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SHA pays £2m for firm to size up PCT commissioning
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South Central strategic health authority has called in turnaround specialists PricewaterhouseCoopers to assess whether its nine primary care trusts should contract out their commissioning functions to the private sector.

The contract, worth approximately £2m, will run until July and will see PwC analysing the 'strengths and weaknesses' of each PCT's commissioning role. PwC will be charged with a number of tasks including:

- creating a strategic plan for each PCT to measure success and long-term goals;
- creating an operating plan which will develop the local delivery plan on a year-on-year basis;
- creating a capability and capacity plan which will identify areas for improvement so that strategic and operating plans can be successfully executed;
- understanding the detail of the commissioning function so that PCTs can individually and collectively assess their own particular strengths and weaknesses;
- specifically identifying areas for building, buying or sharing capacity and capability.

South Central SHA's project director for reform Diane Hedges said that the work with PwC would put them in a position to judge which areas of work they outsource to the private sector under the DoH commissioning framework.

The DoH list of approved commissioning support suppliers is due to be published soon.

Ms Hedges said the work with PwC would enable the PCTs across South Central to 'see if they need to bring in external support'.

'In order to soundly commission they need to look at their short and long-term planning and their skills gaps. Where weaknesses are identified we will look at whether we can work together within the PCTs or whether we can commission something better from someone else'.

Helen Mooney

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