University launches first MSc in Public Service Commissioning

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The University of Birmingham is to launch the first ever full Masters programme designed to help NHS, Local Authority and other public sector managers understand the process of developing markets in the public sector, and managing commissioning relationships with external service providers.

Recent reforms have made purchasing services from external providers a key part of management across the public sector. This process of strategic planning and allocating resources (commissioning) provides a key link between the existing processes for planning and funding public services and the increasing market of external service providers. As more pressure is placed on the commissioning function in the coming years, leaders will need to understand their role in an increasingly complex policy context.

At the same time as developing commissioning knowledge, skills and capacity, public bodies including Primary Care Trusts, Local Authorities and Central Government departments are also being urged to develop 'joined-up' approaches to planning and providing services for the well-being of the communities they collectively serve.

The MSc in Public Service Commissioning, run by the School of Public Policy, is designed to give senior managers working in the public sector an understanding of how commissioning functions. The curriculum includes core modules in strategic commissioning, public service procurement and contracting, and the law, regulation and finance of commissioning, as well as a dissertation and optional modules from across the school. The MSc is available as both full or part time study.

Programme Co-Director Elizabeth Wade comments that: "understanding the process of commissioning and purchasing services has become a critical part of public sector management. Primary Care Trusts in England, are already required to commission a wide range of services and this is an area, which is set to become more important in the next few years.

This is the first course of its kind to explicitly tackle these issues providing senior managers with both the knowledge required to understand emerging commissioning policy, and the skills required to implement it in practice "

Co-Director Barbara Allen adds: "We think it is important that managers understand how the system works across a wide range of public services. So, we will ask managers from the health service to explore the criminal justice system, housing or other parts of local government, and vice-versa.

With policy in this area developing so rapidly, we hope the programme will allow participants to share their expertise with colleagues from different public services as well exploring the latest guidance and research."

For further information from the School of Public Policy will be speaking at The National Commissioning about the program contact

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Note to Editors

Commissioning is currently a key priority for those working within public service, generating intense interest from the national conferencing calendar as well as creating its own conference momentum. Leading academics Conference (ICC Birmingham, 16 – 17th July) and the National Best Practice: Prevention, Partnerships and Healthy Outcomes event (Hayes Conference Centre, 9 – 10th July).

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