Maximising Access to Education – Children and Parents Participation Specification

Date	01st June 2020
Contact	participationpartners@socialfinance.org.uk
Bid Submission Date	All proposals should be submitted no later than 12pm (noon) on Friday 10th July 2020

Background & Context

The Issue: Exclusion from Education

Across England, as each child finishes their school lessons for a day, a classroom of 40 children will have been told to permanently leave mainstream education[1]. It would take less than a month for an entire secondary school to be permanently excluded. This rate of exclusion is 60% higher than it was 5 years ago and represents 7,900 pupils removed from mainstream education in 2017/18[2].

However, the issue of educational exclusion is broader than merely permanent exclusions. We adopt a broad understanding of educational exclusion, which includes fixed term exclusions, especially where multiple are issued, as well as persistent absence and school moves.

We know from our own extensive data analysis that there are three factors which put children at disproportionate risk of being excluded in these different ways: contact with children's social care, having a special educational need or disability (SEND), and coming from a deprived area. These are all factors which only serve to increase a child's vulnerability and contribute to poorer outcomes in later life.[3] Exclusion from mainstream education is itself associated with poorer outcomes in education, health, employment and criminal exploitation, which cost the state an average of £370,000[4].

Although school exclusion is often badged as an 'education issue', we believe it is broader than that. Exclusion is often not the problem in and of itself, but a symptom of complex issues that a young person is facing in a highly fragmented system. Whilst multiple and complex issues may manifest and present in diverse ways in a school setting, the school alone cannot address (and should not be solely responsible and accountable for) the support needs of the young person. Schools know that behavioural challenges can often be a pre-cursor to, or signal, significant safeguarding needs. However, there is insufficient capacity in the current system to focus on early intervention and address the underlying issues. As pupils only become eligible for support at crisis point due to high thresholds, schools then have limited ability and capacity to respond, which can result in exclusion of the child from school. This starts to erode one of the few remaining protective factors in that child's life: education. The current system has created an environment where we know the most about a

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[1] Department for Education, 2019, Timpson Review of School Exclusion. Available at:
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/807862/Timpson_review.pdf
[2] Department for Education National Statistics, Permanent and fixed period exclusions in England: 2017 to 2018. Available at:
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/820773/Permanent_and_fixed_period
_exclusions_2017_to_2018_-_main_text.pdf
[3] Department for Education, 2019, Timpson Review of School Exclusion. Available at:
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/807862/Timpson_review.pdf
[4] Gill, K, Quiler-Pinner, H, and Swift, D. Institute for Public Policy Research, 2017, Making the Difference: Breaking the Link between School
Exclusions and Social Exclusion. Available at: http://www.ippr.org/publications/making-the-difference

child when it is too late – they have already crossed the line from challenging behaviour to a live safeguarding issue.

The Approach: The Impact Incubator's Maximising Access to Education Programme

The Impact Incubator is a collaboration between charitable foundations and Social Finance, who work with partners to tackle entrenched issues and create lasting, systems-level change by developing and implementing responses.

In this context, Social Finance is working with two local authorities, Cheshire West and Chester and Gloucestershire County Council, to develop responses to rising numbers of school exclusions which are rooted in these local contexts, by understanding who is being excluded in specific areas, what works for whom, and how we can improve outcomes for those at heightened risk of educational exclusion. Together with these partner local authorities, Social Finance is taking a collaborative approach to co-produce the necessary local infrastructure and evidence-based interventions in response. Simultaneously, Social Finance is working to capture and disseminate cross-cutting learnings with a view to scaling nationally in the longer-term.

Work to date has incorporated:

- **Data Analysis:** The work began with an initial research phase focussing on understanding who is being excluded locally and how, from those receiving a fixed-term or permanent exclusion to those experiencing persistent absence, school moves, etc. This included both qualitative interview research and substantial data analysis in one local authority, the results of which have helped us to identify cohorts of young people who are at heightened risk of missing out on access to education and how they can be better supported. Simultaneously, Social Finance worked with the other local authority partner to co-develop a common outcomes framework, in order to create a better evidence base for what may be supporting children and thereby inform intelligent commissioning.

- **Systems Mapping:** Currently, in each respective local authority, the team are undertaking a detailed systems-mapping phase to build an understanding of how the local system works for those children and young people who are most likely to be excluded from school. In practice this involves qualitative research with key stakeholders (including teachers across a range of education settings and practitioners across Early Help, and Education Inclusion and Welfare Services) to explore current ways of working, challenges and opportunities in the local system. The approach has sought to centre the experiences of families and children and young people, although no primary research has yet been conducted with these essential stakeholders.

- **Co-Design:** The team are working to co-produce the necessary local infrastructure and evidence-based interventions in response, with a commitment to doing so in a collaborative manner where young people and parents/carers participate, as equals, in decision making and governance going forward. This is key to deepening and developing the long-term process of co-production, which is guided by the following principles:

  - Improving outcomes for local children and young people;
  - Supporting the creation of a national evidence base for this issue;
  - Making the case for wider change by influencing the wider system;
  - Developing two-way reciprocal relationships with expertise flowing in both directions;

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- Establishing stronger local networks and local partnership working, maximising sustainability of the model;

- Developing safe interventions and considering the whole local system;

- Testing underlying assumptions of any model;

- Capturing the learning of co-production itself through a detailed process evaluation.

Throughout, the programme has included capturing and share cross-cutting learnings with a view to scaling the impact of this work nationally in the longer-term. Social Finance have convened local authorities, practitioners, and policy makers who are engaged in this programme of work. For example, the team recently held a roundtable attended by a full room of 30 cross-sector representatives and will shortly be publishing a report from the first phase of data analysis.

The aim of this programme is to improve the local system to better support the young people who are currently being failed by it, to maximise access to education for all.

Project Brief

To achieve this aim we want to partner with one or more organisations who are best positioned to help us secure the voices of and ongoing participation of children and young people (CYP) with experience of, or at risk of, educational exclusion, as well as their parents and carers.

We hope that our partners' work will help to educate the system as to how to engage with these groups as partners in a meaningful way going forward.

We would like such an organisation(s) to support our existing programme between August 2020 and March 2021 in the following capacities:

- **Data Testing:** Playing back and reviewing some of the key findings from our work so far with children and young people (CYP) and parents and carers with experience of, or at-risk of, exclusion, to identify what resonates with their experiences and what does not;

- **Systems Mapping:** Mapping the local system from the perspective of CYP and parents/carers with experience of, or at-risk of, exclusion, through conducting qualitative research to explore what currently works well for them and what doesn't, and to identify challenges and opportunities for change;

- **Co-Design Partners:** Securing the meaningful involvement of CYP and parents/carers with experience of, or at-risk of, exclusion, as partners to shape the response. This will necessarily include designing into the pilot how CYP and parents/carers with experience of, or at-risk of, exclusion will continue to be meaningfully involved as equal partners in the first 3 years of pilot.

We would like the organisation(s) we partner with to be:

- Based in, or with a demonstrable ability to operate in, either Gloucestershire or Cheshire West and Chester, or both.

- Experienced in working with CYP/ families/communities with demonstrable social impact, particularly those with experience of, or at heightened risk of, exclusion from education (as outlined in the above 'Context' section).

- Able to develop or build on existing local relationships to identify and engage with participants.

- Experienced in working with CYP/ families in a participatory manner and/or of carrying out qualitative research with such groups.

- Able to demonstrate how their approach is trauma-informed and/or restorative, and preferably have experience of working with CYP/ families in a therapeutic capacity.

- Committed to ensuring the safeguarding and wellbeing of participants, and their personal data, in particular children and those who may be considered vulnerable.

- Able to employ a range of methods to secure the contributions of CYP/ families to support the project.

The organisation(s) we partner with will support the data testing, systems mapping, and co-design phases of this programme, with respect to the stages outlined above. The partner organisation(s) will:

- Capture and codify the contributions of CYP with experience of, or at heightened risk of, educational exclusion, as well as their parents/carers.

- Provide a report of the feedback and views of participants against our data findings, identifying aspects that resonate and experiences that may not be reflected within the data.

- Build on the existing systems-mapping work to date to map the local system from the perspective of the participants, incorporating examples and case studies to demonstrate their views.

- Capture and present findings and participants' contributions at key stages throughout the project.

- Explore, develop and implement approaches that will secure the ongoing involvement of participants with the co-design of the pilots in the local areas.

- Contribute to the design of the pilot within the remit of ensuring continued involvement of CYP and parents/carers in its implementation, decision-making, and governance.

- Develop or build on local relationships and connection points to lay the foundations for operationalising this, in readiness for the launch of the pilot in February 2021.

- Identify and capture learnings to inform future co-production through a detailed process evaluation, to incorporate the views of CYP and parents/carers.

In your response, please specify how you would use the time and funding available to meet these requirements. Please also indicate any additional value that you feel that your organisation(s) and/or approach would bring.

Project Timescales

Please note that the timescale outlined here is high level and indicative. We will be guided by the expertise of our partners in terms of how best to deliver the programme activities within the specified contractual window (August 2020 – March 2021). Please note the requirement to outline your own proposed timescale in the Project Plan section of your response.

- July 2020 – Partner organisation identified
- August-October 2020 – Data Testing and Systems Mapping

- October-December 2020 – Co-design of pilot models

- January-March 2020 – Co-production launch of 3-year pilot

Funding

We have identified a budget of £18,500 (excluding VAT) to support activity in *each* local area.

Please note that our priority is to ensure that a high-quality piece of work is delivered across our partner area. Therefore, we have provided a clear, fixed budget. You are encouraged to outline the work that you will deliver in accordance with this budget and demonstrate any additional value that your organisation and/or approach will bring.

Requirements

With reference to the Breakdown of Requirements in Appendix I, which provides additional detail including underlying criteria and respective scoring weighting, please provide a written proposal, using the attached template, addressing the following requirements:

- **Background and experience.** Specify relevant experience and any similar/related work, demonstrating the outcomes and difference made, and how this will be applied to address the project brief. (2-page limit, 25% of total scoring)

- **Principles underlying approach.** We request a copy of your safeguarding policy and reserve the right to have it reviewed by an independent reviewer. (2-page limit + attached safeguarding policy, 30% of total scoring)

- **How you intend carry out the project.** This should include a detailed description of your proposals to deliver the project brief. (3-page limit, 35% of total scoring)

- **Project Plan.** Detailed breakdown of costings and your proposed activity schedule. (1-page limit, 10% of total scoring)

All proposals should be submitted **no later than 12pm (noon) on 10/07/2020**. With reference to the procurement process timescale outlined below, we anticipate that evaluation will take place the week commencing 13/07/2020. We may need to speak with tenderers during that week to clarify your proposal and reserve the right to hold a round of remote interviews with tenderers.

All proposals should be submitted via the attached response template in Word document format. If there are any accessibility issues that would prevent you from doing so, please contact participationpartners@socialfinance.org.uk.

Only information provided in the response template will be considered for scoring. You are asked *not* to provide additional supplementary or promotional materials as these will not be considered. Should specific case studies be provided in the context of background and experience, these should be clearly relevant and applied to the specified scoring criteria in the context of your response.

All outputs, reports and presentations arising from this project will remain the property of Social Finance and may not be shared without prior explicit consent. All source documents shared with the successful bidder including, but not limited to, work on the programme to date remain the property of their respective author and/or the organisation they represent and may not be shared or used for any purpose other than the outputs of this contract without prior explicit consent.

Procurement Process Timescale

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This invitation to tender will be live from Thursday 11th June 2020 until the submission deadline of 12pm (noon) Friday 10th July 2020. During this period, clarification questions may be submitted to participationpartners@socialfinance.org.uk up until 12pm (noon) Monday 6th July.

The evaluation process will take place during the week commencing Monday 13th.

All applicants will be notified of the final decision by the end of July 2020.

Scoring Criteria

The task of the evaluation exercise is to select the proposal which best meets the requirements within the budget envelope set. The evaluation will be undertaken by a panel from Social Finance and the respective local authorities, with support from independent evaluation partners. The necessary criteria to be used in making this decision are set out in the Breakdown of Requirements attached (Appendix I). Proposals will be allocated points in accordance with the Scoring Table, also attached (Appendix II).

Overall weighting of the evaluation process is based entirely on quality, within the allocated budget of £18,500.

We reserve the right to accept any offer or to reject any and all offers. We are not beholden to accepting a single tender per local area. We also reserve the right to hold remote interviews with tenderers.

The assessment panel's decision will be final, and no discussions will be entered into regarding the decision making of the panel. However, all candidates will be provided verbal feedback if requested.

Appendix I: Breakdown of Requirements

Requirement	Criteria	Scoring Weighting
Background and experience. (2-page limit)	**Specify relevant experience and any similar/related work, demonstrating the outcomes and difference made, and how this will be applied to address the project brief.**	*25% of total scoring*
	• Giving examples of your experience to date, describe your established work with CYP/ families/communities and demonstrate its impact.	*10%*
	• Demonstrate prior experience of working in a participatory and/or a therapeutic manner, and/or of carrying out qualitative research with such groups.	*10%*
	• Provide evidence of your existing local relationships (in the Gloucestershire and/or Cheshire West and Chester local authority areas) which you would use to identify and engage with participants.	*5%*
Principles underlying approach. (2-page limit + attached safeguarding policy)	**We request a copy of your safeguarding policy and reserve the right to have it reviewed by an independent reviewer.**	*30% of total scoring*
	• Provide evidence of existing arrangements (or demonstrate how such arrangements will be put in place) to ensure the safeguarding and wellbeing of participants, and their personal data, in particular children and those who may be considered vulnerable. With attention to safeguarding in digital engagement where relevant, in light of current circumstances.	*15%*
	• Demonstrate how your existing approach is trauma-informed, restorative, and/or therapeutic in ethos and in practice, and how you will reflect this in your proposed approach.	*15%*
How you intend to carry out the project. (3-page limit)	**This should include a detailed description of your proposals to deliver the project brief.**	*35% of total scoring*
	• Describe how you would build connections with CYP and/or families who have experience of educational exclusion or factors which put them at heightened risk of this.	*15%*
	• Outline your methodological approach to delivering the project brief. Specify the methods which you would use to secure the contributions of children, young people, parents and carers to support the initial stages of our project.	*10%*
	• Detail the measures that you will put in place to ensure delivery of the project brief within the timescales, given the current circumstances concerning the response to Covid-19. The methods specified reflect innovative/ creative routes to engagement relevant to, and emerging from, current restrictions.	*10%*
Project plan. (1-page limit)	**This should comprise a detailed breakdown of costings and your proposed activity schedule**	*10% of total scoring*
	• Cost efficiency.	*5%*
	• The scope of proposed activity is of an efficient and viable scale in the context of the rest of the proposal.	*5%*

Appendix II: Scoring Framework

Strength of Response	Evidence	Scores
Good / Strong Response	**Strong Response** Response far exceeds expectations in terms of relevance to the area being tested and when compared to the requirements of the section. • Response is well presented and structured; **and** • Response is directly and wholly relevant to the area being tested; **and** • Response is judged to far exceed the minimum requirement for the section.	10
	Good Response Response exceeds expectations in terms of relevance to the area being tested and when compared to the requirements of the section. • Response is well presented and structured; **and** • Response is well aligned to the area being tested; **and** • Response is judged to exceed the minimum requirements of the section.	8
Competent Response	**Competent Response** Response offered is sufficient in terms of relevance to the area being tested and when compared to the requirements of the section. • A sufficient response is presented and follows a basic structure; **and** • Response is sufficiently aligned with the area being tested; **and** • Response is judged to meet the minimum requirements of the section.	6
Poor / Unsatisfactory Response	**Unsatisfactory Response** Response offered is insufficient in terms of relevance to the area being tested and/or when compared to the requirements of the section. • Some evidence is presented but assertions and statements are insufficiently supported; **or** • Response offered is only partly relevant to the area being tested; **and/or** • Response offered is/may be relevant to the area being tested but is judged to be insufficient when compared to the requirements of the section in terms of sophistication/complexity.	4
	Poor Response Response offered is way short of expectations in terms of relevance to the area being tested and/or when compared to the requirements of the section. • Little/no evidence is presented to support assertions or general statements; **or** • Response does not correspond in any way to the area being tested; **and/or** • Response is/may be relevant to the area being tested but is judged to be far below the required level for the section in terms of sophistication / complexity.	2
	No Evidence provided Tenderer has responded but has not answered the question and has not demonstrated an understanding of our requirements.	0