



SPRING CONSORTIUM

Delivering the children's social care innovation programme

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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 and improved social mobility for children receiving support and better value for money for the sector. The Programme is inspiring practice change and finding new and innovative ways to improve outcomes.

There is currently a targeted opportunity through the Innovation Programme to develop and test innovations focusing on the four policy areas highlighted in the Department for Education's policy paper '[Putting Children First](#)':

- Building on the recommendations of the Narey report on residential care, particularly piloting 'Staying Close and regional commissioning of residential care;
- Testing the use of social investment to improve support for care leavers;
- Testing alternative delivery models for children's social care; and
- Testing and developing understanding of targeted early support to prevent children entering child protection systems

To date the Innovation Programme has stimulated new thinking in the sector, and is testing a wide range of innovations. Between May 2014 and March 2016 the Innovation Programme provided £110M of funding to 53 projects involving 90 local authorities. There has been an overwhelming amount of interest in the programme it has generated great ideas and taken many much further by testing new ways of working in children's social care in a range of different settings and circumstances. We are beginning to see the impact the Innovation Programme is having on improved outcomes for children and families, and to understand which interventions are most successful in improving the performance of 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', and we are seeking to continue to support this through the programme.

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



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learning from the Innovation Programme and more widely, providing a trusted voice on best practice that is built on solid evidence.

Robust evaluation is integral to the Innovation Programme and early learning from the first set of projects that we funded is showing:

- Innovation is successfully delivered when there is a shared vision and a clear practice methodology;
- Better integration across health, social care, education, youth services and the police are critical building more impactful relationships with children and families;
- The importance of doing needs analysis and having clarity about the children you want to reach before undertaking service design or re-design;
- Robust and supportive social work supervision and systems based on evidence and reflective practice is critical to positive change;
- Recruiting specialist practitioners has taken longer than projects expected.

We want to ensure we are building on 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 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.

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:

1. 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;
 - 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 choice and better outcomes for children.
2. 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.
3. Testing alternative delivery models for children's social care, building the evidence base in this area.
4. Develop and test understanding of how targeted early support can prevent children needing to enter the child protection system.

We are using the Innovation Programme to provide a targeted opportunity to develop and test innovations to tackle these four policy issues.

Rather than opening immediately for expressions of interest, we want to encourage discussion and collaboration with the sector to scope the issues and develop new proposals, initially through a series of events. Through the process we will share learning from the programme so far, explore the most challenging questions presented by the four target policy areas together and support organisations in developing their ideas.

Detail of the events are as follows:

Alternative delivery models – 20 October 2016, Leeds

Thank you to all who attended this workshop. We are currently writing up the learnings from the workshop which will be shared on this website shortly.

Building on recommendations from the Narey report – 9 November 2016, London

[Click here for more information](#)

Targeted early support – 15 November 2016, London

[Click here for more information](#)

Social investment and care leavers – 24 November 2016, Birmingham

[Click here for more information](#)

For further information see the [how to get involved document](#) and to register for a place at an event please contact please contact innovation@springconsortium.com stating which event you would like to attend. Event attendance is not compulsory to proceed to the next stage but encouraged. A summary of key points of discussion from the workshops will be made available on this website following the event if you are unable to attend.

If you are not able to attend the first workshop then please [register your interest](#) stating which area of policy you are interested in.

Get in touch

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