



**Enterprise and Business Committee:  
Inquiry into Influencing the modernisation of European procurement policy**

**About Rathbone Cymru**

Rathbone Cymru is one of the largest voluntary organisations in Wales supporting young people between the ages of 11-25 who are or at risk of becoming not in education, employment or training (NEET). Every year we support 2700 young people to overcome barriers to education, employment or training. We offer support to re-engage young people with learning and getting them on the right track. Our belief is that everyone, whatever their starting point, can achieve and that every young person has the ability to learn and to progress. We believe that the participation and experience of success through learning are fundamental in enabling young people to make an effective transition into adulthood. Rathbone Cymru offers support via:

- Preparation for life and work
- Support to enter the workplace
- Youth Engagement
- Support for those facing difficulties in mainstream education

**Our Experience**

1. PQQ stages can be immensely time consuming with some of the questions and information requested. The Supplier Questionnaire Information Database (SQUID) was introduced by Sell2Wales with a core set of questions with the suppliers' answers stored on Sell2Wales for future tender exercises. However the SQUID tool is rarely used by local authorities and buyers, resulting in many tenders asking the same questions in a slightly different format, covering typical areas such as financial health, management structure and health and safety. Rathbone Cymru would like to see all commissioners legislated to use the SQUID tool in order to save organisations the huge amounts of time that are invested into duplicating common answers for tenders.
2. Rathbone Cymru believes that changes to contracts half way through delivery should not be allowed. For example, the Department for Work

and Pension's Work Programme affected the participant eligibility criteria from October 2011 for WCVA Engagement Gateway contracts. It is noted that ESF funding has to complement statutory services rather than replace them. However the introduction of new statutory programmes can have huge impacts upon what were complementary programmes, rather than allowing such complementary programmes to be phased out at the end of the contract rather than changing the goal posts half way through. This potentially has huge financial consequences for the third sector, especially when ESF programmes pay on the organisation achieving an outcome, with the organisation paying project costs upfront themselves and bearing the risk in return for successful outcome payments.

3. The time period for procurement exercises should be realistic and allow a minimum of four weeks for organisations to tender from the notice being issued, two weeks for assessment, then a REALISTIC date for contracts to be awarded and for delivery to commence. For example, one pre-16 tender was planning to award a contract for delivery to start one week after the tender deadline when most organisations would ideally need six weeks to recruit new staff and to prepare to deliver the contract.
4. Often local authority contracts are driven by cost savings for a service rather than focussing on quality. For example, pre-16 alternative curriculum tenders to deliver vocational learning within schools average around £65,000 per year per tender and expect the supplier to provide two or three tutors, provide minibus transport and lunch. Increasingly more framework provision is being introduced by local authorities in Wales. This makes it difficult for suppliers to bid for a service when they do not know the frequency or financial value of work that might be awarded, especially if the supplier would need to recruit a dedicated member of staff. Rathbone Cymru would like to see all tender notices assessed prior to notices being issued to determine how realistic the requirements are for the price sought. Also, frameworks should give more information on the minimum work and contract value to be contracted to aid organisations with deciding whether or not a tender is financially viable.

**Submitted by Ian Whitehead-Ross, Policy and Development Manager,**

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