

## Schwartz Rounds evaluation: Call for new applicants

What Works for Children's Social Care invites local authorities and trusts in England to help us widen our current evaluation of Schwartz Rounds, an intervention designed to improve the well-being of staff working in Children's Services by providing an open forum for multidisciplinary staff at all positions in an organisation to come together in an environment that is safe and confidential.

We are currently working with six local authorities to help test the use of Schwartz Rounds in children's social care – Haringey, Liverpool, Nottinghamshire, Walsall, Warwickshire and West Sussex. To date, we have collected more than 700 baseline surveys about staff well-being and allocated more than 2,700 people to either an intervention group (invited to attend Rounds) or a waiting-list-control group (asked not to attend Rounds until early 2020).

Although it is too early to report findings related to the primary outcome measure – whether attendance at Schwartz Rounds improves personal health and well-being – the qualitative feedback from attendees has been positive. We have heard about colleagues sharing stories with one another on topics such as 'a child I'll never forget' and 'a day my work made a difference'. We have also been told how the introduction of Rounds has led to ripples of change throughout the wider organisation, from simple steps, such as making sure to ask how colleagues are feeling after a difficult meeting, to more significant changes, such as enabling more reflective conversations in supervision.

In order to give us the very best chance of finding out whether Schwartz Rounds can make a difference in children's services, we would like to expand the study and are making further funding available to support an additional six local authorities and trusts to take part.

All applicants will need to demonstrate that they have the capacity to deliver the project in a timely manner, with the first Round being held no later than January 2020.

To apply, please complete the application form below and email it to [wwcprogrammes@nesta.org.uk](mailto:wwcprogrammes@nesta.org.uk) by 12 September 2019.

If you would like to talk with us about your application before submission, please contact CASCADE, Cardiff University who will arrange for a member of the team to contact you:

**Telephone:** 02922 510 943

**Email:** [wwc-cascade@cardiff.ac.uk](mailto:wwc-cascade@cardiff.ac.uk)

Incomplete or late applications may not be considered. We reserve the right to extend deadlines. We will endeavour to provide feedback on all unsuccessful applications, though this is not guaranteed. Selection criteria and terms and conditions apply.

### Terms and conditions

Successful local authorities and / or trusts will be expected to sign a contractual agreement with What Works for Children's Social Care following the decision-making process, and with the Point of Care Foundation (see appendix 1). The transfer of agreed funds will be subject to these contracts being in place.

### Timetable

We aim to commence working with successful sites as soon as practically possible (ideally from 23 September). An ability and willingness to accommodate this timetable will form part of the selection criteria.

Key milestones	Date
Publication of Call for Partners	22 August 2019
Deadline for applications	12 September 2019
Applicants to be informed of the outcome	20 September 2019
Start of project	1 October 2019

### Budget

The direct cost of the intervention is £5,000 per Local Authority (LA) or Trust for a two-year contract with the Point of Care Foundation. What Works for Children's Social Care (WWCSC) will provide funding of £2,500 per LA / Trust, up to a maximum of six applicants. Indirect costs (e.g. room bookings, catering, and project administration) will not be covered by WWCSC.

If additional applicants meet the criteria, they may be invited to participate in the evaluation but would need to self-fund the full £5,000 direct cost of the contract with Point of Care Foundation.

We will not be liable to you, your partners or anyone else in respect of any direct or indirect loss, economic loss or loss of opportunity arising as a result of your application.

### Selection Criteria

We reserve the right to share applications with members of WWCSC's development team and the Point of Care Foundation. WWCSC and its partners will not retain details of unsuccessful applications.

Selected applicants will be notified as soon as possible after application, and before 20 September.

We will apply the following criteria to all successfully submitted applications:

#### Senior leadership support

- A motivated and sufficiently senior project lead and team committed to driving the project forward, this might include Principal Social Workers, Heads of Service or Assistant Directors
- A realistic plan of how you intend to support implementation of the Schwartz rounds.

- Neither you nor any of your partners has any actual or potential conflict of interest in making your application, you will immediately inform us if you become aware of any such conflict of interest

#### **Capacity**

- Evidence that you can undertake the proposed project and identify suitable individuals to fulfil the roles required
- Proof that you can deliver to our tight timescales
- Commitment to full participation in the Cardiff University evaluation
- Commitment to full participation in delivery of the intervention with the Point of Care Foundation

## Appendix 1: Details of the intervention and evaluation plan

What Works for Children's Social Care aims to support and evaluate interventions that support staff well-being in children's social care.

With this project, we want to test an intervention (Schwartz Rounds) that aims to improve psychological well-being. It is an intervention that is relatively widely used in health services, having been initially developed in Boston, USA. There is evidence to suggest it helps reduce stress for staff who work in hospitals and other health settings.

Our hypothesis is that by helping social workers and other staff members to talk and think more about the emotional impact of the work, this will help improve psychological well-being and reduce sickness-related absence and retention problems.

### The intervention

Schwartz Rounds have been developed and evaluated in health settings where they offer promising indications of improving the emotional well-being and job satisfaction of staff.

*"Schwartz Rounds are the signature programme of the Schwartz Center for Compassionate Care. They provide a regular (usually monthly) open forum for multidisciplinary staff at all positions within the organisation to come together in an environment that is safe and confidential. They provide staff with a level playing field to reflect on, explore and tell stories about the difficult, challenging and rewarding experiences they face when delivering care, and receive the support of their colleagues. Rounds are typically organised and managed by a steering group, championed by a senior [member of staff]. They last for 1 hour and are often held during lunch periods (with food provided). They are a group intervention within which multiple perspectives on a theme, scenario or family (i.e. their stories) are briefly presented by a pre-arranged and pre-prepared panel and then opened to the audience for group reflection and discussion, usually facilitated by a senior [member of staff] and practitioner. The focus is on the...psychosocial, ethical and emotional issues surrounding the relationship – and attendees are encouraged to be open and honest, and reflect, discuss and explore their experiences thoughts and feelings. The interaction between the panellists and audience is felt to foster insight and support from colleagues, create a sense of working in a supportive environment and lead to improved relationships and communication within the hierarchy, improved communication and teamwork between staff and [families] and among staff, improved well-being of staff including enhanced resilience, improved compassionate care and ultimately impact on organisational culture" (Maben et al, 2018, p.14).*

Note, the provision of catering at the Rounds is a key feature of them (not an optional one). The Point of Care Foundation is the licensed provider of Rounds in the UK – and they recommend the following staffing support is needed:

### A nominated Practice Lead (1/2 day per month)

- The practice lead should be a respected senior member of staff (e.g. a Principal Social Worker).
- Requires skills and experience of working with groups and managing difficult emotions
- The practice lead will help find panellists and facilitate the Round itself

#### **One or two facilitators (1.5 days per month per facilitator)**

- Requires skills and experience of working with groups and managing difficult emotions (e.g. senior social workers)
- Facilitators will help with panel preparation and facilitating the Round itself

#### **An administrator (1 day per month)**

- Requires good organisational skills (e.g. professional support staff)
- Administrators help to organise the Rounds (e.g. booking rooms) and will help collate attendance and evaluation data

In addition, a steering group is recommended to take place once a month to help oversee and promote the project, with 4 – 8 members depending on the size of the organisation (e.g. senior managers, clinical / practice leads, facilitators, administrators, heads of service, training and development leads, etc.)

#### **Rationale**

Social workers in Children's Services often have to cope with high demands and high levels of stress. Although the work can be very rewarding, it can also be very challenging. This can cause lower levels of psychological well-being, higher rates of sickness-related absence and problems with retention. Many organisations are effective at supporting their workforce already – but many others are not. Supporting the workforce to manage the social and emotional demands of the work is a key mechanism by which children and families can be provided with the best possible service. Our aims are to:

- Implement the intervention (Schwartz Rounds) within children's services
- Evaluate whether the intervention is feasible for children's services
- Evaluate whether regularly attending Schwartz Rounds helps improve psychological well-being
- Evaluate whether improved psychological well-being affects sickness-related absence and retention

#### **We envisage**

- That each Local Authority or Trust will partner with the Point of Care Foundation (via a contract arrangement) to deliver the intervention and with the What Works Centre (via a different contract arrangement) to deliver the evaluation
- The Point of Care Foundation will support each successful applicant to introduce regular (monthly) Schwartz Rounds in their service (or part of their service for larger organisations)
- That staff will be encouraged and enabled to attend as often as possible (although it is important to note that attendance is voluntary, not mandatory)

- That Cardiff University will collect data prior to the intervention and for a further 6 to 8 months afterwards
- That, if found to be effective, the use of Schwartz Rounds will continue beyond the end of the evaluation period (in January 2020)

### **Outcomes**

Primary outcomes we are interested in are as follows:

- The psychological well-being of staff
- Sickness-related absence
- Retention

### **Evaluation**

Projects will be evaluated by CASCADE (Cardiff University). The evaluation primarily involves asking staff to complete in a brief questionnaire about their health and well-being before attending any Rounds. Staff will then be allocated randomly to either an intervention or a waiting-list-control group. For each successful applicant authority or trust, half the staff in children's services will be invited at random to attend Schwartz Rounds immediately (the intervention group) and the other half will join a waiting list (the control group). Attendance is voluntary even for staff in the intervention group (i.e. they can attend, but do not have to). For staff in the control group, they will be asked not to attend during the first part of the project, even if they want to (this will be a critical part of the evaluation and must be adhered to).

After six Rounds, staff will again be asked to complete another brief questionnaire. Everyone attending Rounds is also asked to fill in a short feedback form each time, and we will also hold focus groups with key groups of staff throughout the project.