



Department  
for Education

# **Children's Social Care Innovation Programme**

**Targeted Funding Opportunity:  
How to get involved**

**November 2016**

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## What are we looking to support through this targeted opportunity?

1. The Children's Social Care Innovation Programme is working with the sector to radically transform the children's social care system so that we achieve better life chances for children receiving support and better value for money. The Programme is inspiring practice change and finding new and innovative ways to improve outcomes.
2. To date the Innovation Programme has stimulated new thinking in the sector and is testing a wide range of innovations. There has been an overwhelming amount of interest in the programme: between May 2014 and March 2016 the Innovation Programme invested £100M in 53 projects involving 90 local authorities. It has generated radical new ideas and taken many much further by testing new ways of working in a range of different settings and circumstances.
3. We are beginning to see the impact the Innovation Programme is having on improving outcomes for children and families, and to understand which interventions are most successful in transforming children's social care. Ofsted's Annual Report cites that 'research-led ideas can have a transformative effect on children, young people and families when staff are supported to deliver them and leaders critically assess their impact'. We are seeking to continue to support this through the Innovation Programme.
4. To transform practice more widely we must focus on building a world-leading evidence base and sharing the learning from the Programme. Over time, the new What Works Centre will bring together in one place evidence of excellent practice and learning from the Innovation Programme and more widely, providing a trusted voice on best practice that is built on solid evidence.
5. We know that a strong evidence base must be grounded in continued development, testing and evaluation of innovations that show promise, including by testing them in different conditions, areas and at larger scale. Robust evaluation is integral to the Innovation Programme and [early findings](#) from the first wave are already starting to identify the key features of successful children's social care systems, which include strong leadership and governance as well as a clear and coherent theory of practice.
6. We want to ensure we are building on this early learning and deepening the evidence base, as well as identifying and filling gaps. Therefore, we are currently developing plans for how we can build on and deepen the evidence base which is starting to emerge from the Innovation Programme, developing the forensic approach to testing what works that will be at the heart of the new Children's Social Care What Works Centre. We aim to publish further details of our plans early in 2017.

7. In the meantime our vision for '[Putting Children First](#)', published in July, set out a number of policy areas where we need quickly to develop and test new interventions. These are:

**a. Building on the recommendations from Sir Martin Narey's report on residential care to:**

- *Test innovative new ways in which residential care could be used in a more dynamic and creative way to support children and link seamlessly with other care placements and services;*
- *Pilot variations of 'Staying Close' to enable young people to live independently but close to their children's home and with support from the home, developing a better understanding of the costings, practicalities and impact; and*
- *Enable LAs to come together in larger scale commissioning arrangements for residential care placements to test Sir Martin Narey's view that this could lead to significant savings, wider placement choices and better outcomes for children.*

**b. Testing the use of social investment to improve the way that care leavers are supported as they make the transition to independent living, and particularly to support their sustained participation in employment and training, specifically in relation to:**

- *Developing and commissioning care leaver social impact bonds;*
- *Supporting and testing approaches that empower care leavers to have a greater say in the design and delivery of services; and*
- *Testing alternative models of delivery for leaving care services through the use of trusts, mutuals, and other arrangements.*

**c. Testing alternative delivery models for children's social care and building the evidence base in this area in order to spark new ideas, provide insight on the risks and benefits of alternative structures and shape support for organisational and structural innovations. By alternative delivery models, we mean:**

- *Transition of Children's Services or Children's Social Care in whole or in part from one or more local authority to a new legally separate entity;*
- *Combined-authority, sub-regional and regional models;*
- *Models focused on specialist service areas (e.g. Care Leaver Trusts);*
- *Models involving public, private and charity/social enterprise partnerships;*
- *Models that include delegation of statutory social care duties from local authorities; and*
- *Models that offer social care professionals a greater degree of ownership and/or control.*

**d. Develop and test understanding of how targeted early support can prevent children needing to enter the child protection system, in particular:**

- *Innovative new ways of providing targeted early support to children who are assessed by social workers, but don't receive a statutory service. There are 146,300 children nationally whose needs are considered serious enough to warrant a social work assessment, but don't go on to become in need. We want to test new models of providing support to these children to mitigate the risk that these children will be re-referred at a later stage with more severe needs.*
- *Interventions for children who are 'in need' for extended periods of time, particularly for low level, persistent neglect. We want to test different approaches for helping children in these circumstances in order to understand the sort of interventions that are most effective in providing help and preventing problems escalating.*
- *Innovative new ways of providing targeted early support to disabled children classed as children in need under S17 of the Children Act. We want to test new ways of providing high quality social care support to disabled children at an early stage (and integrating this well with education and health support). The aim is to ensure that parents are able to effectively support their disabled children to reduce the risk of family breakdown and minimise the need for long-term residential provision and hospital admission.*

This targeted funding opportunity is for those organisations interested in developing and testing innovations in these four areas.

## How to get involved in this targeted opportunity

8. Through this targeted funding opportunity we are specifically looking to support organisations interested in developing and testing innovations in the four policy areas set out in *Putting Children First* and explained above:
  - a. Building on the recommendations of the Narey report on residential care, particularly piloting 'Staying Close' and regional commissioning of residential care;
  - b. Testing the use of social investment to improve support for care leavers;
  - c. Testing alternative delivery models for children's social care; and
  - d. Testing and developing understanding of targeted early support to prevent children entering child protection systems.
  
9. We are not opening immediately for expressions of interest. Rather, we want to engage with the sector to scope the issues in more depth, before working together to develop potential solutions and evaluation designs, and finally inviting proposals to trial those solutions.

## The process in more detail

10. We are aiming for this targeted funding opportunity to be as collaborative as possible. It will include the core components set out below, with timings subject to change depending on how quickly thinking in each area develops:

**Invitation to join problem analysis workshops (October/November 2016) -** organisations [register an interest](#) in attending workshops to further define the challenges and opportunities within the policy areas.

**Problem analysis workshops (October/November 2016)** – to bring together interested organisations, sector experts and policy teams from the Department to build a shared understanding of each of the policy issues and the challenges and opportunities for addressing them. A summary of key points of discussion from the first workshops will be made available on this website following the events.

**Innovation briefs shared with the sector (November/December 2016)** - Output from the problem analysis workshops will be used to develop 'innovation briefs' setting out in more detail the issues which we are looking to address alongside an invitation to submit a short expression of interest (EOI). These EOIs will be used to select organisations to take part in the solution generation events that follow.

**Solution generation events (December 2016/January 2017)** - to bring together potential bidders, policy teams and the Innovation Programme team to explore and develop responses to the policy briefs.

**Invitation to submit proposals (January 2017)** - Bidders asked to submit proposals on their ideas following the solution generation events.

**Proposal assessment and funding decisions (Jan-Mar 2017)** - Proposals will be considered by the Innovation Programme Expert Panel and Investment Board who will make recommendations on funding to the Minister for Vulnerable Children and Families and the Secretary of State. We hope to start releasing funding for Innovation Projects from the spring of 2017.

## Next steps.

To take advantage of this targeted funding opportunity, we recommend that you:

- a. Read DfE's policy document [\*'Putting Children First: delivering our vision for excellent children's social care.'\*](#)
- b. Read [Sir Martin Narey's independent review of children's residential care in England.](#)
- c. Register your interest through the [Spring Consortium website.](#)
- d. Where possible, attend and participate in the problem analysis workshops.
- e. If you are unable to attend the problem analysis workshops, ensure you read the 'innovation briefs' which will be developed and published for each of the four targeted policy areas after the first event.
- f. Keep up to date with evaluation reports and learning reports from the projects that were funded in Wave 1 of the Innovation Programme as they are published in the [Spring Consortium website.](#)

# Questions and Answers

## Funding

### How much funding is available?

There is nearly £200m available for all of the Department's innovation and improvement work over this parliament. We have some flexibility about how we use this funding between the Innovation Programme, Partners in Practice, city and devolution deals and Trusts. We will ensure the money is used where it has the most potential to make a long term difference to the outcomes of vulnerable children and young people.

### What is funding available for?

Funding will be available for new innovation projects and for scaling up or spreading existing innovations in each of the four policy areas outlined in this document.

### How long can we receive funding for/how long can a project be?

In very unusual circumstances projects may receive funding for up to 2019/20. We expect most projects to be shorter, (between one and two years), with a clear plan for becoming self-sustaining in future years.

### How will funding decisions be made?

Funding decisions will be made in a transparent way against the criteria set out in the 'innovation briefs' that will be published after the first solution generation events. In reaching decisions on which projects to fund the Department will take the advice of the Innovation Programme Investment Board, details of which can be found on the Spring Consortium website. Final decisions will be taken by Ministers.

### Who can apply for funding?

Local authorities and organisations from across the private, public and voluntary, community and social enterprise sectors can all apply for funding. We are keen to have a mix of organisations involved.

### How much should I bid for?

We will be looking to achieve maximum impact from the £200m investment in innovation and improvement and this funding over this parliament. There is no single figure that is most likely to attract funding but each project should offer the potential for substantial impact and provide excellent value for public money.

## **When will funding be available from?**

We hope to make funding available from the spring 2017, depending on how well developed the proposals we receive are.

## **How developed does an innovation need to be?**

For this targeted opportunity we are keen to work closely with the sector to develop ideas at different stages of innovation addressing the four policy issues set out above. This includes testing new ideas as well as developing an evidence base for or scaling up an existing innovation. The key is that you have a sense of the problem that you are trying to solve, the outcomes you would like to achieve, and that the idea is truly innovative.

## **I have an idea that I want to scale up but I'm not an Innovation Programme project at the moment. Can I register for one of the events?**

Yes, of course, as long as your idea is linked to one of the four policy areas.

## **What if I am unable to attend the first event?**

If you are unable to attend the problem analysis events you will still be able to access the 'innovation briefs' when they are published and submit a short expression of interest which will be used to select organisations to take part in the second solution generation event. A summary of key points of discussion from the first workshops will be made available on the [Spring Consortium website](#) following the event if you are unable to attend.

## **What if I have an idea which does not fit into one of the four policy areas, but is aligned to the broader programme strands, can I still apply?**

We will not be accepting proposals outside of the four policy areas outlined in this document at this stage.

## **Who do I contact if I have questions?**

Please contact [innovation@springconsortium.com](mailto:innovation@springconsortium.com) with any questions about this targeted funding opportunity.



Department  
for Education

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