**What Works Centre for Children’s Social Care**

**Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)**

*What will the What Works Centre (WWC) achieve?*

The WWC will focus on improving outcomes for children who are at risk of, or suffering from, abuse and/or neglect. It will identify the most effective interventions and practice systems and support their implementation by practitioners and decision makers. Its goal will be to improve outcomes for children and their families by developing a powerful evidence base, and supporting its translation into better practice on the ground.

The WWC will be independent from government and will have four core functions:

1. Synthesis of existing evidence, including learning from the Innovation Programme and SCRs, and other research.
2. Identification of evidence gaps and commissioning of new research and evaluations to fill gaps.
3. Translation of evidence into practical guidance for practitioners, including development of an online ‘toolkit’ to compare the cost-effectiveness of different practices.
4. Dissemination of best practice and supporting practitioners in the implementation of findings into practice.

*What is a What Works Centre?*

The WWC will join the world’s first network of What Works Centres,which support policy makers, commissioners and practitioners to make decisions based upon strong evidence of what works and to provide cost-efficient services. The existing WWCs already address issues such as educational attainment (Education Endowment Foundation), local economic growth (What Works Centre for local economic growth) and crime reduction (College of Policing What Works Centre for Crime Reduction). Information on the What Works Centre network can be found [here](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/what-works-network).

*How much funding is available?*

Up to £4m will be available per year up to 2019/20 to fund the WWC. More information on the precise funding will be available in due course. It is anticipated that the WWC may attract alternative funding once established.

*What is the scope?*

The WWC scope will have in range the totality of support, from the point at which children become known to social care services, through to adoption support. Its initial focus will be on improving the quality of social work practice, to complement the wider social work reform agenda. It will identify both the most effective interventions by practitioners and also the most effective ‘systems’, for example, learning from the structures of the local authorities with the most effective children’s social care systems.

*What types of skills will you be looking for?*

We are interested in attracting the following skills and expertise to the WWC:

* robust knowledge and extensive practical experience of services in children’s social care, and particularly the social work profession;
* research and analytical skills, including experience of robust high quality evaluations and trials;
* translation of evidence into practice; and
* innovative and creative thinking around how to increase the impact and cost-effectiveness of practices in children’s social care.

*How will the WWC fit with other programmes in children’s social care eg. the Innovation Programme, Partners in Practice and SCRs?*

The WWC will work closely to support and share learning with other programmes, including the Innovation Programme, Partners in Practice, the new centralised approach to SCRs, the Child Sexual Exploitation Response Unit and the Centre of Expertise for Child Sexual Abuse.

**Additional FAQ added on 22nd August 2016 following early market engagement**

*What are the next steps?*

DfE carried out early market engagement during June and July, including a workshop and a series of 1:1s to present our thinking around the WWC and to seek the views of the sector. This early market engagement is now complete – it generated a lot of helpful viewpoints and suggestions that we are considering. We plan to engage again with stakeholders by October 2016 with an update on plans for the WWC set-up. All information shared by the DfE during the market engagement is now available via the powerpoint presentations and FAQs on Contracts Finder.

*Will the WWC be given further funding after the current allocation?*

The current funding allocation for the WWC is up to £4m per year until 2020. It is anticipated that the WWC may attract additional funding from sources external to government once established. DfE will take a decision at a future point as to whether further government funding will be provided past 2020.

*What will be the link between the Innovation Programme and WWC? How will the learning feed in?*

The Department is keen that the WWC will work closely to support and share the learning from the Innovation Programme. We are currently exploring what this relationship might look like in practice - further information will be available in the coming months.

*Could the WWC link to children’s social care in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland?*

It is envisaged that this WWC will seek to identify effective practice in children’s social care in England. It is likely that it will be able to draw lessons from and share findings with social care systems in other regions, and potentially at the international level as well.

*What will the WWC’s work priorities be in the first few years? When will these be set and who by?*

The broad scope for the WWC is set out above - the totality of support, from the point at which children become known to social care services, through to adoption support. The initial focus will be on social work practice, and particularly, on identifying effective practice systems. It is expected that a number of priorities within this scope will be identified for the first few years, which the Department will agree with the WWC during the set-up process.

*How much money will go into commissioning new research?*

The DfE has allocated up to £4m per year for the WWC, which will need to include all activities within its remit. Once established, the WWC will need to consider the balance of its priorities in developing its work programme and determining how it will spend its budget.

*Will the WWC be expected to fund evaluations of its own impact within the £4m annual budget?*

Yes, it is expected that any evaluation of the WWC’s impact would be funded out of the provided budget.

*What will be the relationship of the new WWC to NICE?*

The new WWC will join the existing What Works Network, including NICE - it is envisaged that it will work closely with the other Centres to share learning and good practice.

*What will the outcome measures be?*

It will clearly be important for the WWC to develop and use a clear set of outcome measures through which to identify effective practice. It is anticipated that these outcome measures will be determined during the set-up and early operational phase.