SOCIAL WORK STRATEGY

INNOVATION SCHEME

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1.   Introduction

The Innovation Scheme has been set up to support the implementation of the Social Work Strategy. The aim of the Scheme is to encourage the engagement of social workers in designing and delivering innovative changes and improvements in how they practice and provide their services based on their knowledge and experience of what works and what they need to support them to do their jobs.

The purpose of the Scheme is to provide short-term 'seed' funding to support local initiatives to help improve social work practice. These local initiatives will run in parallel with planned larger scale initiatives and will be part of the overall implementation of the Social Work Strategy.

2.   General Funding Objectives

Funding will be awarded to organisations for the purposes of testing out new ideas and supporting eligible pilots or projects that are consistent with progressing the three broad themes of the Strategy:

- *Strengthening the capacity of the social work workforce;*
- *Improving social work services; and*
- *Building leadership and trust in social work and social workers.*

Funding may also be awarded to roll out new ways of working that have already been piloted on a small scale within the organisation and have proven successful.

3.   Specific Funding Objectives

Specific priorities for funding will be agreed each year. Specific objectives will be developed against the priorities and these will be used to assess applications for funding alongside the eligibility criteria. ***The funding objectives for 2013/14 are set out in Appendix 1.***

4.   Eligibility Criteria

Funding will be awarded for projects that:

- Are based on a clearly demonstrated need for change or improvement in social work practice/service provision;
- Do not duplicate existing activities or initiatives elsewhere;
- Have potential wider application either throughout the organisation or regionally;
- Set out clearly expected outcomes that can be measured against an agreed benchmark;
- Have evaluation built in as an integral part of the process;
- Have clear time lines for completion.

5. Funding

Applications are invited for small, medium sized and large-scale projects and funding will be as follows:

Project size	Funding
Small projects	Up to £5000 per project
Medium size projects	Between £5000 - £15,000 per project
Large-scale projects	Up to a maximum of £25,000 per project

Organisations may bid for more than one project but NO organisation will receive more than £25,000 in any year towards a single project or collection of projects under this Scheme.

6. Organisational Contribution

This funding is intended to be in addition to an organisation's investment (financial or 'in kind') to the improvement and development of social work practice or services. Organisations are therefore expected to match the amount allocated by the Department either financially or 'in kind' (eg staff time) and this should be clearly identified in the application.

7. Duration of Funding

Funding will be non-recurrent, and will normally be awarded for one year only. In exceptional circumstances, consideration may be given to extending funding into a second year subject to agreement by the approval panel.

8. Use of Funding

Funding can be used flexibly towards supporting project delivery including:

- Staff release;
- Relevant training costs to support project implementation (eg in Improvement techniques or new way of working);
- Essential equipment and minor capital items;
- Evaluation costs;
- Reasonable overheads;
- Public and personal involvement.

This list is indicative only.

Funding **should not** be used for:

- Normal operational running costs of the service;
- Residential events;
- Promotion of staff;
- Off-set budget deficits.

9.   Who can apply?

(a)   The HSC Board and HSC Trusts;
(b)   Relevant agencies such as NIGALA and NISCC;
(c)   Voluntary sector organisations that provide social work services/social work interventions;
(d)   Organisations that represent social workers[1];

Applications will be accepted for projects in service areas/teams that provide a social work service either in a uni-disciplinary capacity or as part of a multidisciplinary arrangement within an organisation.

Applications will be accepted from partnerships/coalitions between two or more organisations.

Applications from Trusts should be endorsed by the Director of Social Work as well as the senior manager responsible for the service area.

Applications from other organisations must be endorsed by the senior person within the organisation responsible for the service.

10.   How will applications be assessed?

Applications will be assessed against the following criteria:

i.   A clear outline of the proposal;
ii.   Demonstration of evidence-based need and/or clear articulation for an improvement project linked to specific funding objectives;
iii.   Avoidance of duplication of existing activity or initiatives;
iv.   Support from Director of Social Work in Trusts, senior personnel within other organisations, or equivalent;
v.   A management plan with specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, time bound objectives and targets;
vi.   Articulation of measurable outcomes and, where available, existing benchmark **or** plan to determine benchmark;
vii.   Articulation of projected cost benefits (or benefits 'in kind') where relevant;
viii.   Identification of suitably qualified, trained or experienced staff to undertake the work;

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[1] Membership organisations such as NIASW, NIPSA or UNISON

    ix.   Appropriate means of monitoring and control, including proposed evaluation methods;

    x.   Clarity of costing and rationale for proposed budget and identification of organisation's contribution;

    xi.   Reasonableness of estimated costs;

    xii.   Proposals for sustainability following end of funding; and

    xiii.   Proposals for wider application within organisation and/or regionally.

See Appendix 2 for template for applications.

11.   Assessment Process

Proposals will be assessed by a small approval panel agreed by the Social Work Strategy Steering Group.

- All applications will be acknowledged within 10 working days;
- Initial sift for eligibility and completeness: incomplete applications will be rejected and the applicant(s) will be informed by letter – the onus is on the applicant to ensure that all information and enclosures are provided as detailed on the application form, and in these guidelines;
- Applicant will be informed of the decision by letter.

It may be necessary for those considering the application to request further clarification.

12.   Prioritisation

The aim is to support a regional spread and a diverse range of proposals. Account will be taken of the amount of funding requested in relation to total funding available.

13.   Letter of Offer

When funding is awarded, the letter of offer will set out the terms and conditions which govern it. In general the award letter will state:

- The amount of funding that has been approved and the year in which it will be paid;
- The purpose of the funding;
- The conditions that apply; and
- Confirmation of monitoring and evaluation arrangements.

14.   Monitoring

Applications should set at proposed monitoring arrangements. Monitoring arrangements may vary depending on the project and amount and duration of funding awarded, and will be agreed with the organisation and confirmed when the offer of funding is made.

Monitoring will, in most cases, be the responsibility of the senior person who has endorsed the application.

The aims of monitoring are to:

- ensure that funding is being managed effectively and efficiently for the purpose specified;
- assess the extent to which objectives and targets are being met and outcomes achieved;
- identify barriers to implementation at an early stage; and
- provide feedback, help problem solve and facilitate implementation.

Normally, monitoring will include:

- a progress report in the form and at the frequency specified in the letter of offer (usually every 6 months for projects of one year's duration or more); and
- a final report including an evaluation report () and account of expenditure.

Where monitoring arrangements vary these may include:

- visits to organisations; or
- meetings between representatives of the organisation concerned and the Strategy Programme Manager; or
- presentations to the Strategy Steering Group and/or Implementation Group.

15. Evaluation of Projects

Applications should include proposed evaluation arrangements and these will be agreed with the organisation and confirmed at award stage. Each project should have in-built evaluation mechanisms which enable a report to be submitted at its end, identifying achievements, outcomes and the lessons learnt from it. The Social Work Strategy Steering Group reserves the right to secure additional evaluations as it considers necessary.

16. Sharing Information from Evaluations

The Social Work Strategy Steering Group reserves the right to circulate the results of an evaluation to other organisations for information and learning. The Steering Group also reserves the right to recommend the rollout of successful projects either throughout an organisation or regionally.

17.   How Do I Apply?

Timetable

21 June 2013	Information and letter requesting applications issued to organisations.
8 August 2013	Deadline for receipt of project proposals from organisations.
27 September 2013	Funding decisions confirmed with organisations.

LATE APPLICATIONS WILL NOT BE CONSIDERED.

**FUNDING PRIORITES AND OBJECTIVES
2013/14**

Appendix 1

Applications for funding in 2013/14 can be bid for against the following priorities and objectives.

FUNDING PRIORITY 1:

REDUCING UNNECESSARY BUREAUCRACY AND PAPERWORK

Issues: Social workers are trained to work with people and help improve their lives, but feedback has consistently highlighted concerns about the amount of time social workers spend on paperwork or administration including:

- Carrying out administrative tasks;
- Duplication of information and/or reporting requirements;
- Time required to complete records and/or reports; and
- Quality of record keeping and report writing.

Applications are invited from organisations against one or more of the following objectives for initiatives or projects that will:

Objective 1a: eliminate unnecessary bureaucracy and/or reduce duplication in information or data collection OR

Objective 1b: streamline professional practice reporting requirements OR

Objective 1c: improve social workers' writing skills and the quality of professional record keeping and/or report writing

Expected Outcome: Social work time and expertise is used efficiently and effectively in social work practice and associated professional activities expected of a practising social worker.

FUNDING PRIORITY 2:

IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF PROFESSIONAL JUDGEMENT IN ASSESSMENT PRACTICE

Issues: Critical thinking, analysis and professional judgement are at the heart of good assessment practice. If assessment is not right, is not sufficiently robust or evidence-based or is poorly presented, decisions and subsequent plans and actions may be flawed and therefore compromise the effectiveness of social work intervention. Good assessment is key in informing decisions, actions and care plans to improve and protect individuals' wellbeing and safety.

There are a number of inter-connected factors that contribute to high quality assessment and professional decision-making including:

- Evidence-based assessment tools and/or methods;
- Oversight, challenge, feedback and support of practice;
- Professional supervision and 'space' for reflective practice;
- Quality assurance and control mechanisms
- Training, action learning and continuous professional development

Applications are invited from organisations against one or more of the following objectives for initiatives or projects that will:

Objective 2a: pilot/test assessment/decision making tools and/or methods;

Objective 2b: facilitate and support critical thinking and analysis in assessment practice;

Objective 2c: facilitate and improve the effective use of reliable evidence and research and the quality of professional judgements based on social work assessments;

Objective 2d: improve the quality and usefulness of the recording and presentation social work assessments and associated professional judgements for decision making purposes (eg in court, case conferences, LAC reviews etc).

Expected outcome: **Improved professional judgements based on high quality assessment to inform decision-making.**

**TEMPLATE FOR APPLICATION FOR FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE
THE SOCIAL WORK STRATEGY INNOVATION FUND**

1.   **State which Funding Priority and Relevant Objective(s) application is being made against.**

2.   **Brief description of proposal, including rationale and evidence of need.**

3.   **Aim, objectives and expected outcomes.**

4.   **Timeframe (start and completion dates and any key milestones)**

5.   **Projected costs of proposal against activity.**

6.   **Details of how the Trust will match the funding applied for.**

7.   **Management and monitoring arrangements.**

8.   **Evaluation and reporting arrangements.**

9.   **Consideration of wider application and sustainability following end of funding.**

10. **Name and contact details of project lead.**

All applications must be endorsed by the senior person responsible for the social work service area(s) where the project will be implemented.

All applications from Trusts must be approved by the Executive Director of Social Work.

Completed applications should be returned to:

Noelle Barton, Programme Manager (Social Work Strategy), HSCB, Directorate of Social Care and Children's Services, Linenhall Street, BELFAST BT2 8BS **by 5.00pm on 8 August 2013.**

LATE APPLICATIONS WILL NOT BE CONSIDERED.