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Home Office

Trusted Relationships Fund

Prospectus

February 2018

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Introduction

A reoccurring theme in research into the experience of children and young people who have been abused or exploited is that they lacked a consistent, trusted adult in their lives with whom they could share concerns about their safety and wellbeing. We know that in many cases this has compounded vulnerability and led to harm escalating. That is why the Home Office commissioned the Early Intervention Foundation to carry out a [rapid review](#) of the evidence base to look at ‘how early practitioner–child trusted relationships can work to reduce the likelihood of vulnerable children and young people experiencing child sexual abuse (CSA) or exploitation (CSE)’¹.

This review provided an overview of different interventions administered by professionals, or trusted adults connected to the young person, that help improve young people’s resilience, critical thinking and self-esteem, as well as the features that can make these relationships more successful.

While there are examples of good practice where local areas are delivering early interventions for those at risk, in many cases public services still have a way to go in providing effective interventions that protect and prevent young people from becoming victims or perpetrators of abuse and exploitation in the first place. The Government’s ambition, as set out in the [Tackling CSE Progress Report \(2016\)](#), is to improve resilience in children and young people and to reduce vulnerability by making everyone - whether professionals, parents, or children – better equipped to understand and address the risk factors that can lead to abuse.

The Trusted Relationships Fund aims to support this through expanding system capability and capacity to deliver promising interventions that will provide earlier support to young people who have been identified as at risk of abuse and exploitation. The Fund team will work with an Implementation Partner, who will support the local areas with project planning and delivery, including how to embed change in a sustainable way. The Fund will use an independent Evaluation Partner to undertake a robust programme wide evaluation in order to contribute to the UK’s evidence base on what works to protect young people from exploitation and abuse.

What we know

1. We know that vulnerability to exploitation and abuse is not an ‘on-off switch’. Different people can be vulnerable at different stages in their lives due to personal, social or environmental factors.

¹ <http://www.eif.org.uk/publication/building-trusted-relationships-for-vulnerable-children-and-young-people-with-public-services-2/>

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2. We also know that different forms of exploitation can be interlinked and that young people can be vulnerable to becoming victims or perpetrators of multiple harms at the same time². Being a 'victim' or 'perpetrator' is not clear cut: we know that victimisation can be linked to offending in the future³ and we know that vulnerable young people can be coerced into offending behaviour.
3. We know that, among other factors, alcohol and drug abuse can be both a driver and consequence of different forms of abuse and exploitation. 80% of young people in substance misuse treatment reported two or more other vulnerabilities, including experiencing domestic abuse, sexual exploitation, early sexual activity and offending behaviour.⁴ Other risk factors that have been highlighted by academics and frontline professionals include experience of family abuse or trauma⁵, familial links to criminality, being in residential care and disability.⁶
4. Young people who have been victims of these forms of exploitation and abuse often cite that they did not have a consistent, trusted adult with whom they could share concerns, either in their family or community network or a professional, and that this led to harm escalating in their lives. We know that a trusted relationship with an adult can be a protective factor for vulnerable young people, alongside self esteem, sense of purpose, critical thinking skills and positive peer networks.⁷
5. Although there is emerging evidence on elements that can make interventions more likely to be successful, there is still a lot to learn. Through this fund we hope to establish new evidence, and strengthen existing evidence, on what works to prevent young people's involvement in exploitation and abuse in order to inform cost effective commissioning going forward.

The purpose of the funding

6. We are looking to fund local authority led projects local authority led projects that work with young people aged 10-17 who have been identified by local partners as vulnerable to exploitation and abuse.

² Preventing child abuse and neglect, NSPCC [online]. (2018)

³ Victimization, psychological distress and subsequent offending among youth, Hartinger-Saunders et al. (2011).

⁴ Young People's Statistics from the National Drug Treatment Monitoring System, Public Health England and Department of Health (1 April 2016 – 31 March 2017).

⁵ Not a world away: The sexual exploitation of children and young people in Northern Ireland, Beckett (2011).

⁶ Building Trusted Relationships for Vulnerable Children and Young People with Public Services, Early Intervention Foundation (2018).

⁷ What Works in Character Education. Characterandcitizenship.org. (2018).

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7. This forms part of the Home Office's agenda to build resilience in children and young people to a range of hidden, high harm crimes, including **child sexual exploitation and abuse, gang exploitation including county lines, and peer/relationship abuse**. The purpose of the fund is to tackle these different forms of exploitation and abuse through facilitating consistent, trusted relationships between young people and the adults who are there to support them.

Objectives

8. The objective of the Trusted Relationships Fund is to reduce young people's involvement in exploitation and abuse, as victims and/or perpetrators, through:
 - increasing the consistency and quality of support for children and young people at risk of becoming involved in exploitation and abuse;
 - improving trust between young people and adults who are there to support them;
 - developing protective factors that build resilience in children and young people (including support networks; positive role models; sense of purpose; self esteem; critical thinking skills).

Outcomes

9. We expect successful applicants to work with our independent evaluation partner to develop outcomes measures for their project. However, we will be looking for projects to achieve sustained overarching outcomes including:
 - improvements in wellbeing, self esteem, self efficacy, resilience and critical thinking for vulnerable young people;
 - higher quantity and quality of trusted relationships between young people and adults who are there to support them, as reported by both young people and professionals;
 - reduced incidents of exploitation, abuse, going missing and interactions with the youth justice system.

What we are looking for

10. We are looking to fund initiatives that support work with **young people aged 10-17** who have been identified by local partners as vulnerable to involvement in one or more forms of exploitation and abuse including:
 - **child sexual exploitation or abuse;**

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- **gang exploitation including county lines;**
- **peer/relationship abuse.**

11. Local organisations will be best placed to identify vulnerable young people in their areas, however we are particularly interested in project proposals that include work with young people who **repeatedly go missing** as an indicator of vulnerability.

NB: The focus of this fund is community based exploitation and abuse types listed above, and will not fund projects exclusively addressing intra-familial abuse and neglect.

12. [An evidence review](#) carried out in partnership with the Early Intervention Foundation found a range of factors that have made relationships between young people and professionals more likely to be successful. You may wish to consider this review alongside other local sources of evidence during the development of your proposal.

13. We are particularly interested in applications that include elements such as:

paid professionals who are offered robust and supportive supervision; testing longevity and frequency of contact between young people and professionals; ensuring flexibility in timings and location of services to suit young people's needs; inclusion of mental health expertise; responding to and encouraging young people's interests through meaningful activities.

14. Applicants should not feel constrained to focus their proposals solely on these elements; the Home Office is also open to additional factors that in applicants' experience contribute towards successful engagement with young people. We are open to funding new and innovative models, as well as models which have already been tested and show promising results. We are also open to applications that propose wider systemic changes in local child protection services that will lead to better support for young people at risk of exploitation and abuse as a result. As part of this, we will be looking for applicants to demonstrate how their project will interact with and deliver benefits over and above the structures and services already in place, for example the local Troubled Families offer.

15. All applications should be submitted by a **local authority lead applicant** but should be developed with local partners, who could play a significant role in delivery of the initiative. Any partners who will play a significant role in referring to or delivering the project will need to provide a signature at full application stage to demonstrate their commitment to co-delivery as described in the proposal. We will also accept applications from consortia of local authorities who propose delivering projects and initiatives across local authority areas.

16. The total funding available across the local areas will be £2.45m in 18/19 and £3m in 19/20. A pot of £3m in 20/21 and £2.6m in 21/22 has been identified but this will be dependent upon the department's funding position and priorities following the 2019

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Spending Review. If this continues to be available, at the two year point we will evaluate benefits and continue funding as long as match funding can be identified, (to be agreed with Home Office, with a minimum of 20% match funding by year 4).

17. Although there is no formal limit on the amount of funding that organisations can bid for, please bear in mind that we are expecting to award funding to approximately ten projects using the total funding available. We will use discretion regarding the distribution of funding between projects, depending on the application that are submitted, and so the capability of the project proposals to flex in size to an extent is important.

The support we will offer

Implementation and evaluation

18. In order to ensure that successful applicants receive appropriate support to develop and deliver their projects, they will work with an Implementation Partner who will support project planning and delivery and will be available to provide support over the course of the programme.
19. In addition to strengthening support for vulnerable young people, an aim of the Trusted Relationships Fund is to improve the evidence base on what works to prevent involvement in exploitation and abuse. In order to achieve this, local areas will also need to work with our Independent Evaluation Partner (to be announced) during the set up, delivery and evaluation of their project. The Independent Evaluation Partner will support areas to put in place robust monitoring arrangements and gather qualitative and quantitative data over the course of the project, which will contribute to a programme wide evaluation, including an overview of what we have learnt about good practice.

Eligibility

20. This fund is open to local authorities in England as lead applicants. We encourage lead applicants to work with local partners to develop and deliver their projects, which could include other statutory organisations, the voluntary and community sector and the private sector. We will also accept applications from consortia of local authorities who propose delivering projects across local authority areas.

Due Diligence Requirements

21. During the process, organisations whose proposals are successful will be subject to financial, commercial and extremism due diligence checks.

The application process

22. There is a two-stage application process for the Trusted Relationships Fund. Organisations interested in applying should ensure they are registered on the [eSourcing tool](#), and that they allow ample time to do so as **registration can take up to 10 working days**. Guidance on the eSourcing tool can be found [here](#).

Stage 1: Expression of Interest

23. Lead applicants are invited to submit an Expression of Interest through the eSourcing tool which outlines their proposal, the need for it in their local area, and how they will work with local partners to deliver it.
24. If we receive a high volume of proposals, we will carry out a sift on the first criteria, 'Project Deliverables and Outcomes'. The twenty highest scoring Expressions of Interest will be invited to submit a full application.⁸ Unfortunately we will be unable to provide individual feedback to proposals that are unsuccessful at the Expression of Interest stage.

Stage 2: Full Application

25. Applicants who are successful at the Expression of Interest stage will be invited to submit a full application, which includes more detail on their plans for project delivery, target outcomes and sustainability.
26. Please note that applicants may be invited to an interview with the Home Office team to discuss their proposal in more detail following the submission of full applications. One or more partners listed on the application form may also be invited to attend the same interview.

⁸ All applications must score at least a three on each criterion as a minimum standard– if there are fewer than 20 applications that score a 3 on all criteria then only those that have reached the minimum standard will progress to full application stage.

Timetable

Expressions of Interest due	13 th April 2018 (midday)
Successful Expressions of Interest invited to submit full application	Week commencing 7 th May 2018
Full applications due	1st June 2018 (midday)
Successful applications announced	Mid-July 2018

Please send any queries to TrustedRelationships@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk

Annex A: see attachment for application questions, criteria and scoring for the Expression of Interest stage.