



## Delivering the Department for Education's Social Care Innovation Programme

### Executive Summary

In 2014, the Department for Education (DfE) invested £100m to stimulate innovation to achieve dramatic improvement in the way we protect children and support young people who are in, or on the edge, of care. The DfE selected Deloitte as delivery partner for its track-record in bringing together teams who combine deep knowledge of social care with professional advisory support, innovation and change expertise. Selection of Mutual Ventures and Innovation Unit to join the team was a key part of Deloitte's success.

Deloitte has played a critical role in the success of the DfE's Innovation Programme, helping turn government's vision into a reality, designing and implementing an application and assessment process and supporting projects in implementation. A significant move away from the traditional grant-funding model, investment funding means only the best ideas were selected and received support from a field-force of coaches to deliver sustainably and at scale. Deloitte also keeps tight control on the programme through the project

management office, and is delivering a learning programme to share insights across the sector.

The Innovation Programme is working with 53 projects, selected from nearly 300 applications. It has been widely lauded as a success across local and central government with an estimated projected annual saving to the public purse of £134m p.a. and a lasting legacy, improving the lives of our most vulnerable children and families.

"Deloitte was the delivery partner for our £100m innovation programme, working alongside Innovation Unit and Mutual Ventures. They were fundamental to the widely acknowledged success of the programme, providing expert insight and advice on how to implement a large-scale, high profile change programme in exceptionally tight timescales. The team worked tirelessly to design and deliver a fair and robust application and selection process; they created a bespoke approach to managing the portfolio so that the funding had the greatest impact and reach; and they delivered public events, as part of the learning programme, led by the minister and chief social worker that played a key role in communicating our vision for innovation in the sector. Deloitte challenged our thinking and raised the bar for our ambition of innovation in the sector, leading to improved outcomes for children and young people – evidence shows that we are already starting to see this investment make a huge difference in the lives of children and their families."

Almudena Lara, Head of Children's Social Care Reform and Innovation

# Project and approach

There are over 68,000 children in social care in England and a further 400,000 who need support. After several high-profile failures in the sector and a history of underachievement of children in care – only 15% achieve five or more A\*-C GCSEs compared with 58% who live at home – the DfE recognised the need to secure a significant improvement in outcomes for these vulnerable children and young people. Historically, attempts to effect major change across the sector have had little impact and DfE knew it needed to do something vastly different this time to really stimulate lasting change in local government and across children's services more widely.

Leaders in local and central government recognised that regulatory frameworks and local structures, customs and practice have previously tended to focus the attention of those working with children on compliance and risk avoidance. This leaves little space for the development of new ways of working, and prevents new approaches from spreading through the system. By investing £100m into the sector, the Innovation Programme aims to inspire systemic change to improve

the life chances of children receiving help from the social care system by creating incentives and mechanisms for innovation, removing and breaking down bureaucracy and improving value for money.

The DfE wanted to focus on child protection and services for adolescents on the edge of care as these two areas are where improvement could deliver the greatest impact. Developing an evidence base was a key feature of the programme; this enables the scaling and spreading of change and gives confidence about the cost of investment, the likely outcomes and the system benefits.

The DfE had never run a programme of this sort and appointed Deloitte as delivery partner, to develop and manage the programme over a two-year period. As part of its initial submission, the firm identified and introduced two partner organisations, Mutual Ventures and Innovation Unit, to act as sub-contractors within the main Deloitte team – part of Deloitte's success lies with its ability to bring the right mix of skills and expertise to the table.

Deloitte has supported the DfE in launching a programme with genuine and lasting impact by:

- **Reducing bureaucracy – designing applications and assessment process**, including creating investment criteria, coaching bidders, providing recommendations to the DfE on bids and supporting an investment board to make funding decisions. The team's pragmatism, discipline and experience have helped to safely accelerate progress, opening the programme to applications and assessing bids as quickly as possible against a clear set of investment criteria. Deloitte's collaborative team approach has been critical in progressing the sometimes animated discussions over the outcomes of bids, and helped to fast-track the unexpectedly high volume – nearly 300 – of applications for investment funding.





- **Creating a strategic portfolio approach** to ensure that investment was targeted in the most impactful way, with a diversity of projects that maximised potential for testing, spreading and scaling ideas beyond the lifespan of the programme to deliver sustainable change. Deloitte's approach pushed and challenged the DfE's thinking, ensuring that investment decisions took account of the overall portfolio and its potential to positively impact the sector, rather than focusing on each project individually in its own narrow terms.

- **Coaching bidders to help them develop their ideas and raise their ambition.** Deloitte used tried-and-tested tools and methodologies, such as theory of change, adapted for use in a social care context, to ensure that there was a consistent and innovative approach to achieving improved outcomes for children and young people. This way of working was new to the sector and bidders; both successful and unsuccessful bidders report that they routinely use this approach in other areas of work.

- **Supporting successful organisations as they implement their projects** by providing coaching and technical support for 12-18 months – a rare opportunity on programmes of this sort but crucial to sustainability and something that Deloitte strongly advocated during the bidding process.

- **Creating a sector-wide learning programme** to share insights from the programme and its projects so that the whole sector could benefit even if they were not directly receiving funding.

The journey that the DfE and Deloitte went on was fast-paced and intense, and this framework for running programmes is now widely cited – by central government and by participants – as a best practice example; it is already being replicated through the DfE and other parts of government. 98% of participants on the Innovation Programme said that they were satisfied with the overall experience of the programme, with one participant commenting: "I think the idea behind the innovation programme is one of the most exciting and bold things to have come out of the DfE."

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# Outcomes

The programme has been widely hailed as a success across government with the Chief Social Worker reporting to us that the Prime Minister cited the programme as one of his proudest achievements of the last administration. The programme is at the cutting edge of progress on some of today's most intractable challenges. Its portfolio includes a project offering intensive support to families at risk of breakdown through involvement with gangs or sexual exploitation; the opening of a home to help young people who have been sexually exploited; a practical intervention for women who have had multiple children taken into care and projects to protect children from FGM (female genital mutilation). The Innovation Programme aims, over five years from 2014, to inspire

whole system change to improve the life chances of children receiving help from the social care system, to create incentives and mechanisms for innovation, and to improve value for money.

Value-for-money and cost-benefit analysis indicate that the programme will meet these objectives and, even at this early stage, projects are already demonstrating a real, tangible improvement for children and young people. 39 projects from 53 have so far returned data and collectively they expect to see £96.7m in net benefit by 2020. This is based on £70.5m of DfE funding through the innovation programme. At this rate of return the financial break-even point would be after three years from the programme start in 2014.

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"Just a huge thank-you to all involved for giving us such a great opportunity to develop and share our ideas. We sincerely hope and expect to repay the trust and investment made in us. ... Our coach [Deloitte] has been critical to the development of the project and helping us steer an innovative idea thought process. His approach has been well judged and well executed and he is highly regarded by our partnership."

Participant to the innovation programme

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"I have been involved in a number of bids with different government departments. In comparison to other departments, I have found the DfE, the DfE lead and the Coach [Deloitte] have been amazing – setting high standards as an exemplar of professional bid content and submission. I have learned so many positive lessons from participating which I am confident will further improve my professionalism and quality of service to others/partners in the future."

Unsuccessful bidder to the innovation programme

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