



Department  
for Education

# **Launch of the Get Help Buying for Schools Service**

**Government consultation**

**Launch date 11th February 2021**

**Respond by 11<sup>th</sup> March 2021**

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## Introduction

The Schools Buying Programme is designed to support schools to achieve value for money on their non-staff spend.

The Get Help Buying for Schools service is designed to ensure that buyers and other buying decision makers in schools have access to specialist support, relationships, information and tools to buy goods and services efficiently delivering value for money. This service would enable schools to reinvest savings into improving educational attainment and outcomes.

This public consultation exercise seeks views on our chosen in-house delivered model for a Get Help Buying for Schools service and will allow those with comments, views or concerns to express them. We will use your thoughts, comments and concerns to help us both shape our chosen model, and future developments for the service, should feedback from the consultation suggest this.

## Who this is for

- Governing bodies of local authority maintained schools in England
- Academy trusts
- Church and other foundation and trust bodies
- Local Authorities in England
- Governing bodies of local authority maintained schools in England
- Academy trusts
- Church and other foundation and trust bodies
- Public Sector Buying Organisations
- Private sector organisations providing procurement support to schools
- Private sector organisations supplying goods and services to schools

## Issue date

The consultation is being issued on 11th February 2021.

## Enquiries

If your enquiry is related to the policy content of the consultation you can contact the team via email:

[gethelpbuyingforschools.consultation@education.gov.uk](mailto:gethelpbuyingforschools.consultation@education.gov.uk)

If your enquiry is related to the DfE e-consultation website or the consultation process in general, you can contact the DfE Ministerial and Public Communications Division by

email: [Consultations.Coordinator@education.gov.uk](mailto:Consultations.Coordinator@education.gov.uk) or by telephone: 0370 000 2288 or via the DfE Contact us page.

## **Additional copies**

Additional copies are available electronically and can be downloaded from [GOV.UK DfE consultations](#).

## **The response**

We aim to publish the results of the consultation and the Department's response on GOV.UK in April 2021.

## **Respond online**

To help us analyse the responses please use the online system wherever possible. Visit <https://consult.education.gov.uk/> to submit your response.

## **Other ways to respond**

If for exceptional reasons, you are unable to use the online system, for example because you use specialist accessibility software that is not compatible with the system, you may download a word document version of the form and email it or post it.

## **By email**

[gethelpbuyingforschools.consultation@education.gov.uk](mailto:gethelpbuyingforschools.consultation@education.gov.uk)

## **By post**

Insights and Service Design Team  
Schools Commercial Team  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

## **Deadline**

The consultation closes on 11th March 2021.

# Launch of the Get Help Buying for Schools Service

## Background

In 2017 the Department for Education published the first Schools Buying Strategy. This strategy aimed to support schools to save over £1 billion a year by 2019-20 on their non-staff spend through helping all schools improve how they buy goods and services. This would help schools to maximise available resources to invest in high quality education for their pupils and support them in managing cost pressures.

Our engagement with schools at this time demonstrated clearly that schools often lack the capacity or access to capability to undertake more complex procurement processes. One of the key initiatives first raised in the 2017 Schools Buying Strategy was to provide a national network of direct buying support to schools to address this. Subsequently, the DfE launched Schools Buying Hubs pilots in the North West and South West of England, designed to help understand whether this type of service would be beneficial and make a difference to schools.

The delivery of the Hubs pilots in the North West and South West has demonstrated the value that direct support brings to schools and therefore we intend to launch a national provision.

Our aim is to deliver a user-centred service focused on providing maximum value to schools, aligning with the strategic direction of the Schools Buying Strategy and securing the best return on investment from the public purse.

## Proposal and rationale

We have studied the Regional Hubs pilots to understand how we can best move forward to deliver a service for schools nationally and have identified that an in-house delivery model for a Get Help Buying for Schools service will deliver the most beneficial outcomes for our users. The Get Help Buying for Schools service is a national service with the objective of helping schools and academies in England complete procurements for goods and services from source to contract award, thereby enabling schools to create best value, saving time and money and reducing risk.

DfE are uniquely placed to provide this service in-house. Building the service in-house gives DfE the flexibility to develop the service over time to meet market changes and school needs. Furthermore, through resourcing the service through the expansion of an existing team structure we would deliver the highest return on investment.

Through the Get Help Buying for Schools service a user in a school would hear about the service through our outreach and engagement team. This team would direct users

to the Buying for Schools GOV.UK pages where the user will find resources and digital products and encourage use of the service to support their buying journey.

Through user-led research we identified that the ability to 'plan a procurement' and 'create a specification' creates the greatest value for the user as they enable a school to carry out the initial stages of the procurement process effectively. Due to the value of these stages, digital product development has been prioritised to ensure that there is live digital functionality in these areas when the service launches. Our vision of the service beyond launch will be to develop further digital capability to enable schools to self-serve through the whole buying journey digitally. From launch, schools can access further support from procurement specialists when needed, who can offer further advice and guidance as well as conducting a procurement on behalf of the school from source to contract award.

As per the pilot, from launch, schools will be able to access support for the procurement of a selected range of goods and services. Within these areas of spend, the service will offer support in sourcing, identification of suitable frameworks and deals and aggregation opportunities. As evidenced by the pilot, schools will benefit from access to specialist advice and support through the procurement process. The department will continue to work alongside established public sector providers of deals for schools, using combined market knowledge and insight to create the very best solutions for schools.

You can find a graphic which sets out how we plan to introduce and grow our service as an appendix to this consultation.

The service would be available to all state-funded primary, secondary, special and alternative provision schools which have some pupils aged 5-16; and to maintained nursery schools. The service would not be provided to private, voluntary and independent early years providers, and institutions that provide only for pupils and students aged 16+. This service would not help schools with contract management at this time, nor would it provide legal advice.

We want to consult to obtain feedback from those impacted by our proposal as we believe this feedback would be useful to build into our analysis, help us shape the delivery of the service and form part of our informed decision making.

## **Conclusion**

We would welcome your views on our chosen in-house delivery model for a Get Help Buying for Schools service for schools and academies in England, and our plans for implementation.

# Consultation Questions

## Preliminary Questions

1. What is your name? (Where you wish to remain anonymous, please leave blank)
2. What is your email address?
3. Are you responding as an individual or on behalf of an organisation?
  - a. Individual
  - b. On behalf of an organisation
4. What is the name of your organisation (if applicable)?
5. What type of organisation is this (if applicable)?
  - a. Mainstream local authority maintained school
  - b. Special local authority maintained school
  - c. Academy or free school
  - d. Multi-academy trust
  - e. Independent school
  - f. Independent special school
  - g. Non-maintained special school
  - h. Sector organisation
  - i. Charity
  - j. Local Authority
  - k. Public Sector Buying Organisation
  - l. Schools Buying Body/Organisation
  - m. Private sector organisations who supply goods and services for schools
  - n. Private sector organisations who provide procurement support to schools
  - o. Other – Please provide organisation details
6. What is your role?
  - a. Governor
  - b. Multi-academy trust member
  - c. Headteacher/ Principal Teacher
  - d. Parent
  - e. Local authority councillor
  - f. Local authority finance officer
  - g. School Business Professional

- h. Industry Expert
- i. Other – Please provide role details

7. Which local authority are you responding from? (where applicable)

8. We are keen to develop this service based around the feedback we receive. Are you happy to be contacted directly about your response? If yes, please provide your preferred contact email or phone number below.

## Questions on the consultation

Please use the comments box to give more details for each question where relevant.

9. To what degree do you agree with the following statement 'The introduction of the chosen in-house delivered model of a new national buying service run by the DfE would have a positive impact on my organisation directly or indirectly'. Please let us know what the impact would be.
- a. Strongly agree
  - b. Agree
  - c. Neither agree nor disagree
  - d. Disagree
  - e. Strongly disagree

Comments:

10. In principle, do you or your organisation agree with the introduction of a DfE in-house delivered model of a new national buying service which we believe will help schools secure value for money when buying goods and services?
- a. Strongly agree
  - b. Agree
  - c. Neither agree nor disagree
  - d. Disagree
  - e. Strongly disagree

Comments:

11. To what extent do you agree our Get Help Buying for Schools service would add value to schools' procurement activity?

- a. Strongly agree
- b. Agree
- c. Neither agree nor disagree
- d. Disagree
- e. Strongly disagree

Comments:

12. To what extent do you agree that this service would enable school's greater accessibility to procurement support?

- a. Strongly agree
- b. Agree
- c. Neither agree nor disagree
- d. Disagree
- e. Strongly disagree

Comments:

13. To what extent do you agree that a self-serve digital process on Buying For Schools Gov.uk pages will enable schools greater accessibility to procurement support when needed?

- a. Strongly agree
- b. Agree
- c. Neither agree nor disagree
- d. Disagree
- e. Strongly disagree

Comments:

14. Do you have any suggestions for our new service regarding elements of procurement support that would be especially valuable for your organisation?

Comments:

15. Do you have any comments on the chosen design and operation of the new service?

Comments:



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