

The Social Value Act and Family Support Services

The Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012 became law on the 8th March 2012 and went live on the 31st January 2013. It was created to ensure that the recognition of full value (monetary plus social value) becomes part of mainstream commissioning practice, rather than optional good practice. Under the Act public bodies in England and Wales, such as local authorities, government departments, NHS Trusts, PCTs, fire and rescue services and housing associations, have to consider how the services they commission and procure might improve the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of the area. In other words, when spending taxpayer's money on public services, public authorities are no longer allowed to regard monetary costs as the primary selection criterion when making procurement decisions. Instead, they must look at everything each contractor brings to the table and ensure that it not only provides value for money, but provides value to people and communities.

Positive Effects on family support services

- As the Act places value on the social cost of services, it gives smaller, community based, family support groups, who have the knowledge, expertise and local connections that add to social value, a genuine chance to successfully compete against big organisations with financial muscle and expert bid-writing capabilities.
- The requirement that commissioners take into consideration the needs of the individuals who will benefit from the service procured, will provide the opportunity for family support groups to start conversations with previously hard to reach public bodies and jumpstart the kind of dialogues that can address their service users' specific needs and issues.
- The Act might improve the quality of operations and lead to better organised and more efficient support groups. Support groups will be required to have a measurable description of how their services positively affect their service users. This will require them to create long-term goals as well as clear aims, objectives and activities on how the different types of interventions or support they offer can bring about change. Having clear long-term goals, as well as an idea of the tools needed to achieve them, will play a huge role in improving the efficiency and effectiveness of support groups and the services they deliver.

Negative Effects on family support services

- Conducting a Social Impact Assessment requires the expertise of an external consultant. Family support groups do not often have the financial resources to employ someone to carry out this analysis on their behalf. Without this ability to provide concrete evidence of their impact, family support groups are might be edged out of the running by larger organisations.
- The Act might lead to reduction in the range of services provided by support groups. Not all services that support groups offer achieve the goals of being both economically and socially valuable. Some services might be socially valuable but financially inefficient. Support groups that want to increase their chances of competing for local authority contracts may stop providing these financially inefficient services. This will in turn have a negative effect on the families who relied on those specific services to help them cope with the problems they face.

The Government's own appraisal of the Act after its first year is available [here](#).