Expression of interest

Title: Peer support for mental health and wellbeing pilots - Evaluation

Project reference: 2016-014

Deadline for expressions of interest: 5pm 11th April 2017

Summary

Expressions of interest are sought for an evaluation of delivery of peer support programme pilots in schools, colleges and youth organisations aimed at supporting mental health and wellbeing of children and young people. The evaluation will: explore how organisations set up and deliver peer support programmes, and the models and approaches used; provide self-evaluation tools for organisations and support their use; use self-evaluation data to analyse changes in outcomes associated with provision of and engagement with peer support; and develop case studies of practice for wider dissemination amongst schools, colleges and wider youth organisations.

Background

The government has made it a priority to transform the way mental health is supported across society. On the 9 January 2017 the Prime Minister announced a comprehensive package of measures to improve mental health support in schools, workplaces and communities. This included a high-level announcement of a peer support programme, building on previous commitments from DfE Ministers in response to recommendations in Future in Mind and the Youth Select Committee reports on children and young people's mental health.

Feedback from young people through both the Future in Mind engagement work and the Youth Select Committee reports on mental health stated that when they need information or help on mental health concerns, their friends/peers and apps/websites are the first places they go to for help and support. As a response to this DfE established a Steering Group in December 2015 whose remit was to investigate ways to increase and improve the quality of peer support for mental wellbeing available to children and young people.

To inform their work we collected further data through:

- Two national online calls for evidence to find out more about children, young people's and adult's knowledge and experiences of peer support. Nearly 2,000 people responded, including 1,800 children and young people;
- A series of 4 thematic workshops with stakeholders that were focused around: vulnerable children, schools, the Voluntary and Community Sector and families;
- A series of 5 young people's workshops, including 2 focused on vulnerable groups. The young people involved ranged in age from 13-23 years and had varying levels of experience of peer support;
- A literature Research Review which looked at peer support interventions for school-age young people from the past 10 years, including international evidence where available; and
- A series of 'flash' Twitter polls throughout February and March, which asked a short-lived 'question of the week' about peer support. There were 741 responses

Our evidence collection confirmed that both children and young people and organisations value the peer support approach. Over 50% of children and young people told us they would take part in a peer support programme, both to receive and provide support. Our literature review uncovered a variety of strong peer support benefits such as increased happiness and wellbeing, improved self-esteem, confidence and emotional resilience, improved social skills and relationships, and a positive impact on the school environment.

We want to be able to offer advice to schools and youth organisations about effective approaches to setting up and running peer support schemes which promote whole school mental well-being and support children and young people with worries or concerns. To inform this we want to produce more detailed evidence on how organisations go about setting up and delivering peer support and what approaches other organisations could consider.

Peer support covers a wide range of activities, from a young person talking a friend through their problems, to more formal group or 1-to-1 settings. Support can be provided both face-to-face and online. For peer support to be successful young people need to be able to get help, advice and support from knowledgeable peers without fear of stigma or judgement.

We know that many schools, colleges and youth organisations already provide peer support schemes on a wide range of topics including friendships, academic support, transition and bullying, as well as some who offer peer support for mental health. We would like to identify how schools, colleges and youth organisations can go about setting up and delivering peer support programmes for mental health that are tailored to their individual needs and circumstances.

To generate this learning the department will be funding both a pilot of peer support programmes in schools, colleges and youth organisations and this accompanying independent evaluation.

The pilot

The pilot will offer a small amount of funding to around 100 volunteer schools and colleges recruited by our delivery contractor to take part in the pilot to cover a geiographic spread across England, with a mix of rural and urban schools and a range of phase and type of provision, such as: primary, secondary, colleges, special schools, alternative provision, maintained schools, sponsored schools, academies and MAT's. Ten local youth groups will also be recruited on the same terms. Schools in Opportunity Areas will be given the chance to put themselves forward to take part. We anticipate that the successful evaluation contractor will have opportunity to work with the delivery organisation

to finalise the recruitment approach to ensure it meets the needs of the evaluation and that recruitment of pilot organisations will take place by the end of the summer term in July 2017.

Within the pilot, schools, colleges and youth organisations will deliver models of their own design to support the mental health and wellbeing of their pupils, including consideration of local needs and context. All models will include the following eight elements that our evidence shows as being key to delivery of peer support:

- A selection process for mentors
- Training for mentors
- Adult supervision of the service
- Senior Leadership Team engagement
- Whole school promotion of the service
- Monitoring and evaluation of the service
- Programme sustainability, and
- Clear signposting and pathways to further specialist support where necessary

Organisations will receive training and support developed by our delivery contractor in setting up and delivering their approach to peer support, and training for their potential peer mentors.

The overarching aims of the pilot and evaluation are to:

- Identify the variety of peer support models that schools, colleges and community groups use to deliver the key elements, specified above, and what common aspects are important for successful implementation;
- Test how the key elements of peer support models are delivered within organisations' individual approaches;
- Test how support materials provided by the delivery contractor are used and received;
- Provide case studies to encourage and support more schools to offer more effective peer support; and
- identify any wider benefits to the institution that schools report they perceive from putting in place peer support

Evaluation aims

The aim of the evaluation is to understand how schools go about delivering peer support to support children and young people's mental health and wellbeing in order to produce a range of replicable models for different contexts. It is important that the research provides sufficient detail and quality so schools can readily access and adopt these models with some confidence that programmes may work in their setting. The research findings also need to be delivered in a manner that is accessible to schools, colleges and youth organisations.

This predominantly process evaluation will accompany the pilot to address the following research questions:

- What are the organisations' local aims/objectives in implementing peer support? What informs that decision?
- What range of models are used? Are there similar approaches used for different aims or different models for similar aims? (e.g. group vs. 1:1 support, appointments vs. ad hoc, peer

tutoring, other approaches e.g. worry boxes) What informs decisions about which model is used?

- Do models vary by phase/type of institution or for youth organisations? If so, how?
- Who is involved in set up and delivery (staff/ pupils) and who receives support (types of pupils, needs and numbers)? Does take up vary by type of model (overall numbers and demographic of users)? Are certain models preferred by different types of C&YP or different types of need?
- Are there any examples of schools/colleges and community groups working together?
- How has monitoring and evaluation data been used by institutions? How useful have they found it?
- What are the costs to pilot organisations? What is delivered for this cost? How are resources/funding used?
- What wider perceived benefits to the school/organisation or offering peer support are reported by pilot participants?
- What are barriers and facilitators to delivery?
- How have organisations planned for sustainability after the end of the pilot period and funding?
- How satisfied are school staff and pupils with the offer? How does this vary?
- How satisfied are staff and mentors with the support delivery offer (training day for staff, 1:1 set up and delivery support, mentor training)?
- To what extent do the models implemented meet the institution-level stated aims?
- Does the self-evaluation data collected by schools suggest any change in outcomes associated with participation in peer support?
- Are any models with similar aims better received or associated with greater change in outcomes?
- Do outcomes vary by type or phase of institution?

Methodology

The evaluation contract will comprise four inter-related elements:

- Process evaluation of delivery of the pilot to meet the questions outlined above
- Design of a self-evaluation model and tools for organisations to use for monitoring and evaluation of the service they deliver
- Assessment, based on self-evaluation data collected by organisations, of the extent to which peer support models are associated with changes in outcomes

We will expect bidders who are invited to the tender stage of this procurement to set out the methods they recommend as being the best value way of answering the research questions and delivering these three elements. We have included illustrative methods we might expect contractors to consider below for information on the nature, scale and scope of this research. At tender stage we will welcome proposals of innovative methods which may improve the quality and/or value for money of the research. **We do not expect bidders' proposed methods to be described in the expression of interest unless used to support the assessment criteria set out below.**

Process evaluation

We propose a combination of data collection from all organisations involved in the pilot and more detailed case studies. We want to obtain a detailed understanding of delivery to allow for high quality evidence to be provided to organisations about effective approaches to setting up and running peer support schemes which support children and young people's mental health.

All organisation data collection

We envisage data collection across all organisations to understand what is being delivered, how and with what aims to inform a typology of approaches and associated aims.

Methods might comprise:

- Baseline online survey of all leads (n= approx. 113) at start of set-up to collect information about starting position (existing peer support or other support in schools), local aims for the pilot, description of proposed approaches
- Brief telephone interviews with all leads (n= approx. 113) in first few months of delivery to explore the model being delivered in more detail, building on baseline survey to inform typography
- Repeated brief survey of leads at end of pilot to identify any changes in delivery from initial expectations, changes in aims, perceptions of success, costs incurred, how helpful the key elements have been, perceptions of the support provided by the delivery contractor
- Documentary analysis of programme design documents to supplement understanding of models
- Review of case records/management information to understand who is using the service and demographics and needs

Case studies

We envisage case studies with a sub set of the organisations involved in the pilot to explore aims, set up and delivery of peer support in more detail. These should be sampled to capture a range of: types of peer support delivery (informed by the survey); phase and type of school and youth organisation, and demographics such as rural/urban, school performance, disadvantage etc. We envisage the final number of case studies will be finalised after the initial data collection when the range of types of delivery are known.

Self-evaluation model

We would like the successful bidders to design a self-evaluation approach and materials for use by organisations to monitor and evaluate their schemes. This self-evaluation tool should be suitable for all organisations, or have different versions or adaptations. We would expect the delivery organisation to also be involved in the design and to support organisations to use the tools and to collect the data. The tools should provide appropriate means for schools to collect data on mentors', support recipients' and whole school outcomes, as well as guidance on use. We would also expect tools to allow for optional measures to be included to enable organisations to measure their specific local aims. Self-evaluation should also include use of administrative data collected by schools such as around absence and behaviour management. DfE will need to be able to use and disseminate

these tools after the pilot as part of a wider toolkit to allow other organisations to develop their own peer support offers.

The evaluators and delivery contractors will also work closely with pilot organisations to set out parameters for the required/appropriate quality and frequency of data collection, and to support them to find means of doing this within their own contexts and constraints.

The evaluators will need to work with the delivery contractor to identify what consents are needed for data to be collected by the school and to be shared with the evaluators for further analysis. We would also like to consider the feasibility of collecting consents to link self-evaluation data with administrative data sets. We anticipate that the delivery contractor will be instrumental in supporting schools to collect the relevant consent, but the evaluator will need to develop the consent approach and ensure that processes are ethical.

The process evaluation will collect evidence on how these tools are used and how effective ongoing monitoring and evaluation can be delivered by organisations running peer support schemes. The data collected will be used by the successful bidders in an assessment of the change in outcomes associated with the peer support services.

Analysis of change in outcomes

We would also like evaluators to use the before and after organisation-level self-evaluation data in order to consider whether:

- There is any difference in outcomes as defined by organisational aims from different models with similar local aims
- Similar models with different local aims achieve all those aims
- Outcomes achieved vary by type or phase of institution
- Different types of need/demographics of C&YP are better met by different models

The design of this will necessarily depend on the throughputs achieved by the pilot organisations.

Budget

We are not declaring a budget for this work. The EOI sets out the scale and scope of the research and more detail will be provided as part of the invitation to tender (ITT). We expect bidders at the tender stage to propose an approach which will meet the above aims and offer value for money.

Timing

- Deadline for EOIs – 5pm 11th April 2017
- ITT issued to successful bidders – w/c 24th April 2017
- Tender deadline - w/c 15th May 2017
- Contract Awarded by 26th May 2017
- Inception meeting w/c 29th May (TBC)
- Participant organisation recruitment starts approx. June 2017
- Autumn Term 2017 - Pilot set up in schools and baseline data collection

- Pilot delivery in schools January 2018-December 2018, ongoing self-evaluation and qualitative data collection.
- December 2018 fieldwork complete
- Final report by Easter 2018

Assessment criteria

Expressions of interest will be assessed against the following criteria:

- Experience of proposed research methodologies (process evaluation, self-evaluation approaches in schools, analysis of relevant outcome data)
- Experience of research topics to be covered (children and young people's mental health, measuring mental health outcomes, mental health provision in schools)
- Experience of proposed research settings (schools, mental health support services)
- Experience of translating research findings for schools/youth organisations
- Project management skills and ability to deliver to timescales

Queries

If you have any queries about this call for expressions of interest or the procurement procedures please contact MH.Researchprogramme@education.gov.uk. Please email enquiries by noon on 4th April. All replies will be published on Gov.uk by 6th April. We are not able to respond to individual enquiries directly as we need to ensure, as far as possible, that all applicants are able to access information at the same time. We are also not able to answer questions about the specifics of what you would like to include in your bid as again this may give an applicant an unfair advantage over other applicants.

Closing date for EOIs: 5pm 11th April 2017

Send your EOI form to: MH.Researchprogramme@education.gov.uk

How to submit an epression of interest

You must submit an expression of interest (EOI) in order to be considered to be invited to tender. To do so, please complete the Expression of Interest Research template found on the Department's research website. A submission of an EOI does not guarantee an invitation to tender and the Department does not routinely advise organisations that they have not been successful in being invited to tender. Feedback is however available on request.

In order to express an interest you must be registered with us and you will need your ID number. If you need to register then please do so using the online supplier registration form. If you have already registered and have forgotten your ID number, please send an email to Enquiries.RBU@education.gov.uk

All contracts are let on the basis of the [Department's Terms and Conditions](#). You are encouraged to check these before submitting your expression of interest, as these form part of your contractual obligations.