



Department
for Education

Children's Social Care Innovation Programme

How to get involved

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Introduction

1. This document sets out the kind of activity the Department for Education (DfE) is looking to support through the next round of the Children's Social Care Innovation Programme, and how people with ideas can get involved or stay involved. It provides more detail about how the Programme will operate over the next four years, the types of projects it will support, and the kinds of support available.
2. The Children's Social Care Innovation Programme was launched by the Children's Minister, Edward Timpson, in October 2013. The programme is designed to innovate and redesign service delivery to achieve high quality services, improved outcomes for children and better value for money.
3. In January, the Department published 'Children's Social Care Reform: A Vision for Change'¹. This set out our ambition for this Parliament, which is to radically reform the children's social care system, putting practice excellence and achieving more for the children we serve at its heart. Reforms will be structured around three areas:
 - **People and leadership** – bringing the best people into the profession, and giving them the right knowledge and skills for the incredibly challenging but hugely rewarding work we expect them to do, and developing leaders equipped to nurture practice excellence.
 - **Practice and systems** – creating the right environment for excellent practice and innovation to flourish.
 - **Governance and accountability** – making sure that what we are doing is working, using data to show strengths and weaknesses in the system, and developing innovative new organisational models with the potential to radically improve services.
4. Creating a culture of innovation is at the heart of our vision for children's social care, and crucial to the delivery of our reforms across all three of these areas. Our reforms to the social work profession will create a highly skilled and professional workforce, and a pipeline of excellent leaders. But this will not in isolation deliver the radical reform required. We need a system which frees up excellent frontline social workers and their leaders to focus on the needs of children and families. We need the future shape of children's social care to be defined not by Whitehall, but by the very best professionals and leaders using the very best evidence. We need to make sure that children's social care services are organisations where excellent social work is nurtured and the talents of professionals are harnessed to the full. We need the best most imaginative social workers to help drive both policy development and the

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/childrens-social-care-reform-a-vision-for-change>

evolution of an inspection framework which sharply measures quality of practice. Specifically, we need to:

- Give permission to innovators, and support them to redesign practice systems and structures to improve outcomes for children and families.
 - Back the best, most innovative local areas to show us what they are capable of achieving when they are given the freedom to design practice around an uncompromising focus on what children and families need.
 - Support new collective arrangements between local authorities for commissioning or delivering excellent services, including through city and devolution deals.
 - Support the emergence of new not-for-profit children's social care organisations as part of a more dynamic and diverse range of provision, supporting those local authorities who wish to establish organisations, mutuals and trusts covering all, or part, of their children's social care functions.
 - Build the capacity for outcomes based commissioning to drive better results from existing services and move to a system that rewards success.
5. The Children's Social Care Innovation Programme, and related activity, is our vehicle for delivering these changes. We are committing nearly £200m of funding to our innovation and improvement work over the next four years. We will use this to build on, expand and deepen the successes of the Innovation Programme.
6. Being able to bring this work together into a four-year programme for innovation and improvement is a significant opportunity. It will allow us to strengthen and spread the best ideas, bringing them to more areas, and ensure that the principles of innovation and creativity are driving whole-system redesign across children's social care. Over the next four years we would like to see every local authority in England involved in our innovation and improvement programmes in some way.
7. Nearly £110m has already been invested in the Innovation Programme. The sector has come forward with a wealth of good ideas and has demonstrated its willingness and commitment to thinking differently. We have already extended the funding for some projects to allow them to fully test and evaluate their concept. We are now looking to expand the Innovation Programme further by:
- Enabling the most promising projects to scale up their excellent work, including by supporting new areas to adopt the best innovations; and
 - Inviting new projects, focused particularly in two areas: rethinking children's social care, and supporting the transition of adolescents through the social care system and into adulthood.

What has the Innovation Programme achieved so far?

8. In its first two years the Innovation Programme has supported 53 projects with £110m, operating across 59% of all top-tier local authorities and involving over 120 public, private and voluntary sector organisations. Local authorities, voluntary sector organisations and others have come forward with bold and creative new approaches to the delivery of children's social care, which are now being tested. Projects are already delivering valuable lessons for the sector, with early indicators of effectiveness being seen in many of the projects.

9. The evaluation of these projects is well underway, with a significant number of projects extending their evaluation in recognition that they can demonstrate further evidence about the positive outcomes they create for children and young people given more time.

10. These projects include:

North Yorkshire County Council, and their 'No Wrong Door' project. This operates from two hubs of multi-disciplinary teams including clinical psychologists, speech therapists, family circle workers, education and training, employment support, placement support and homelessness support. These practitioners work together in a single space and use the Signs of Safety approach to assess and plan with young people. Whether young people choose to live independently or in a family placement they are continuously supported by their key worker. The project is seeing an increase in the number of adolescents remaining at home through the successful out-of-care support, with a reduction in crisis presentations and young people being remanded into custody. One of the hubs for this project has recently been judged to be 'outstanding' by Ofsted.

Pause's 'Preventing Repeat Removals' project received £4.3m of funding for their work to break the cycle of children being removed into care, often related to complex trans-generational patterns of neglect or abuse. Pause's aim is to break these cycles by intervening at a point when women have no children in their care, working intensely with them through a systemic, integrated model. Pause is currently delivering across seven areas in England working intensely with up to 20 women at each area over an 18-month period and are on course to be working with 160 women by the end of this month.

Evidence has so far demonstrated a number of positive outcomes as a result of the intense therapeutic, practical and behavioural support, provided through a one-to-one Practitioner relationship. Pause is reaching their target of working with 160 women who have had 568 children removed between them, across the current seven Pause Practices, in London and in Yorkshire. As well as a reduction in pregnancies and removals, many women are now in safe accommodation, receiving help and support from domestic violence or mental health services, and engaged in training and education, as well as volunteering and employment. Some women have engaged in positive and

consistent contact with their children, with feedback beginning to demonstrate a positive impact on children.

Tri-Borough (Westminster, Kensington and Chelsea, Hammersmith and Fulham local authorities) received £4m to implement their ambitious new model called *Focus on Practice* to achieve more purposeful practice and effective interventions with children, young people and their families. The Tri-Borough are investing in training their children's social care workforce, just over 700 staff in total, from top leadership through to frontline practitioners across the three local authorities. *Focus on Practice* includes; training in evidenced based methodologies including systemic practice, motivational interviewing, parenting theory and skills and Signs of Safety, new approaches to supervision and embedding clinical psychologists and family therapists in teams. This is enabling frontline staff to engage more positively and proactively with families with the long term aim of reducing re-referrals and entries into care. Early evidence suggests these new approaches are having a positive impact on staff and the families they engage with.

Ealing's 'Brighter Futures' project aims to prevent placement and family breakdown through skilled and intensive interventions, delivered by small, multidisciplinary teams. It has seen reduced caseloads and increased administrative support which has created time to dedicate to young people. This has been achieved by promoting the empowerment of teenagers and families and devolving power and decision-making closer to the child and the key worker. The impact of these changes has been a reduction in looked after children from 400 to 360 with nine young people to date moved back from residential care into local foster care and eight more in transition. The service has received positive feedback from young people and been shortlisted for the Children's Services Award at the 2016 LGC Awards.

Leeds City Council are aiming to put the family back at the heart of children's social care. The Family Valued programme aims to embed restorative practice across all council services, offering a common theory of practice for the whole workforce, at the same time as developing Family Group Conferencing as a core offer to families in a wide range of circumstances. 1,500 staff from across the local authority have been trained in the use of restorative practice, with 36 trained as family group conference co-ordinators. In the first six months of the project 500 family group conferences have taken place. The aim is for 6,000 staff to be trained in restorative approaches by the end of the Programme.

Lessons so far

11. The Interim Learning Report, published in February 2016 and available on the Spring Consortium website², demonstrates that in order to enable effective innovation, we need to create alignment across practice and systems, people and leadership, and local governance and accountability. Emerging learning across these themes is summarised below.

Practice and systems

Innovation Projects are:

- Strengthening the relationships at the heart of children's lives (especially with their birth family, carers, residential key worker or social worker);
- Using these improved relationships to better assess a child's risks, needs and strengths; and
- More actively engaging children in planning and decision making that balances their risks, needs and strengths.

The result is that social workers are better at matching care to need, so children's lives and placements are more stable.

People and leadership

Innovation Projects are:

- Changing culture through shared vision and values that guide the practice of all staff, through a universal practice methodology;
- Improving practice through reflection, reflective supervision and evaluation that builds a culture of evidence based practice; and
- Liberating frontline staff to spend more time with children and families, by reducing bureaucracy.

The result is empowered frontline staff who make better decisions to keep children safe.

Governance and accountability

Innovation Projects are:

- Incentivising providers to innovate through new models of funding and commissioning; and

² Available at <http://springconsortium.com/interim-learning-report-for-the-innovation-programme/>

- Integrating services from social care, health, education, housing and policing to ensure better children's outcomes are sustained into adulthood.

The result is that providers and local authorities are responding creatively to 'new' social work problems as they emerge.

12. Another enabler of effective innovation is to ensure that the voices of children, young people and families are listened to as part of the process of developing new services to support them. Many of our projects, such as Stoke-on-Trent City Council's 'house project' (a housing co-operative that is led by young care leavers using homes owned by the council) have done this very effectively.

Learning: next steps

13. Learning from the programme is still developing. Many of the Innovation Projects will start to generate evidence of their impact in the next six to twelve months. That means that the success of the programme will be marked by its ability to continue to share lessons and evidence as it emerges and encourage practice to be replicated or developed with more young people, with new target groups and/or in new geographical areas. That learning will be shared through our new Innovation Programme Learning Network, through a series of publications and resources, and through the new What Works Centre focusing on children's social care.

14. With the continuation of the Innovation Programme to 2020 we also have an opportunity to further connect and embed the learning from projects to date. All of the projects involved in the Innovation Programme in 2014-16 have been invited to join the Innovation Programme Learning Network.

15. The network will build on the success to date of the Department and the sector learning together about how innovation can achieve better outcomes for children and young people and value for money. It will set up learning network hubs, focused on tackling common challenges that projects have faced in their innovations and sharing learning from their delivery.

16. A number of thematic reports will be published alongside a final report in early 2017, identifying which models of practice indicate improved outcomes for children and young people. Crucially, these reports will also analyse what we can learn from those projects which have not been as successful. This evidence will give us a strong basis to build on findings, and to contribute to future reform in children's social care.

Objectives of the Innovation Programme 2016-2020

Overarching Objectives

17. The Innovation Programme is designed to create conditions which promote innovation, and through this deliver better life chances for children in the social care system, and better value for money.

18. Those objectives clearly appealed to a very significant number of organisations in the children's social care sector in the first phase of the programme. We believe that they are still relevant now and we will be retaining them for the next phase of the programme. Better life chances and better value for money are far from mutually exclusive and many of our strongest projects are finding innovative ways of genuinely improving services while reducing the cost of providing them.

Priority Policy Areas

19. In the last phase, two priority policy areas for innovation were developed. We want to retain and build upon these priority areas for the next phase of the programme. The two areas, which are explored in more detail in the following section, are *rethinking children's social care* and *rethinking transitions to adulthood for young people* in the social care system. As before, we remain interested in very innovative ideas outside of these two priority areas, but these priorities will underpin our objectives for 2016-18 and are likely to be the basis from which we build thereafter.

Spreading and Scaling Innovation

20. In addition to introducing a new wave of projects to Innovation Programme, now is also the right time to support the strongest of our existing projects to scale up their innovations so that the benefits have an impact on the life chances of more young people. The Partners in Practice programme will be a key part of that growth. However, we also want to create an opportunity for projects that are not part of that programme to receive DfE support to accelerate the spread of their innovations.

The design of the Innovation Programme 2016 - 2020

21. The design principles that underpin the Innovation Programme remain largely unchanged. Through the programme we will:

1. Focus on **improved outcomes** for children and young people:
 - driving **measurable change** in children's outcomes and value for money over a period of one to two years; and
 - contributing to **longer term** measurable change in the wider social care system.
2. Provide **financial and non-financial support** to spark, enable, incentivise, scale and spread sustainable innovation. This will include:
 - investment;
 - coaching;
 - technical support;
 - networking, peer-learning opportunities and sharing of best practice across the sector; and
 - policy support and sponsorship.
3. Prioritise the use and creation of a strong **evidence base**, excellent data management and robust independent evaluation.
4. Deliver robust cross-sector **governance** with clear accountability at programme and project level.
5. Create a **spirit of innovation and empowerment** by:
 - providing appropriate freedoms and flexibilities to enable innovation and supporting organisations to take risks to deliver innovation;
 - influencing, motivating and inspiring organisations to think creatively, boldly and innovatively about how to radically improve outcomes for children; and
 - engaging Ofsted in a discussion about how innovation should feed into developing inspection frameworks.

An Invitation for New Projects

What are we looking to support?

22. We are looking to:

- Enable the most promising projects to scale up their excellent work, including by supporting new areas to adopt the best innovations, or by applying a successful approach to a new or wider target group; and
- Support new projects, focused particularly upon two areas: rethinking children's social care, and rethinking transitions to adulthood for young people in the social care system.

23. We are looking for proposals that take bold new approaches to transforming outcomes for children and young people. This means that any work supported by the programme should have the potential to help transform the system, not just improve it incrementally, if it were adopted at scale.

24. In some cases this will involve a completely new approach. This could include learning from other sectors and applying that learning in a new way to the children's social care sector, or by taking a relatively new approach that has started to be tested and developing a robust evidence base for it.

25. We do not believe that the traditional operational arrangements for children's social care always create the conditions that best enable social workers to do what we ask of them. We are therefore looking for proposals which seek to enable professionals to create and embed an excellent practice system, and encourage the adoption of structures which empower social workers and other professionals to use their skills and judgement to best support vulnerable children and their families.

How developed does an innovation need to be?

26. We can work with ideas at different stages of innovation, whether you want to explore an area in which you have identified a problem; implement a new idea for improvement; or develop an evidence base for or scale up an innovation that you already have in place. 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.

Who can get involved?

27. As with last time, we are looking for public sector, private sector, not for profit and voluntary organisations, working across the social care, justice, health, education or other

sectors with an ambition to inspire and lead change and drive improved outcomes. Some examples of organisations we want to hear from include academies and academy trusts, directors of public health, private sector providers of social care services or adjacent services and local authorities. We are not imposing boundaries on who can get involved – if you have transformative ideas for improving outcomes for vulnerable children, particularly in relation to our two focus areas, we will support you to be involved.

Rethinking Children's Social Care

What do we mean by 'rethinking children's social care'?

28. The aim of this strand of the programme is to drive systemic changes that, in conjunction with our wider reforms, have the potential to improve the quality and impact of children's social work and children's social care services. We are looking for projects that seek to redesign the organisational systems and practice frameworks that underpin children's social care. As before, we want everyone to ask themselves these three fundamental questions:

- *How* do we want our social workers and other professionals to help our most vulnerable children and families?
- *What* are we asking practitioners to achieve for these children and families?
- What kind of environment, culture and practice model would *best enable* them to achieve this?

Why is this a focus area for the Innovation Programme?

29. A system can either harness the talents of those working in it, or stifle them. Too often, the social care system has stifled them. Professor Munro's review³ described a system in which the actions of social workers had become driven by a pressure to comply with process, which had accumulated in response to specific child protection failings. By the time Professor Munro began her work, she found a system which was "doing things right rather than doing the right thing".

30. As set out in '*Children's Social Care Reform: A Vision for Change*' (2016), if we are to do our very best by our most vulnerable children, we need a system which frees up excellent front line social workers and their leaders to focus on the needs of children and families. We need the future shape of children's social care in England to be defined not by Whitehall, but by the very best professionals and leaders in the field using the very best evidence. We need to make sure that children's social care services are places where excellent social work is nurtured and the talents of social workers are harnessed to the full.

31. The first phase of the Innovation Programme started this work. Around half of the projects funded were looking at wholesale redesign of the children's social care system and underpinning practice framework. Projects such as Leeds City Council's, which is embedding restorative practice across the whole of children's services, are placing the

³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/munro-review>

service user and those close to them at the heart of planning and decision making. The Signs of Safety project, which is operating in 10 local authorities also involves rethinking processes, reporting structures and systems so that social workers can work more intensively with families.

32. We have already started to see evidence that, by giving professionals freedom and support to design the services that they know children and families need, we can have a dramatic impact. The first two 'outstanding' Ofsted judgments under the new framework were recently awarded to two Innovation Programme authorities – Westminster and Kensington and Chelsea – and the whole system change programme they have rolled out through the Innovation Programme was cited as contributing to their success.

33. Now we want to take what we have learned so far from the Innovation Programme, and from wider examples of excellence in the children's social care system, and spread this kind of whole-system redesign across the sector, so that we are consistently creating the right environment for excellent practice to flourish.

What are we looking to support through the Innovation Programme now?

34. When we started the Innovation Programme, we analysed examples of success and promising innovative approaches to children's social care at home and abroad. At the heart of the examples we analysed was a clear and well-articulated vision for what the service was there to achieve for vulnerable children and families. There was also a belief that social workers should be making change happen for families and, where necessary, taking decisive action themselves, rather than just assessing and monitoring. These values were shared throughout the organisations. Work was often underpinned by a particular evidence-based theory and/or set of interventions that shaped the way that social workers operated, both in direct work and in their critical thinking and decision making. Staff were well supported by managers and colleagues, but also challenged to develop multiple hypotheses and try new approaches when something wasn't working. There was often easy access or joint working between social workers and other professionals, especially clinicians. A full list of the 'key ingredients of success' we identified can be found here:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/342053/Re-thinking_children_s_social_work.pdf.

35. The projects we have funded to date have been influenced by and designed around these success factors, and the emerging evidence to date supports our hypothesis that these are important features of new models. In particular, our interim learning report suggests that projects which embedded shared vision and values, a universal practice methodology, evidence based and reflective practice, and better

integration across health, social care and education were building stronger and more impactful relationships with children and families.

36. We want to build on this emerging learning, and fund projects in this focus area which seek to embed the features above to redesign the practice system around an uncompromising focus on what children and families need.

37. The proposals we will be looking to support through the Innovation Programme will be transformative, testing the furthest boundaries of current practice and having the potential to create completely different positive experiences and outcomes for children and young people in the social care system as a result.

New delivery models

38. As set out in *'Children's Social Care: A Vision for Change'* (2016), we are also very keen to stimulate ideas about how children's services can be delivered through new delivery models, whether that be through regional or sub-regional arrangements for part of the social care service, through children's social care trusts and/or through mutual or other delegated services arrangements.

39. To achieve the vision for excellence set out in January, we need dynamic children's social care organisations, designed with practice excellence and innovation at their heart. Some areas of children's social care – such as foster care and residential care – have long been served by a diverse range of organisations. But core social work functions have remained the preserve of 'in-house' local authority teams. At their best these services are excellent: some of the most effective and innovative work in children's social care takes place in well-led local authority services, with a clear model of practice and a consistently strong workforce. Historically, there have been too few opportunities for these local authority services to spread their influence to other areas or support improvement elsewhere. But there have also been too few examples of excellence: too many local authority services are not good enough, with over 60% currently 'inadequate' or 'requires improvement'.

40. In the last few years, the organisational and geographical landscape of children's social care has begun to change. We have seen the emergence of new 'combined authority' models – with local authorities joining together to provide social care across larger areas; and the emergence of new not-for-profit organisations, established by local authorities to deliver social care functions at arm's length. For the people who have driven forward these innovations, operating outside of the local authority context provides an opportunity to innovate and create an organisation with absolute clarity of purpose and vision, rather than the children's social care department being one small cog within a much bigger and more diverse corporate context.

41. Local authorities themselves have driven forward these changes, supported by central government. We now want to use the Innovation Programme to support more areas and accelerate the development of new delivery models. These could be new Social Care Trusts, delivering all children's social care functions; or they could be Specialist Trusts, providing a specialist service (e.g. leaving care services) over a larger geographical area; or another model.

42. We are clear however that the delivery model *in and of itself* will not transform the quality of children's social care services. The thing that shapes outcomes for children and families is social work practice: what the social worker does with a family once they step through their front door. We will therefore want to see proposals with a clear vision for the kind of practice innovation that moving to a new delivery model will enable.

Rethinking transitions to adulthood for young people in the social care system

What do we mean by ‘rethinking transitions to adulthood’?

43. The government wants to improve the life chances of all young people as they transition into adulthood. We know that those leaving care, or with a history of receiving services from the children’s social care system, may need particular support as they become adults. That will also be true of many of those children and young people with disabilities who are in receipt of support from social care services. The aim of this strand of the programme is to develop and test new, more holistic ways of providing young people with the stability and support they need to grow into adulthood successfully. This notion includes having a safe, stable and supportive place to grow up – whether at home, in care or after care; getting a good education and the chance of a job or training; and developing a support network of friends and family.

44. We are asking projects to ask themselves these three fundamental questions:

- What should the system’s purpose and objectives be in working with adolescents in the social care system and care leavers?
- How should this purpose drive practice and the structure of services?
- Who is best placed to provide young people with the support they need?

45. We are interested in projects aimed at supporting adolescents in care, adolescents on the edge of care or involved with the social care system, and care leavers. We are particularly interested in projects which seek to work across boundaries and provide a consistent approach to support across adolescence in care and leaving care.

Why is this a focus area for the Innovation Programme?

46. Adolescents and young people involved with the social care system face particular challenges. They have to deal living independently at a younger age than many, often without the family or community support networks that other young people rely on. They may have to deal with the enduring impact of abuse or neglect. They often have to deal with instability in their placement or their school. As a group they show high rates of special educational needs and disproportionately poor mental health. Similarly, disabled young people need to be effectively supported towards greater independence, improved health, participation in society and employability.

47. For younger children, there is an expectation that, once safe, care will lead to some form of permanence. However, this is a much more challenging issue for young people who are often already starting to manage the difficult transition into adulthood.

Most – three quarters – of adolescents return to their birth family when leaving care. However, 40% will re-enter care within five years with many of them moving in and out of the system. The reasons for entering care and the level and complexity of need are also far more diverse amongst this group. By age 14, abuse or neglect accounts for just 42% of entries to care, with 45% accounted for by a mixture of acute family stress, family dysfunction and socially unacceptable behaviour⁴. Therefore, the system's response to these young people needs to be specific to the complex nature of the challenges they face.

48. We want all young people in or leaving the social care system to receive the kind of help and support - whether from their families, public services, or other organisations - that we would want for our own children. But too often this isn't the case. We know, for example, that the quality of support that care leavers receive from local authorities is patchy and in too many cases is poor: only two Ofsted inspections have found 'outstanding' care leaver services; two-thirds either 'require improvement' or are 'inadequate'.

What are we looking to support through the next round of the Innovation Programme?

49. The aim of this strand of the programme is to find innovative and radical ways to improve outcomes for adolescents in or leaving the children's social care system. That might be about finding new ways to support young people in care or those with disabilities as they prepare to make the transition into adulthood and make their way as young adults. Or it might be achieved by changing the journey of young people completely, keeping them out of care and finding better ways to support them and their families at home. For those children for whom the state does take on parental responsibility, the government wants to see a step-change in the support provided by public services in their role as 'corporate parent', both for looked after children and care leavers.

50. We are particularly interested in projects which consider:

- How to better provide consistent and long-lasting supportive relationships for young people, whether from professionals or others;
- Who is best placed to work with and reach out to young people, and how this support is best organised;

⁴https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/342052/Rethinking_support_for_adolescents.pdf

- New ways of providing young people with a safe, stable and supportive place to live and learn to become independent, whether in care or after care;
- Approaches which help young people to develop a supportive and protective social network;
- More fluid and responsive ways of using different types of placement and support to more effectively meet the needs of young people, whether in or out of care or leaving care;
- Innovations in how residential care is used, especially how it is used in combination with other types of support and as part of a longer term plan for a young person;
- New partnerships between education and care providers and new approaches to getting young people into education, employment or training;
- Innovations in commissioning, for example models which commission pathways through and beyond care, rather than individual placements.
- The use of alternative financing mechanisms, such as outcomes based commissioning and social impact bonds.

New delivery models

51. As with the ‘rethinking children’s social care’ strand, we are also keen to stimulate new delivery models for statutory services. The power for local authorities to delegate responsibility for looked-after children’s services, and care leavers, has existed for almost a decade. We believe there is a real opportunity to develop new specialist delivery vehicles, with full case-owning responsibility and greater freedom to work across organisational boundaries, greater ability to use professionals in flexible and innovative ways, and space to adopt new ways of working. . We believe organisations such as these may be able to respond more holistically and effectively to the needs of young people. Examples might be:

- a. creating a new independent Trust delivering adolescent care and leaving care services, providing a smoother transition from children’s social care to independent adult life, blending children’s and adult support and removing traditional hand-off points;
- b. creating a joint venture between a charity and a group of local authorities to harness external specialist expertise in working with adolescents;
- c. creating a Care Leavers Trust to run care leaver services for a group of local authorities, enabling specialisation, clarity of purpose and the delivery of an enhanced range of services because of increased scale;
- d. developing regional services working across or beyond local authority boundaries, linking up with work, housing and healthcare; and
- e. developing a mentoring and employability programme for care leavers that is funded via a social impact bond

52. We are flexible about the types of models that could come forward through this strand of the programme. New models could draw from some or all of the features suggested above. They could be focused exclusively on care leavers, disabled children or those with a history of receiving social care services, or could support all of these groups.

Developing an idea for a new Innovation Project

53. Developing a proposal for an innovation project is not the same as developing a normal funding application. When thinking about a new innovation project you will want to think about:

- The problem your innovation is trying to address. You should have a clear sense of the problem you are trying to solve and how it aligns with DfE's policy interests.
- The outcomes you want to achieve and how you might be able to measure them. That should include both the outcomes for children and young people and the impact on value for money.
- What your solution is and how would it work, even if you have only got very early ideas at this stage.
- Whether your solution is genuinely innovative. You should know what makes it innovative and how it will change cultures, structures and practice in a way that is scalable, so that it can have a wider impact in the future.
- How you will make it happen. You will need to think about who will play a part in making it happen, what the approach would be, what the costs would be. You will also want to think about the likely challenges at an early stage.

Building the impact of existing innovations

54. From the start, the Innovation Programme was designed to invest in projects that have the potential to secure a substantial positive impact on children's lives. Projects were chosen with their potential to be scaled up in mind, whether that be by being adopted in new geographical areas, or applied to new target groups.

55. In many cases Innovation Projects already have sustainability and growth plans for the future. This funding is not about securing the long-term sustainability or growth of projects through ongoing DfE funding. It is about finding the projects that have the most promise and ability to scale up and helping those projects to achieve more than they would otherwise be able to do so by accelerating and being more ambitious about their growth strategy. It is also about supporting those local authorities, trusts, private or voluntary organisations that would like to adopt or adapt promising innovations developed by others.

56. The funding we are offering for scale and spread can, therefore, be allocated to either existing Innovation Projects to support their growth strategy, or to local authorities, trusts, private or voluntary sector organisations who are not part of the original project but who are seeking support to enable them to adopt or adapt innovations. Where the latter is taking place, we would expect this to be done in partnership with the original Innovation Project.

57. When thinking about when and how to scale up, spread or adopt an Innovation Project you will need to consider the conditions for innovation at scale. This should include detailed thinking in the following areas:

- The fidelity of the model. The extent to which the innovation can or should be adapted, and how fidelity will be protected where it is important.
- Partnership and collaboration. Detail on which organisations will be in a partnership and consideration about the demands of scaling and spreading an innovation both in the existing and adopting organisation(s). We will want to ensure the Innovation Project grows at a manageable rate.
- The local circumstances where the model will be adopted, including the extent to which the problems and outcomes being sought are the same in that area; the strength of local support and buy in; and the potential for long term sustainability.
- The strength of the evidence that suggests a model is having positive outcomes. It may be that there is a time in the near future where this evidence will be stronger than it is now, and you may wish to seek funding for the future, subject to that evidence being positive.

Submitting Expressions of Interest

58. In 2014-16 the Innovation Programme ran 53 new Innovation Projects. We will continue to support those 53 projects through our Innovation Programme Learning Network and some will receive continued coaching. We will also be investing in some of those projects to accelerate the scaling up of their innovations and launching new Innovation Projects.

Funding

59. In 2014-16 we gave funding for periods of up to 18 months. Over the period 2016-2020 we have greater flexibility in how we fund projects, although we expect that many of the projects we fund will continue to have a life span of not more than one or two years with only the most complex receiving funding over a longer period.

60. That also gives us greater flexibility in how we allocate funding. We want to see the strength of the proposals we receive before we decide how much funding we will allocate to new projects and to scaling up existing innovations. Where proposals involve the use of social impact bonds we will consider funding development work and/or acting as the contract commissioner if a statutory commissioner does not already exist. We will be looking to achieve maximum impact from the £200m investment in innovation and improvement over the next four years. 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.

What to do next

61. Whether you are interested in submitting an Expression of Interest for a new Innovation Project or have an existing proposal that you think is ready to scale up, the first steps are to download the Expression of Interest Form from the Spring Consortium website⁵ and email Spring⁶ with some basic information. The form makes it clear what further information you will need to have ready when submitting your proposals to the Department.

62. Whether you are new to the Innovation Programme or have run a project in the past you will also benefit from logging in to our live webinar on 12 April. For that session we will have members of the DfE Innovation Programme and the Spring Consortium together to answer your questions about the how the programme will work in this new phase. We would encourage you to submit any immediate questions that you have in

⁵ www.springconsortium.com

⁶ innovation@springconsortium.com

advance and we will endeavour to answer these on the day, as well as answering new questions that emerge. The webinar will be loaded on to the Spring website afterwards for those that cannot attend live and so will be more useful than us answering individual enquiries over the next few days.

How the process will work

63. We recognise that some organisations already have ideas they want to put to us that will be quite well developed, whilst others will need more time to progress their proposals. For that reason we are launching one single call for expressions of interest now but we will consider Expressions of Interest against two deadlines. The first – for those whose proposals are well developed – is Friday 6 May, at 3pm, and the second – for those whose proposals need more time – is Thursday 7 July, 3pm.

64. At both stages, successful Expressions of Interest will be invited to submit full proposals to the programme and will receive support from Spring Consortium coaches to help them to do so. In addition, you will receive advice about how to evaluate your project and initial ideas for doing so. Coaching support is not available to support the development of Expressions of Interest ahead of this point.

65. Where Expressions of Interest submitted by the first deadline are successful we will require full project proposals by Thursday 30 June, at 3pm. Where Expressions of Interest submitted by the second deadline are successful we will require full project proposals by Thursday 29 September, at 3pm.

66. We hope to start releasing funding for Innovation Projects from the summer, but the final decision on funding dates will depend on the readiness of projects to put that funding to effective use.

How decisions will be made

67. Decisions on which projects will receive funding will be based upon the following criteria:

Criteria	The strongest projects will...
The project is innovative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include bold new approaches to transforming outcomes for children and young people • Challenge the status quo • Have the potential, if delivered at scale, to transform the sector

Criteria	The strongest projects will...
The project will improve outcomes for children and/or young people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clearly describe the type and extent of change that will be achieved for children in need of social care support • Have a logical and compelling case for the expected impact • Be backed by evidence where the proposal has been previously tested or draw on relevant evidence where the proposal is new • Show a strong understanding of what data will be collected to show impact, and how it will be collected
The project will improve value for money	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Show a compelling case that better outcomes can be achieved for the same or less money • Include figures that are complete and robust • Have a clear plan for securing funding from other sources
The project will be able to be delivered	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have identified a strong team to take forward the work • Include appropriate and realistic activities, milestones, timescales and budget planning • Show good awareness of the enablers and risks for the project • Include appropriate sponsorship and/or endorsements
The project will be sustained and mainstreamed*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include clear and achievable plans to achieve long term sustainability, backed by figures • Show how activity will be part of core delivery, not peripheral
The project will have an impact at a bigger scale*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be very likely to be adopted and adapted in other places • Have a clear plan for how the innovation can grow (whether this is led by the project or not) <p>and, in addition to the above for scale and spread projects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have developed business models and/or commissioning models that create demand and enable delivery of their innovation • Have national partners on board • Have a plan for how to engage policy makers • Be codifying practice • Be engaging with workforce development issues related to the project

Criteria	The strongest projects will...
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="491 232 1171 271">• Be ensuring appropriate fidelity to the model

*** In allocating funding for projects that are looking to scale up and spread their innovations greater emphasis will be placed on these criteria.**

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 the next four years. 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 is available for new Innovation Projects and for scaling up or spreading existing innovations. New Innovation Projects can focus upon either of our two priority themes "rethinking children's social care" or "rethinking transitions to adulthood for children in the social care system". Or, if an idea is particularly promising and innovative, it may sit outside of those themes. Projects who are interested in taking an existing idea with strong indications of impact from initial evaluation may also apply for funding to help spread their idea to more young people or work in a greater number of areas.

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

In very unusual circumstances projects may receive funding for up to four years. We expect most projects to be much shorter, for example 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 this document. In reaching decisions on which projects to fund the department will take the advice of our Investment Board, details of which can be found on the Spring Consortium website. Final decisions will be taken by DfE Ministers.

Who can apply for funding?

Local authorities and organisations from across the private, public and voluntary 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 is spread over 4 years. 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 summer of 2016, depending on how well developed the proposals we receive are.

I have an idea that is focused on early intervention. Can that be funded?

This programme is about supporting innovations for children and young people who are part of the social care system and as such is focused upon those who are identified as having quite a high level of need. This programme is not intended to fund early intervention innovations.

Scaling existing innovations

I have an idea that I want to scale up but I'm not an Innovation Programme project at the moment. Can I register an interest?

Yes, of course. Please do register with us and explain that your idea is already in place and you would like to grow it further.

Next Steps

Who do I contact if I have questions?

We will hold a webinar to answer questions on 12 April 2016 and we will publish the key questions and answers from that online. That will allow us to ensure that we make information available fairly to anyone who has questions. There may well be some questions we cannot answer at that point in time, but we will endeavour to answer them as quickly as possible thereafter.



Department
for Education

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