

New contract announced to support the implementation of the SEND and Alternative Provision Improvement Plan

On Wednesday 23 August, the Department for Education (DfE) announced a new contract to support the implementation of the SEND and Alternative Provision Improvement Plan.

We are pleased to announce that the Reaching Excellence and Ambition for all Children (REACH) consortium, led by PA Consulting in partnership with the Council for Disabled Children, Olive Academies and IMPOWER, will support the DfE with delivery of a two-year programme to implement, test and refine reforms introduced by the Improvement Plan – including (but not limited to) Local Area Inclusion Plans (LAIPs), improving the Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) processes and strengthening mediation.

The REACH consortium will deliver a three-phased programme which includes rapid cycle evaluations to test and analyse insights, allowing reforms to be assessed, refined and disseminated, in real time across the nine Change Programme Partnerships (CPPs) - one in each region.

What does this mean for the workforce?

Working alongside DfE delivery colleagues, we will deploy support including 3 CPP cluster teams, each supporting 3 CPPs, plus subject matter experts to:

- Design, develop and deliver a strategic framework that will help CPPs to adopt and test reforms, as well as sharing what works through a continuous feedback loop to allow the whole system to begin functioning more sustainably.
- Tailor support to areas based on LAIPs and support needs identified in phase 1.
- Provide strategic and leadership challenge and coaching.
- Provide ongoing support and guidance to CPPs to deliver their testing of the proposed reforms.

Underpinning this is a robust approach to programme management, security of data and quality assurance of the programme.

How will we work with the partnerships and the department to share learning from the programme?

We will:

- Support in capturing and sharing learning from CPPs, across the sector through national/regional events and webinars.
- Develop Communities of Practice which will be used to drive system-wide learning.

- Build 'reform delivery toolkits' as a key repository and resource for CPPs and local areas, in and beyond the programme.
- Support Expert Review Panels (ERPs) to present evidence, distil learning, and codify policy and practice recommendations.
- Provide easy access to learning and insight by publishing learning resources. For example, reform delivery toolkits, guidance and newsletters.

What will this mean for children, young people and families?

The REACH consortium is committed to ensuring that the voice and experience of children, young people and families is embedded not only in the national change programme but also through CPPs and local area activity. We will do this by:

- Supporting co-production and facilitating co-design in CPPs as they test the range of reforms introduced in the Improvement Plan.
- Ensuring Rapid Cycle Evaluations take account of the experiences of children and families.
- Engaging with existing models of parent and carer involvement.

Amanda Kelly, Adult and children's social care lead at PA Consulting, said:

"PA Consulting is delighted to be leading this consortium, helping to shape the DfE's reform programme for SEND and AP with a clear ambition to deliver lasting change so that current and future generations of children can thrive and reach their full potential."

Adam Tedesco, Deputy CEO at Olive Academies, said:

"Olive Academies is proud to be the alternative provision lead for REACH consortium. We firmly believe that everyone has the right to a high-quality education and, with the right support in place, every child has the ability to achieve. Being part of REACH is a welcome opportunity to utilise the extensive knowledge and expertise within our trust and the wider alternative provision sector to help shape the reform programme, ensuring it positively impacts the experience and outcomes of children and young people in alternative provision, and students with SEND."

Amanda Allard, Council for Disabled Children, said:

"CDC is delighted to be part of the REACH consortium, this builds on our long history of both improvement work and partnership working. We look forward to working together with everyone in the system to make a real positive difference to the lives of children and families and the professionals who support them."

Sean Hanson, Chief Executive Officer at IMPOWER said:

"IMPOWER is proud to be part of this delivery partnership, a remarkable opportunity to drive meaningful reform in SEND and Alternative Provision services. We are committed to working with children, families and professionals to improve lives and, having supported twenty percent of local High Needs systems in England to deliver frontline

change already, we are excited about the difference our EDGEWORK™ approach can make through this national programme.”

The DfE also announced that an additional 7 special free schools are to be built, meaning over 1000 new special school places for disabled children and young people and children and young people with special educational needs. In addition to this, the DfE is also confirming an expansion in training for early years staff, adding an extra 2,000 training places for early years special educational needs co-ordinators on top of the 5,000 already announced.

[Hear more from Dame Christine Lenehan in this blog about the Improvement Plan.](#)

Find out more here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/more-support-for-children-with-special-educational-needs>