



Department
for Education

Practice and Improvement Fund Round 2- Q&A

December 2016

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About this document

This document provides clarification for organisations interested in bidding to the Practice and Improvement Fund. The questions listed in this document, and related annexes, were raised by organisations at the PIF supplier event on 16th December 2016 and/or were sent to adoption.pif@education.gov.uk before close on 20 December 2016.

Questions and answers

Q: Can private organisations (e.g. private members of the ‘Consortium of Adoption Support Agencies’ or social enterprises) bid for this funding opportunity?

A: All Adoption Support Agencies (ASA), including private agencies, may lead bids for this funding.

Other organisations, such as social enterprises, may be part of a proposal but, as set out on p.10 of the guidance document and below, proposals should be **led** by a Voluntary Adoption Agency (VAA), ASA, Regional Adoption Agency (RAA) or relevant voluntary sector body. We would welcome a social enterprise to apply as a partner **within** a bid.

Private organisations should also note that the ‘Overarching evaluation criteria’ (page 11 of the guidance) state that the cost basis of the proposal should be clear and represent best use of public funding. This means that if proposals include a margin for profit, or intend to generate profit, we may not score those proposals highly.

Eligibility for this round of funding is set out on page 10 of the invitation as follows:

1. Proposals under the ‘innovations in matching practice’ ‘increasing early permanence’ and ‘spreading awareness of VAA services’ themes must be led by VAAs, ASAs or relevant voluntary sector bodies.

- *We strongly encourage bids that are led by VAAs with an RAA partner(s) (or local authority partners where local authorities are not yet part of an RAA);*
- *We also strongly encourage VAAs to bid in partnerships with other VAAs or ASA.*

2. Proposals under the ‘developing regional approaches to support provision’ theme should be led by an RAA.

- *We strongly encourage proposals to demonstrate effective partnership working with VAAs and other relevant service providers.*

Q: For RAA led applications, is it okay to work with RAAs that are not up and running yet?

A: Yes, the department will take into account that no RAA will be up and running before April 2017.

Q: Are we able to submit an Expression of Interest (EOI) regarding a project that will cover more than 1 RAA?

Yes. We strongly encourage proposals which have potential to benefit multiple RAAs and improve outcomes for adopted children across several regions.

Q: Is the department open to both of the adoption support focus areas being interlinked in one EOI?

A: Yes, the department is open to all approaches.

Q: Is the department open to ideas / EOIs where there is linkage between focus area 1 and 2 of the programme?

A: Yes. In the EOI form, please select which focus areas your proposal relates to.

If you are submitting multiple EOIs that interlink, please cross-reference the different EOIs in each application and flag this in Section 4 of the form under the 'other documentation' section.

Q: Are we able to submit a VAA led EOI that relates to adoption support under focus area 3 (Improving access to VAA/ASA expertise and services)?

Yes. We will accept proposals under focus area 3 which relate to any element of adoption services.

Q: For focus 3 (improving access to VAA/ASA services and expertise) how desirable is it for an organisation to partner with an RAA rather than an Local Authority (LA) who is not yet part of an RAA?

We are willing to accept **both** RAAs and LAs as partners for proposals under all themes. Where organisations are partnering with an LA, and where the LA is an RAA partner, we would expect to see how the proposal will benefit RAAs.

If an LA is not in a RAA, we would like to see how the proposal will benefit the area within which it is implemented and, in the long-term, how it will benefit existing or new RAAs. We will consider proposals against each other and on their potential.

Q: Would you encourage an organisation to put in more than one EOI under different focus areas? Or would you prefer organisations to submit one bid per ‘focus area’?

We will accept multiple EOIs from organisations and will accept multiple EOIs from the same organisation *within* the four focus areas. However, we would encourage organisations to focus on developing their ‘best’ proposals and ensuring that all submissions are of a high quality.

Q: For Adoption Support Fund (ASF) pilot proposals, must the organisation(s) be established as (a) fully operational RAA(s) before proposals can be piloted?

A: No, the department wants the applicant to explore different partnerships. The pilot phase is exploratory to help scope how regionalisation of the ASF could work in practice and might look at testing shadow budgeting.

Q: How long does the department expect ASF pilots to run for?

Funding under this round of the PIF is available until end March 2019. We have not set a minimum or maximum time period for ASF pilots but we would expect scoping work to be completed within the two-year funding window.

Q: Will the department consider ASF pilot proposals that request more than £50,000 in funding across the 2 years?

A: No. As stated on p.9 of the guidance document we will award **up to £50,000** for this activity. Funding through this round of the PIF is for programme management to coordinate the testing and development of the pilot. This would be exploratory stage / scoping work between 1 April 2017 and 31 March 2019.

Q: Is there potential to take the ASF scoping work forward if it is successful?

A: There is a possibility depending on where the organisation is in the process. The PIF funding will cover project management time to assist scoping and design work. If partnership arrangements are sufficiently mature we could explore the use of shadow regional budgets to test the potential for more strategic commissioning. This will be subject to budget availability and further conversations between bidders and the department.

Q: The expectation for the ‘adoption support centres of excellence’ focus area is quite high. Is there an appetite for the department to consider proposals that miss that expectation by a small margin?

A: We will still consider those proposals but they should at least show that applicants have started conversations with the NHS. Proposals which show more progress in developing these critical links will be looked at more favourably.

Q: Would the department help with linking up EOIs / applicants where their ideas build on each other?

A: Yes, if we think there is potential for collaboration, we will advise the applicants involved and ask them to come back with a revised proposal.

Q: Would it be possible to share information on the emerging findings on core pathway projects?

A: The Department of Health and Department for Education have commissioned the Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE) to develop models of care and care pathways to support the mental health and wellbeing of looked after children and care leavers, including those that leave care through adoption and special guardianship.

An Expert Advisory Group, co-chaired by Peter Fonagy and Alison O’Sullivan, combines the knowledge of experienced professionals from the health, social care, academic and voluntary sectors, people who use services, together with the SCIE project team.

For further information on this project, please visit the [Looked after children: mental health and wellbeing section](#) of the SCIE website.

Q: Could the department clarify the scalability requirement?

A: The scalability requirement is different depending on the proposal. We want proposals that have potential to be scaled up and expanded, to serve at least one if not more RAAs. But there may also be proposals which are more relevant locally. In these cases,

proposals should demonstrate an understanding of local needs and local gaps in the provision of services and how their proposal plans to address those needs.

Q. What is meant by sustainability? Is it measured based on size or in any other format?

A: We want to avoid proposals which will require long-term dependency on government funding. We do not want applicants to be reliant on the department's funding beyond 2020 or for proposals to have no longevity when the funding stops.

There are two aspects to our sustainability requirement:

1. If the proposals are aimed at creating tools to support the sector, then there may be no need for further funding once tools are developed and available for use. In proposals we would want to see evidence of a plan to ensure that tools will be disseminated beyond the end of the funding period and for how and where they will have an impact.
2. If the proposals are about delivering a service, proposals should demonstrate that demand can be generated, beyond the funding period, and how applicants will sell their service.

Q: Will the department accept proposals that shows savings in public spend but will still rely on public funding in the long term?

A: No. We expect all proposals to show savings to the public purse to some degree. We do not intend to fund projects which will require government funding in the long term.

Q: Please provide more clarity on the funding stream. Is there a minimum/maximum value for individual bids? Are you able to give guidance to help us judge the size of bids anticipated?

Information about funding expectations is provided on p.15 of the guidance document.

There is no minimum or maximum threshold for funding but we would not generally expect to fund bids over £500,000.

We would be willing to consider bids over this amount where proposals demonstrate clear innovation, value for money and have very significant potential for impact. We expect that proposals to develop adoption support 'Centres of Excellence' for example may exceed this figure.

Please note that in some cases, we may also offer funding at a lower level than that proposed by the applicant.

Q: Is there any exclusion on the people / organisations that can give match funding?

A: The assessment will be the same as in Round 1 of the Practice and Improvement Fund. It is not essential to have match funding to be successful, but we will consider those proposals that have more favourably as this will meet an objective of the sustainability criteria. There is no constraint on who can provide the funding but the department expects applicants to conduct proportionate due diligence on match-funding organisation(s).

Q: What is the department's commitment beyond 2020?

A: The department is not able to comment on their commitment beyond 2020.

Q: As the organisations and partners' ability to shape the purchasing market is limited, can the department assist the applicants with shaping the market?

A: It will be easier for the department to assist with shaping the market once the successful projects are known. We will then be able to work individually with the projects to support them.

Q: Under focus area 4, would the department expect to see signed-up / firm commitments from health providers at the EOI stage?

A: We would like to see a reasonable number of providers signed-up, in principle, to demonstrate that a proposal has sufficient momentum to persuade the remaining providers to come on-board. Applicants should bring out any commitments in the EOI form so that the department can understand the scale of the proposal.

Q: Can we talk to anyone at DfE about our proposal before we submit an Expression of Interest?

A: No, in order to ensure the process is fair for all bidders, we are unable to enter into individual discussions with interested organisations about their proposals. Organisations who are invited to 'full bid' stage will be offered support from our delivery partner to develop their proposals.

Q: Will all applicants be invited to the full proposal stage?

A: No, we will identify which applicants to invite to full proposal stage based on their EOIs. We will then invite and assess full proposals before successful applicants are given funding.

Q: Will the deadline for clarification questions be further extended?

A: We cannot extend the deadlines for clarification questions. We need time to respond to clarification questions well before the 16th January EOI deadline in order to give all bidders time to reflect on the answers and work on their bids. We do not feel there would be time to do this if an extension was granted.

The department is aware that there is a tight timeline for applicants to complete their EOI forms and will not expect EOIs to be detailed. For example, in filling out the partnership section, the department is looking to see the partners that applicants have ‘in principle’ and will only want to see firmer commitments during the full proposal stage.

If applicants are unable to include certain information in the EOI, we would like applicants to specify this. This will help to us to understand the accessibility of certain criteria and inform how critical we should be during the assessment stage.

Q: I couldn't attend the supplier event on 16th December 2016, please could you make the slides available from the event?

A: Yes. If you were unable to attend the event but would like to see a copy of the slides please email adoption.pif@education.gov.uk.

Q: Can you share information on projects that were successful in Round 1 of this fund?

A: Yes. A list of projects from Round 1 is provided at Annex A.

Annex A: Projects successful under Round 1 of the Practice and Improvement Fund

| Lead bidders | Partners | Description of project | Region |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Adopters for adoption | The Rees Centre (Academic institution -collaboration between Core Assets (Adopters for Adoption parent group) and University of Oxford) | Piloting and evaluating an existing 'Safer Stronger Families' adolescent crisis intervention service with adoptive families. | Yorkshire and Humberside, Kent |
| PACT | Vodafone UK (Corporate Partner) | To develop PACT's Family and Children Therapeutic Support [FACTS] service which aims to improve accessibility of adoption support services, increase the number of therapists with adoption experience; provide a virtual support clinic offering support at weekends and evenings, and support staff in schools. | South East England (primarily Thames Valley and Southern counties) |
| Coram Cambridgeshire Adoption | Cambridgeshire County Council CoramBAAF | Funding to develop assessment tools and a comprehensive programme of support for siblings. | Cambridgeshire initially, expanding into Central East Region |
| Penny Appeal | N/A | Pilot initiative in the Midlands to raise awareness of adoption in the Muslim community and improve recruitment rates within the community for Muslim children in care. | Midlands (primarily Birmingham) |
| New Family Social | N/A | Developing a national recruitment strategy aimed at LGBT adopters. | England |
| Tavistock | CoramBAAF - adoption and fostering academy RAAs including London Adoption Board (to be developed) | A wide ranging proposal to develop and spread best practice and practitioner skills throughout the sector on supporting couple relationships and co-parenting capacity of adoptive couples. | London |

| Lead bidders | Partners | Description of project | Region |
|---------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Family Action | Lincolnshire County Council (LA) East Midlands RAA | To develop and deliver a new adoption support service in the East Midlands with a primary focus on supporting adopted children in schools. | East Midlands (primarily Derby, Derbyshire, Leicester, Leicestershire, Lincolnshire, Nottingham, Nottinghamshire and Peterborough) |
| PAC UK | Adoption UK | To build a peer to peer support model, and workforce development, to provide remote-based support for families struggling with child on parent violence. | Yorkshire and Humber, East Midlands, Staffordshire, Coventry, Wiltshire, Gloucestershire, Somerset, Plymouth. East Midlands |
| Body and Soul | Post Adoption Teams in North London Adoption Consortium | To develop an ongoing model of support by putting infrastructure in place which is not covered by the Adoption Support Fund. This includes monthly group support, immediately following on from 4 week intensive courses for adopted children and young people and their parents. | Greater London and home counties. |
| After Adoption | N/A | Scaling up of the 'SafeBase Therapeutic Parenting Programme which provides parents with skills to deal with challenging behaviour and understand the effects of neglect, trauma and its relationship to healthy development. | UK |
| Adoption UK | Several Local Authorities and Regional Adoption Agencies across England | Establishing a national Adopter Voice service to co-ordinate and increase adopters' participation in RAAs and ensure that they are involved in the development of national policies that might affect them. | England |

| Lead bidders | Partners | Description of project | Region |
|-----------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------|
| Adoptionplus | North London Consortium (LA consortium) Hertfordshire Social Services (LA) | To establish a new therapeutic Dyadic Development Psychotherapy practice- based social work service in North London with a focus on early intervention and issue prevention. | North London and Hertfordshire |
| Coram | Tavistock and Portman NHS Trust (Tavistock) (NHS Provider) South London and Maudsley NHS Trust (NHS Provider) Anna Freud Centre (vol sec org) Faith in Families (VAA) | Coram, with the Anna Freud National Centre for Children and Families, South London & Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust and the Tavistock and Portman NHS Foundation Trust and Faith in Families are developing a new post-adoption support service which offers access to a range of preventive and specialist interventions. It is linked to in-house therapeutic services and provides a direct access route with potential for fast-track needs assessment. The service brings in expertise from a range of clinicians to ensure that adoptive families get the right kind of therapeutic support earlier, in settings where they feel comfortable and supported, with full clinical assurance. | London. East midlands |
| Families for Children | N/A | To set up an Adoption Support 'Centre of Excellence' in the South West region. | Cornwall, Devon, Somerset, Dorset and the Isles of Scilly |
| ARC adoption NE | Cumbria County Council (LA) Sunderland City Council (LA) Shoo Fly Publishing (Commercial design partner) | To fund the expansion of support provision in the North East of England through five services including: A buddying system for new and experienced adopters across three agencies A therapeutic support service Access to a clinical psychologist and child therapist A child led support package, enhanced with digital access to social storyboards A digital life-story tool which can be used long after the adoption takes place | North East England |

| Lead bidders | Partners | Description of project | Region |
|---------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Clifton Children's Society | <p>Action for Children (Bristol Project) (VAA) The Centre for Adoption Support & Education (The Centre) (Independent Provider)</p> <p>Other partners include Adoption West RAA; CoramBAAF Concurrent planning network; Adoption UK; Prof Julie Selwyn; Hop, Skip, Jump and Happy City</p> | Develop a new integrated regional service model that ensures seamless, lifelong planning, assessment and support for children and adopting families from first entry into care through to permanency and beyond. | South West (primarily Bristol, Bath & North East Somerset, Gloucestershire) |
| Faith in Families | <p>Nottinghamshire & Nottingham City LA</p> <p>East Midlands Adoption Consortium & RAA</p> | Scaling of existing model to recruit, prepare, assess and match adopters for 'harder to place' categories of children. | East Midlands |
| Specialist Adoption Matching Service (SAMS) | <p>Nugent Care (VAA) New Leaf (VAA) Family Care Nottingham (VAA) SSAFA (VAA) Inter Country Adoption Centre (VAA) DFW Adoption (VAA) ARC (VAA)</p> | 8 VAAs working together to develop a specialist adoption matching service (SAMS) that reduces the delay in placing looked after children with adoptive families. | England with a focus on the East Midlands |

| Lead bidders | Partners | Description of project | Region |
|----------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| SSAFA* | N/A | Strengthening an existing national adoption service for military adopters using three 'Military Adoption Champions' to boost evidence, increase engagement and promote the military as a source of adopters for children who wait the longest. | UK |
| PAC UK | Adoption UK (Vol sector org) Hartlepool Borough Council (LA) London Adoption Board National Association of Virtual School Heads (Vol sector org) | Work with schools, virtual schools and early years settings to add a module on adopted children into initial teacher training, and embed a CPD module into the school environment. | London. Tees Valley. Also exploring links in South West and Midlands |
| IAC* | North London Adoption & Fostering Consortium (6 LA's) Arc (VAA) Adoption Matters (VAA) Yorkshire Adoption (VAA) Nugent Care (VAA) | The development of a national service covering inbound and outbound (inter-country) adoption services. | England |
| Adoption focus | St Francis Children's Society (VAA) | To run a project called 'Care to Adopt' that offers a foster-to-adopt service which specifically focuses on foster-to-adopt placements for harder to place children. | Birmingham, West Midlands, Staffordshire, Shropshire, Warwickshire, Worcestershire, Hertfordshire, Cambridgeshire and neighbouring counties |

| Lead bidders | Partners | Description of project | Region |
|--------------|-----------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Coram | CoramBAAF Hadley Centre/University of Bristol | To develop a National Centre for Early Permanence, which will define and disseminate best practice in early placement and matching and will inform the design of RAAs via VAA centres of excellence and their partner LAs. | England |
| CVAA* | LA, VAA and RAA partners | To provide a management and data collection function to the Adoption Leadership Board. | England |
| CVAA* | VAA, RAA and university partners | Building practice excellence through a national network of VAAs | UK with a focus on England |

** these projects were successful in round 1 but have not yet been signed off (at the time of writing). Grant agreements are currently being finalised between bidders and the Department.*



Department
for Education

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