



Alternative Delivery Models: Policy Brief

Please note that this brief aims to outline the policy objectives the Department for Education is looking for projects to respond to in their applications. Whilst it is specific in terms of what the Department for Education is looking for, we are open to different, innovative approaches to how you achieve this.

Challenge and context

The Innovation Programme has, thus far, rightly been focused on practice improvement, whether to the way whole children's social care systems operate or to test specific interventions intended to transform a particular part of the system. Sometimes however, structural change can support or extend the scope for such practice innovation, attract or retain leaders or other key people who might otherwise have looked elsewhere and sharpen focus and decision making within organisations to drive faster change.

Alternative models of delivery, either outside direct local authority control or combining local authorities, have been a small but significant part of several authorities' improvement journeys, with more LAs interested in taking part:

- In the Triborough a combined children's social care service has delivered the first outstanding judgements under the current Ofsted inspection framework;
- In Richmond and Kingston a combined and jointly owned social care organisation delivers good services in both Boroughs and is supporting the development of alternative delivery models elsewhere in the country;
- In the Isle of Wight a strategic partnership with Hampshire has improved services very significantly, to a "requires improvement" Ofsted judgement;
- In Doncaster the social care Trust is making a significant difference to services, recognised by Ofsted in their monitoring visits.

Other local authorities, some in DfE intervention and others acting voluntarily, are showing an interest in alternative delivery models as part of their improvement journey. Birmingham, Sandwell, Slough, Sunderland, and Northamptonshire are at various stages in developing new models.

This brief offers the opportunity to extend those gains to other LAs interested in developing alternative models, whether that is combining with other LAs, developing not for profit social care Trusts, forming partnerships with charities, or developing other not for profit ideas for social care delivery.

Whilst structural change is not an end in itself, in the right circumstances it may be the key to unlocking or extending improvement and providing economies of scale which can drive improvement in specific areas, respond to new threats to our children, or enable a refocusing of resource in a way which responds to budgetary pressures as well as new threats to our children and young people. Where conditions are right, new models can:



- refresh or retain leadership and attract strong and ambitious people to organisations where new ways of doing things are needed or where reputations and the promise of further improvement are attractive;
- attract or retain good people more generally, including to areas where previous organisations have had a poor reputation and recruitment problems, or where practice excellence can provide a basis for people to develop their careers;
- provide a sharper focus on children's social care as a whole or on aspects of the system and create an environment where decision making can be faster and less bureaucratic;
- enable existing strong organisations to innovate more easily and to create a distinctive culture of excellence; and
- bring together different areas and organisations to share expertise, create economies of scale and deliver more coherent or comprehensive services in robust structures which go beyond collaboration and into integration.

Opportunity and scope

We are now inviting applications to the Children's Social Care Innovation Programme from organisations who are looking to develop, implement and test not for profit, alternative delivery models for children's social care.

We are open to a wide variety of proposals including, but not limited to, those that test one or more of the following features:

- Transition of Children's Services or Children's Social Care in whole or in part from one or more local authorities to a new legally separate entity;
- Combined services, sub-regional and regional models;
- Models focused on specialist service areas (e.g. Care Leaver Trusts);
- Models involving public, not-for-profit, charity, and social enterprise partnerships;
- Models that include delegation of statutory social care functions from local authorities;
- Models involving greater levels of employee control and engagement, eg. mutuals.

Your proposal should add to our current evidence and understanding of how alternative structures can support service improvement and practice innovation, and have mainstream appeal by enabling or directly solving financial and practice issues facing the sector. Successful applications will be explicit about what and how we will learn from the new model proposed.

Structural changes will not be the answer for every authority, so it is important that you are clear about the case for change for your particular local authority, or group of LAs, tailored for the local context, conditions and challenges you and any partners involved may face.

As part of your application, you are asked provide a coherent and strong rationale for the new structure you propose: successful applications will not only present a compelling clear link to improvements in quality of service for children in care, but also demonstrate the long term financial sustainability of the new model.

You may want to consider the conditions for success that early evidence from other alternative delivery model initiatives have highlighted and think broadly about the factors that



will contribute to the success of your own design. As part of your proposal you are encouraged to think about:

- Leadership - ambitious, inspirational leaders are essential to set vision and carry through implementation of structural change. They and the organisation need to be bold and create the culture and appetite to take the risk to make the change a success. They also have to have a dogged determination to make it work. Do you have the right people in place to lead your alternative delivery model, if not, what are your plans to find and recruit them? Do you have the support of political and senior officers locally to drive through this structural change?
- Practitioners – a key motivation for pursuing structural change can be a desire to develop ambitious and innovative practice with children and families at its heart. This requires bold, highly-experienced practitioners who are willing to go above and beyond. It also requires your new delivery model be designed in such a way that it creates or maintains a good environment for innovative practice. Do you have the bold practitioners needed to make structural change a success, and is your model designed around enabling practice innovation and excellence?
- Culture – alternative delivery models can provide the opportunity to create new cultures in partnership with staff: an autonomous, flexible and supported workforce, with a more robust outlook on how resources are used and problems solved. What cultural change ambitions do you have within your structural redesign and how will you manage this change?
- Partnerships - cross-sector learning and partnership working between agencies is a vital component of developing an alternative delivery model. Supporting each other through change and genuinely working together is crucial. This means creating and fostering a culture of collaboration, not competition for a dwindling pot of resources. What are your plans for engaging with and working with other agencies and partners in implementing your alternative delivery model?
- Finance – how will alternative delivery models better enable organisations to focus resource on the things that will make the biggest difference to children and families?

The Department will generally be looking for proposals that are feasible within two to three years, and successful applications will be required to provide detailed cost benefit analysis demonstrating the near-term feasibility.

For the purposes of illustration, new alternative delivery models with the following aims would all be of interest to the Innovation Programme:

- Strengthening quality of service through specialisation and/or increased focus on children's social care delivery;
- Creation of a more viable, sustainable organisational model;
- Removal of unnecessary bureaucracy through the implementation of more efficient and service specific procedures/processes;
- Enabling implementation of more effective support infrastructures and systems tailored specifically for children's social care;
- Supporting workforce development aims, enhancing recruitment and retention of staff to drive improved quality of service;
- Accelerating the culture change needed to transform services (e.g. greater focus on efficient use of resources, delegation of decisions to frontline professionals, catalysing creativity and innovation);



- Enabling sharing of capability or resources across a wider geographical area as a means of driving outcome improvements; and
- Generating opportunities to secure alternative sources of funding to reinvest in the service and improve long-term viability of essential services.

... and we're open to many other ideas!

Submission requirements

Applicants should use the detail provided in this brief when completing their EOI to ensure they are addressing the problems and challenges outlined and that their EOI meets the policy objectives for this targeted funding opportunity. In addition, applicants should refer to the Innovation Programme's assessment criteria when completing their EOI which can be found in the ['How to get involved'](#) document.

All applications must be submitted by 3pm, 31st January 2017 to CS.INNOVATIONPROGRAMME@education.gsi.gov.uk using the **EOI form** provided alongside this brief.

Please hold in your diary the 1st March 2017 in London for a workshop to develop your solution should your EOI be successful.