach to allocate funds. The move to a commissioning approach aims to make the allocation of resources more strategic and better linked to medium and long term change.

This framework sets out the principles that guide the commissioning of services and the roles of the commissioner and the provider. It guides the work of the Halton Strategic Partnership Board, the five Specialist Strategic Partnerships, and the organisations delivering services funded through the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund.

The commissioning process

The commissioning process runs from the initial needs analysis and identification of work to address those needs to the end of delivery and evaluation.

Commissioning is needed to ensure that neighbourhood renewal activities in Halton are developed which meet the identified needs in a systematic and co-ordinated way, ensuring that services:

- are appropriate and meet the identified needs
- achieve the desired outcomes
- are flexible enough to be changed or decommissioned if ineffective

The process is different from traditional bidding for funds in several ways:

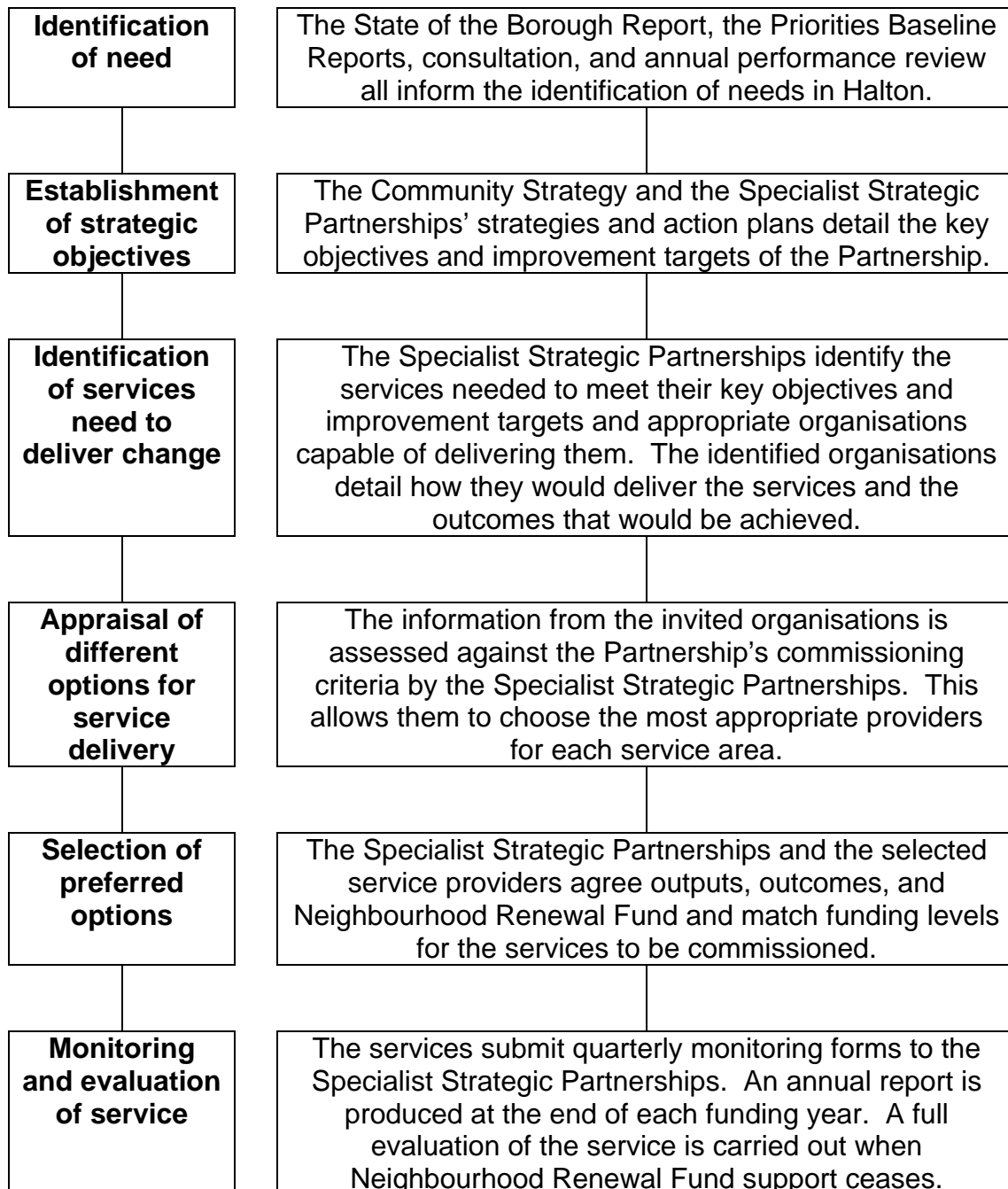
- only organisations invited to do so can submit proposals for consideration
- invited organisations are requested to submit proposals related to specific service delivery activities
- the work to be commissioned should lead to long term improvements in service delivery and is not just short term, project-based activity
- the focus of the work is on medium and long term outcomes, not on short term outputs

All work commissioned by the Specialist Strategic Partnerships should meet the commissioning criteria laid out in this document and the guiding principles of the Halton Strategic Partnership as set out in the Community Strategy: Key Priorities document (Appendix 1).

The process is managed by the Specialist Strategic Partnerships through the development and implementation of their strategies and action plans. It is overseen by the Halton Strategic Partnership Board through the quarterly reporting from the Specialist Strategic Partnerships and the annual approval of Neighbourhood Renewal Fund allocations.

The diagram below outlines the process.

Commissioning process diagram



Commissioning criteria

- ✓ The need for the proposed service has been identified and can be clearly evidenced through statistics and/or research.
- ✓ Best practice in circumstances relevant to Halton's has been identified and used in the development of the proposed service.
- ✓ The proposed service can demonstrate clear links to at least one of the key objectives and at least one of the improvement targets of the Specialist Strategic Partnership commissioning the service.
- ✓ The proposed service will be delivered by an organisation with a proven track record and which has the resources to deliver the proposed service to the required standards. Where no proven track record exists and an organisation is identified as the most appropriate provider, additional support and monitoring will be provided to ensure the effective delivery of the service and meet audit requirements.
- ✓ The proposed service has identified and gained the commitment of all appropriate partners.
- ✓ The beneficiaries of the proposed service have been identified and appropriate methods identified to engage with them and, where appropriate, with the wider community.
- ✓ The proposed service aims to improve the situation of the most disadvantaged and, if appropriate, minority groups.
- ✓ The proposed service has identified short, medium, and long term results and developed appropriate SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, time-bound) targets.
- ✓ An appropriate level of match funding from the lead organisation for the proposed service has been identified.
- ✓ The proposed service has been selected following documented option appraisal by the Specialist Strategic Partnership and can demonstrate cost effectiveness.
- ✓ The proposed service uses existing staffing and service delivery arrangements where possible and creates new staffing and delivery arrangements only where essential.
- ✓ A forward strategy for the proposed service has been committed to by all partners to ensure delivery continues once Neighbourhood Renewal Fund ceases (if appropriate), with a focus on staffing and funding arrangements.

Responsibilities of partners

The Halton Strategic Partnership will:

✓ **Ensure the commissioning process is fair and open.**

The Specialist Strategic Partnerships will consider all options for service delivery. The most appropriate method will be chosen having regard to effectiveness, economy, and efficiency in delivering the required outcomes.

✓ **Be clear in its expectations of services.**

Negotiated Service Agreements with service providers will be agreed, detailing the expected outputs and outcomes of the service and the planned cost and funding sources. The guidance for financial management and monitoring of services will be distributed to all service providers and training and ad-hoc assistance provided. The purpose of Neighbourhood Renewal Fund – to improve mainstream services – will be clearly communicated to all service providers.

✓ **Monitor service delivery and give regular feedback to service providers.**

The Specialist Strategic Partnerships will monitor service delivery on a quarterly basis and submit reports on performance to the Halton Strategic Partnership Board. Feedback on performance will be given to service providers as necessary and on request. Information provided by service providers will be used to inform the identification of need and the allocation of partnership resources, including Neighbourhood Renewal Fund.

✓ **Ensure payments to service providers are made promptly.**

Clear guidance will be given to service providers on how the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund payment mechanism will work. Clear and reasonable timescales will be set for service providers to submit the necessary paperwork to the Halton Partnership Team.

Providers of commissioned services will:

✓ **Ensure robust performance management systems are in place.**

Service providers will ensure their performance management systems are capable of providing the information required by the Specialist Strategic Partnerships. The systems must produce robust, accurate, and timely information. Where existing systems do not fulfil these requirements, steps will be taken to ensure they do so.

✓ **Provide information on request and on time to the Halton Partnership.**

Information required by the Specialist Strategic Partnerships and the Halton Strategic Partnership Board for performance management purposes will be provided as requested and in accordance with any published timescales.

✓ **Progress realistic forward strategies.**

All service providers are required to have clear and achievable forward strategies for commissioned work in place. They should provide the details of their forward strategies to the Specialist Strategic Partnerships and report regularly on progress in implementing them.

Appendix 1: Extract from the Community Strategy: Key Priorities for Halton

Partnership principles

Halton partners will:

- Be committed to the priorities, principles and objectives contained in this agreed Community Strategy and will take them into account in deciding their own priorities and plans
- Co-operate with each other to achieve the improvement targets set out in this Strategy and progressively develop more effective ways of working together and with the community
- Share relevant information and good practice so far as the law allows
- Contribute resources to the Halton Partnership in keeping with the size and circumstances of each partner organisation and be willing to pool resources where appropriate
- Adhere to the guiding principles and values set out at the start of this Community Strategy