

Dear Colleague

## **Call for Effective Local Practice Case Studies on School Commissioning**

The Centre for Excellence and Outcomes (C4EO) wishes to secure excellent 'validated' examples of effective local practice which is leading to significantly improved outcomes for children, young people and their families. We believe that there is good practice in your local area school commissioning arrangements and would welcome hearing about it. In so doing, you will be sharing these with others across the Children's Sector, helping them to make service improvements which really work, as well as showcasing your and colleagues' successes.

We are particularly interested in practice examples from instances where:

- Schools have taken responsibility for commissioning services (primarily relating to education and children's services).
- Local authorities are helping schools to commission services (possibly including measures to stimulate the market of providers).
- Clusters, federations or other groups of schools are commissioning services together or with other services.
- Schools are commissioning alternative provision for young people of school age (e.g. vocational education for 14-19-year olds at risk of exclusion or underperformance).
- Mainstream schools are commissioning services for children with SEN (including language therapy).
- Special schools are commissioning multi-agency services (e.g. from social care and health providers).
- Schools are commissioning support for leadership and school improvement.
- Schools are commissioning support for early intervention and preventive initiatives such as school behaviour and attendance partnerships.
- Schools have encountered difficulties and challenges in commissioning, and information on how they have overcome them.

Ideally, the examples should:

- Focus on compulsory phase education
- Centre on commissioning in its true sense (including needs assessment, resource analysis and focus on outcomes).
- Explain why and how the commissioning was undertaken (including how schools found their service providers).
- Provide some evidence of improved outcomes for children, young people and families.
- Include an acknowledgement of the practical issues and barriers schools face in commissioning high quality services

The following types of services are **not included** in this definition of school commissioning:

- Extended schools/extended services
- Cleaning services
- School meals services
- School buildings and grounds
- School transport.

### **Why use validated local practice examples?**

C4EO recognises that not all useful knowledge about ‘what works’ and why, is to be found in research reports and papers. We believe that there is invaluable evidence based in the experience and practice in schools, local authorities and local strategic partnerships. Moreover, local knowledge and practice on ‘what works’ is often ahead of that contained in research reports, which can take months or years to publish. C4EO wishes to mobilise and share this valuable local resource and use it to complement and extend the formal research evidence available to the sector.

We need, however, to ensure that the local examples of what works used by C4EO can demonstrate the achievements (outcomes; results) of effective practice. This is where ‘validation’ comes in. It is a two stage process:

- The self-validation stage, when local areas set out their examples in a consistent format.
- The external validation stage, when C4EO theme advisory groups of expert practitioners and sector specialists assess that sufficient and appropriate detail is provided by the practice account.

We do recognise that the development of successful practice is generally achieved through a journey of implementation, adaptation and further development as experience accrues. The template for submission of practice examples hopes to capture some of this.

### **How do I submit an example of effective practice?**

Please complete the online template/submission form. This enables you to describe the practice and tell us why you believe it is successful. We really want examples where there is good evidence and some documentation on how and why the practice has worked to improve outcomes, so the more that you can tell us about this, the better. Also, if you have it, do send us any other substantiating evidence such as an internal or external review, assessment or evaluation report. We do not, however, need lots of detailed paperwork. Please do not be put off if you do not have this; just complete the form as fully as possible.

If you have any queries or need support filling in the template, please do not hesitate to contact Monica Hetherington and the C4EO team at NFER on 01753 574123 or [C4EOteam@nfer.ac.uk](mailto:C4EOteam@nfer.ac.uk).

### **What will we do with the examples?**

We will acknowledge receipt of the submission and then gather together the practice examples and put them through a simple external validation process using a small panel of C4EO staff and advisers.

The validated practice will be used in two main ways:

- It will form a bank of on-line exemplars within each themed section of the C4EO website.
- It will be used in the full knowledge reviews to complement or fill gaps in the existing knowledge base.

We may also use them for other C4EO publications and outputs.

We will advise you of the outcome of the validation process and how we plan to use the material. If some of the material is to be included as a vignette in a research review, we will first send you the text and seek your clearance for it to be included in a named or anonymous way.

Many thanks for your support.

Yours sincerely

**Neil Wilson, Executive Headteacher, Newall Green High School,  
Manchester  
C4EO Theme Chair, Schools and Communities**