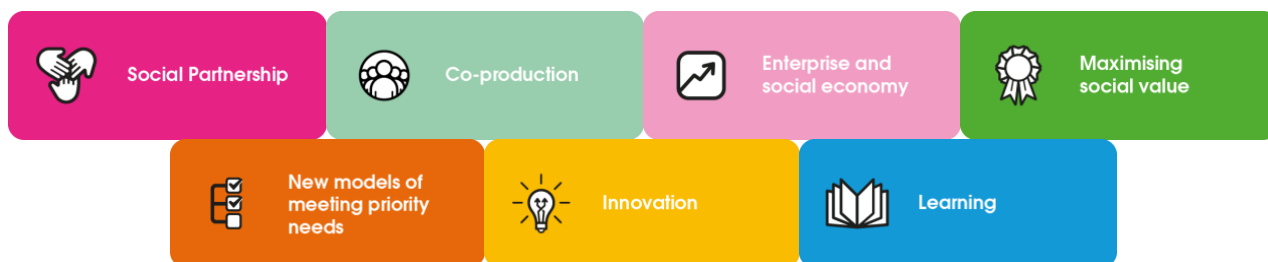




## EDUCATION AND TRAINING



## Public Service Transformation Academy working with the Cabinet Office

### The National Commissioning Academy - delivered on behalf of the Cabinet Office

#### What is the National Commissioning Academy?

The National Commissioning Academy, delivered by the Public Service Transformation Academy (PSTA) on behalf of the Cabinet Office, is a flagship development programme designed to equip public service commissioners with the tools, insight, and leadership capability to transform outcomes for citizens and communities. Since its inception within the Cabinet Office in 2012 and its transition to delivery by the PSTA, the Academy has supported hundreds of commissioners across local government, the NHS, central government agencies, and other public bodies to lead system-wide change and improve the impact of public services.

The Academy brings together diverse cohorts of participants. Recent years have included participation from adult social care, children's services, housing, public health, office of police and crime commissioners, crown dependencies, central government, and other public bodies. These diverse cohorts allow individuals from a range of organisations and geographical areas to learn from one another's experience and tackle real-world commissioning challenges in a structured and supportive environment.

#### What happens on an academy?

At the heart of each participant's learning is their hundred-day plan. This encourages them to apply their learning immediately to a pressing challenge in their own system or locality, building momentum for change and providing a tangible vehicle for innovation. As a result of this, academies are not about theory or rote learning – they are about driving real change inside organisations that can improve outcomes for

citizens. The emphasis is on developing practical skills through an action learning approach, grounded in live projects and tailored to the specific priorities of participants.



PSTA Commissioning Academy event

Academies consist of five ‘cycles’ of learning that are structured around our ‘Aspects of Commissioning’ model. The first four cycles each focus on two aspects of commissioning:

- Cycle one: Whole system design for wellbeing; Relationships and organisations across the system.
- Cycle two: Capacity, capability and confidence; Citizen, user, and outcome-centred approaches.
- Cycle three: Information, insight, and innovation; Making room to make a difference.
- Cycle four: Commissioning Process; Service design, models and tactics.

The final cycle, ‘Convening Change’, is about how to put your learning into action. Participants explore the commissioning cycle in the context of systemic transformation, considering topics such as early intervention, trauma-informed practice, inclusive commissioning, and creating the conditions for sustainable change.

Each cycle features three events, including one all-day ‘anchor day’, as well as two other shorter sessions. These can be webinars, provider perspective events, workshops, or site visits. Each cohort benefits from input by expert facilitators and speakers drawn from across the public and voluntary sectors. Through these events, participants learn from experts with hands-on experience in their areas, including thought leaders, commissioners, and people leading provider organisations. These sessions cover a comprehensive range of themes including systems thinking, outcomes-based commissioning, community and place-based

approaches, behavioural insights, asset-based working, innovation, inclusive commissioning, and market shaping.

One of the Academy's distinguishing features is its focus on collaboration and systems leadership. Participants are encouraged to reflect on their role not only as commissioners but as system stewards and place-shapers—working beyond organisational boundaries to improve whole-system outcomes. This involves developing shared purpose, building trust, and applying co-production principles to reimagine services with communities and providers.

### **What are the results?**

The academy has run successfully for over a decade and has run dozens of cohorts, including several bespoke versions hosted by specific host organisations such as Greater Manchester Combined Authority, Somerset County Council, the States of Jersey, and Kent County Council. The national Academy benefits from this heritage of local adaptation and innovation.

Through these programmes, we have trained hundreds of commissioners, some of whom have gone on to become system leaders. Participants build strong relationships across sectors, leading to a more integrated and outcomes-focused approach and an openness to new practice, wherever it can be found.

Alongside formal learning, the Academy fosters a strong peer network through its national alumni community. This network supports continued reflection and collaboration beyond the programme itself, encouraging participants to embed change in their own organisations and systems.

Some quotations from participants:

- 'I feel prepared to enter a commissioning role!'
- 'It was great to hear from other people about their experiences and how to overcome challenges. It was also reassuring to know the challenges we face aren't just localised challenges.'
- 'I learnt a lot about different approaches in commissioning and gained confidence in how to apply new concepts and new knowledge'
- 'Now I feel I can consider more what our common purposes is rather than just focusing on need and challenge some of our existing processes - not continue to do things a certain way just because that's how they have always been done.'

The National Commissioning Academy is a high-impact development experience that supports commissioners to think differently, work collaboratively, and lead transformational change across public services. By combining practical action learning with strategic insight and systems leadership, the programme helps commissioners navigate complexity and improve outcomes for the people and communities they serve.

---

### **For further information, contact:**

Benjamin Taylor  
CEO - PSTA

Benjamin.taylor@publicservicetransformation.org | 07931317230 | [www.publicservicetransformation.org](http://www.publicservicetransformation.org)