What Works Centre for Children's Social Care

Change Project proposals: Information for applicants

The What Works Centre for Children's Social Care invites Local Authorities and Children's Services Trusts in England to partner with us and help test initial project proposals in our Change Programme (outlined in Appendix One).

We are seeking applications from authorities and trusts, with funding available to support delivery. Where the proposed project could be carried out in collaboration with a charity or other third-sector organisation, applications can only be submitted by the Local Authority or Children's Services Trust and must provide details of the proposed collaboration.

All applicants will need to demonstrate that they have the capacity to deliver the project (with additional funding) in a timely manner, allowing it to be evaluated by March 2020.

To apply, please complete the application below and email it to wwccsc@nesta.org.uk by noon 31st October 2018.

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: 02922510943
Email: wwc-cascade@cardiff.ac.uk

The WWC team will be holding a webinar on the 15th October 2018 to discuss the application process in more detail. To register your interest, please email wwccsc@nesta.org.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 children's trusts will be expected to sign a contractual agreement with Cardiff University following the decision making process. The transfer of agreed funds will be subject to this contract being in place.

Timetable

We aim to commence working with successful sites as soon as practically possible (ideally from December 2018). An ability and willingness to accommodate this timetable will form part of the selection criteria.

Key milestone	Date
Publication of Call for Partners	26th September 2018
Webinars for interested applicants	15th October 2018
Deadline for applications	Noon 31st October 2018
Applicants to be informed of the outcome	As soon after 31st October as possible
Provisional announcements @NCASC	14th November 2018
End of funding period	31st March 2020

Project Budgets

Name of project	Indicative Value (£)
Empowering Social Workers to Reduce the Need for Care	400,000 – 600,000 (applications for larger or smaller amounts are acceptable but the rationale needs to be clear and compelling)
School-Based Social Workers	

Costs

Your application should provide a breakdown of costs for each element of the work outlined above on the basis of:

- project delivery costs, including staff and other costs;

- project management including administrative time.

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 the Centre's development team. The Centre and its partners will not retain details of unsuccessful applications. Selected partners will be notified as soon as possible after application, and within three weeks.

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

Motivation & preferences
- 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
- A motivated and sufficiently senior project lead and team committed to driving the project forward to include evidence of creativity and passion in delivering excellent services for children and their families. Depending on the project, the team might include senior practitioners, Principal Social Workers, Heads of Service or Assistant Directors
- Proven strong senior leadership
- An existing practice focus on keeping families together with some evidence of success
- A compelling rationale for applying and which project(s) the applicant would be especially interested in

Quality of proposal
- An understanding of the rationale for the projects
- A realistic plan that clearly indicates:
  - What you will do to deliver the project
  - How this will achieve the project objectives
  - An account of the decisions you have made in order to deliver the project effectively – for instance, who the project is targeted at; what sites you would like to work with e.g. some or all teams or schools in your area

Capacity

- Evidence that you have the capacity to undertake the proposed project and ability to identify suitable individuals to fulfil the roles required
- Proof that you can deliver to the tight timescale we have
- Commitment to full participation in the Cardiff University/What Works Centre evaluation
- Commitment to ensure any funding provided is spent efficiently and effectively on the proposed project

Risk Management

- Applicants should submit as part of their proposal a brief summary of what they consider to be key risks in delivering the project and what contingencies they have or will have to mitigate them (a risk is any factor that may delay, disrupt or prevent the full achievement of a project)
  - Typical areas of risk will include staffing, resource constraints, technical constraints, data access, timing, management and operational issues
- Each application should also indicate whether any reliance would exist on a third party to undertake parts or the whole of a project

Appendix 1: Details of Change Project proposals

What Works Centre for Children's Social Care Change Programme

The What Works Centre aims to support and evaluate transformative change projects in children's social care. The focus for the initial projects in this Change Programme is on ways of working that move services closer to children and their families. We will be doing this in two areas of work:

1. Locating social workers in schools to work with children and families
2. Empowering social workers to take decisions - including over budgets - to prevent the need for children to enter care

Our hypothesis is that locating social work expertise closer to where children are and allowing social workers to take decisions at that point will:

- empower social workers in decision making;
- provide help earlier to children;
- reduce the need to refer children to statutory processes;
- reduce pressure on the 'front door' of children's social care; and
- make better use of available resources.

Selection criteria
Applications will require:

- A clearly described plan for delivering the objectives
- This will need a logic model explaining how the service will achieve our identified key outcomes. A logic model consists of:
    o Your theory about how this would work i.e. how would your proposals for this project achieve the goals of the project specification (as set out below)?
    o Information on *inputs* (what will you do?)
    o Information on *outputs* (what difference this will make to those receiving the service – what difference will the inputs make?)
    o Information on *outcomes* (how will these service outputs lead to different outcomes?)
- Proof that you can deliver to the tight timescale we are working within
- Commitment to full participation in the evaluation

- Evidence of commitment, creativity and passion in delivering excellent services for children and their families

Area 1:   School based social workers

Rationale
A high proportion of referrals to children's social care come from schools, and these often come predominantly from a relatively small number of schools. This area of work will set-up and evaluate new ways of working in which social workers work in schools to prevent harm to children and deal more effectively with harm where it occurs. The aims are to:

- Reduce the need for higher levels of statutory social work involvement (including allocation and child protection)
- A key aim is to reduce the need for care entry or the commencement of the Public Law Outline
- Deal more swiftly and effectively with concerns about children
- Demonstrate cost-effectiveness in reduced demand for children's social care services overall.
- Influence more effective use of a school's existing early help services for children and families

Key elements

- Social workers will be based in schools and work closely with them
- They will deal with the full range of work of children's social care – from referrals of need through to care proceedings
- They will be encouraged to explore creatively ways of preventing the need for children's social care involvement

We envisage

- Social workers will work in a small unit or team across a few schools
- These should be schools identified as generating high levels of referrals to children's social care
- local authorities can decide whether to focus on primary schools, secondary schools or both – but will need to provide a rationale in applying
- Social workers will carry out the full range of work normally associated with children's social care and will remain part of a children's social care department
- We wish to encourage devolved responsibility and creativity and are interested in how the local authority will ensure this will be at the heart of the project
- We are particularly interested in how social workers could carry out:

- o Primary prevention – for instance delivering strengths based programmes in partnership with teachers and/or parents
- o Secondary prevention – working to help teachers and schools help children more effectively
- o Tertiary prevention – where a child is at risk of serious harm, the social worker would be expected to lead on helping them effectively, including all levels of intervention and assessment up to and including care proceedings

Outcomes we are interested in
The aim is for all funded projects to achieve the following key outcome measures:

- Reduce the number of s.17 and s.47 referrals to children's social care
- Reduce the number of Public Law Outline and care proceedings

We envisage most projects aiming to achieve some of the following:

- More timely assessments
- Higher levels of teacher and parent satisfaction with children's social care services
- Improved use of non-children's social care resources, such as school nursing or family liaison
- Enhanced use of primary or secondary prevention such as evidence based services based in schools

Evaluation
We will select projects to allow comparison of different ways of delivering schools-based children's social care. Projects will be evaluated by the What Works Centre. There is likely to be variation in the way the projects are delivered in different sites. We are keen to understand and compare such differences. As a result there are elements of the evaluation that will be delivered across all projects, while some parts may be designed solely for one site. For all projects we will gather data on:

- Patterns of referral and casework, including statutory basis, for children from study schools for the period before and after the project
- Numbers of children subject to the Public Law Outline or care proceedings before and after
- Qualitative and quantitative evidence about the implementation of the new approach

In addition it will often be appropriate to gather data on:

- Parent and teacher satisfaction with the children's social care service
- The views of other professionals
- Other data as appropriate

Area 2:   Empowering social workers to reduce the need for care

Rationale
There has been an unprecedented increase in the number of children in care in recent years. Some children need to be in care, however for many it seems likely that it could be avoided. Certainly, we owe it to all families to offer the best possible opportunity to avoid the need for care. Yet what provides the best opportunity? The evidence on this is complicated. Five findings stand out:

- First, there is no simple solution – each family and set of problems is unique.
- Second, the literature and to an extent practice systems have tended to focus on professionally-led psychological interventions. These are important, but social and practical issues, including the direct and indirect effects of poverty, may be as significant or may need to be tackled simultaneously to allow help to be effective.
- Third, services are likely to be more effective if family members' are involved in understanding and solving their own problems.
- Fourth, the model of service is probably less important than the quality, commitment and passion with which it is delivered.
- Finally, to be effective in preventing care, services need to be targeted at children who really might come into care.

To address these five findings, we propose that social workers and the families they are working with are best placed to know what might be needed to create real change and keep children safely at home. Together, they can design bespoke care prevention plans. This area will therefore work by devolving significant funds for "Direct Help" so that individual social workers and families can work together with all their creativity, professionalism and passion to help children remain safely at home.

Key elements

- Social workers will be allocated and manage a budget to spend flexibly on care prevention plans with families
- They will be encouraged to be creative in delivering a plan that is focused on preventing care. This might include practical help (for instance, from child care to redecorating the house to a family respite break) or bringing in professional help swiftly (for instance buying in expert psychological intervention).
- Social workers will work with families to develop ways of keeping children safely at home that are designed for the specific context of each family. This could include

the use of family group conferences to identify the best use of resources, or other collaborative ways of involving families in developing plans to keep children safe.

- The money needs to be effectively targeted at children who genuinely might enter care.

We envisage

- A significant pre-allocated budget that social workers have freedom to deploy to improve outcomes for families – the funds being provided should primarily be spent on this
- Social workers receiving encouragement and support to spend this in creative ways to help families
- Well developed and coherent plans for involving families in such decision-making. This might use existing processes (such as Family Group Conferences) or the development of a new, clearly described approach for your project
- There is a tight focus on reducing care proceedings – either at or prior to the Public Law Outline (PLO). Applicants can decide what the best point to provide such help might be. We are open to earlier and wider targeting – but it is crucial to be aware that project evaluation will focus on reduced PLO, care proceedings and days in care.

Outcomes we are interested in
The aim is for all funded projects to achieve the following key outcome measures:

- Reduced use of the Public Law Outline
- Reduced care proceedings
- Reduced days in care for children

In addition, we envisage most projects aiming to achieve some of the following:

- Enhanced parent and child satisfaction with the service
- Increased agency and job satisfaction from social workers
- Cost savings

Evaluation
We will select projects to allow comparison of different ways of empowering social workers and families in this way. All projects will be evaluated by the What Works Centre. For all projects, we will gather data on:

- Numbers of children subject to the Public Law Outline or care proceedings before and after the project is implemented and/or in teams implementing the new approach and those not doing so.
- Qualitative and quantitative evidence about the implementation of empowering workers and devolved budgets.

In addition, it will often be appropriate to gather data on:

- How the funds are used – and different patterns of success for different ways of using the resource
- The views of workers, managers and families on the approach
- Other data as appropriate

Appendix 2: Application Form

Name and Organisation	
Job title	
Email	
Contact Telephone No.	

We will store and use this information to contact you about your application. This will involve sharing details with What Works Centre Development Team members.

	Criteria	How You Meet This Criteria
1.	Sponsorship	*Please provide the name of the Director of Children's Services and a signature to indicate his or her sponsorship of this application (digital signatures are acceptable, as is an email from the DCS).*
2.	Motivation	*Please describe your motivation for making this application* *[Maximum 250 words]*
3.	Project	*Please indicate which project(s) you have a specific interest in and explain your proposal – the more specific you can be, the better*

		You should address the following points in a separate document: • *The nature of the issue or problem in your area* • *How the proposed project would address this* • *What you plan to do – a detailed description of the proposed project* You may find it useful to present a logic model explaining how the service will achieve our identified key outcomes. A logic model consists of: • Your *theory* about how this would work i.e. how would your proposals for this project achieve the goals of the project specification? • Information on *inputs* (what will you do?) • Information on *outputs* (what difference this will make to those receiving the service – what difference will the inputs make?) • Information on *outcomes* (how will these service outputs lead to different outcomes?) *[Maximum 2000 words]*
4.	**Budget**	*Breakdown of costs* *This should indicate costs to be incurred by end of March 2019 and costs for April 2019-March 2020*
5.	**Capability to coordinate and deliver work within timescales**	*Please describe your readiness to commence working* *[Maximum 250 words]*
6.	**Risks**	*A brief summary of what you believe will be the key risks to delivering the project and what contingencies you will put in place to deal with them.* *[Maximum 200 words]*