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Getting it right, and righting the wrongs

Practitioners' Toolkit pilot programme

Getting it right, and righting the wrongs:

Practitioners' Toolkit pilot programme

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Invitation

Communities and Local Government (CLG) invites expressions of interest from local authorities and partnerships between local authorities and other delivery partners to be redress review pilot areas.

The independent review of redress developed a Practitioners' Toolkit to help areas work with customers to review and improve their service and remedy provision. CLG has committed £900,000 to the testing and further development of this Practitioners' Toolkit through a pilot programme. Nine pilot areas (one per region) will be selected and will receive up to £100,000 each in funding to support the outcomes described on the following pages.

Section 1:

***Getting it right, and righting the wrongs* review**

The white paper *Communities in control: real people, real power* promised to commission a review to look at the feasibility and practicality of introducing and extending the idea of redress for citizens when their council services fail to meet agreed standards.

David Cook (CEO, Kettering Borough Council) chaired this Review and looked at the experience of service and redress provision from the customer's viewpoint, and at how a customer-focused approach can be embedded in the culture of local service providers. His report *Getting it right, and righting the wrongs* was presented to CLG on 17 June 2009.¹

Main themes of the review

To ensure local service providers not only deal better with complaints but also get it 'right first time', the main themes of the Review are:

- **The service and remedy pledge:** clearly setting out how local service providers will get it right, and right any wrongs
- **The importance of the frontline:** understanding that good people are more important than process, and
- **Customer-focused partnerships:** making sure that partnerships deliver a seamless experience and an economy of effort for the customer.

Practitioners' Toolkit

The main output of the Review was a Practitioners' Toolkit developed by local authority practitioners, and in collaboration with the LGA and IDeA. The Toolkit is intended to be a practical aid to help councils work with customers and other partners to identify key issues for improvement in both their service provision and systems of redress. It has been designed to help local authorities focus on the principles of excellent customer service, the importance of getting the culture and values of the organisation right and the role of the frontline, and making partnerships work for the benefit of the customer. The Practitioners' toolkit can be found at www.communities.gov.uk/publications/communities/gettingitrighttoolkit

¹ The report is available at www.communities.gov.uk/publications/communities/gettingitrightreport

The Practitioners' Toolkit pilot programme 2009/2010

CLG has committed £900,000 to the use and further development of the Practitioners' Toolkit through a pilot programme. Nine pilot areas (one per Government Office region) will be selected and receive up to £100,000 each to:

- use and test out the Practitioners' Toolkit, sharing experiences and challenges during the course of the pilot with other pilot areas.
- evaluate and further develop the Practitioners' Toolkit
- become a 'regional champion' – providing peer support to other local authorities; delivering and disseminating learning, and championing customer service improvement at both a local and regional level.

Free customer service health check

In addition, a free health check visit will be made available to successful pilot areas, drawn from a team made up of private, public and third (including not for profit) sector organisations, who already have experience and a track record in improving customer service and customer focus in service and remedy provision.

Section 2:

Application process

CLG is inviting **expressions of interest** from local authorities, and partnerships between local authorities and other key delivery partners (including contractual and strategic arrangements), who would like to become a pilot area. Applicants may already have an established track record in customer service and wish to develop further, or be just starting out on their journey. Please note though that all applications must nominate one local authority to act as the lead partner, to whom funding will be allocated and who will be responsible for ensuring that outcomes are met.

Candidates will be sifted based on their expressions of interest, the selection process for which is detailed in Section 3. Only candidates who have been selected to potentially become one of the nine pilot areas will be asked to submit a detailed application.

We would look for the expressions of interest to **outline** (in no more than two A4 pages²) how the local authority or partnership would:

- 1 Use whole or part of the Practitioners' Toolkit, to address the principles of excellent customer service in line with the main themes of the review, i.e. looking at all three or one of the following themes:
 - **The service and remedy pledge** – working to apply the five identified characteristics of good service and remedy provision to:
 - a service
 - service area
 - organisation
 - partnership
 - **Importance of the frontline** – to better facilitate the frontline to improve the service offered to the customer.
 - **Customer-focused partnerships** – to ensure partnership arrangements are customer focused and work for the benefit of the customer as well as the provider. This could include:
 - strategic partnerships, for example, local strategic partnerships (LSPs)
 - delivery/contractual partnerships, for example, contracted out services
 - co-located customer service arrangements in partnerships
 - integrated working arrangements, for example, one customer service contact shared between partners

² Please note that there is no guarantee that any additional pages beyond what has been requested will be considered in the selection process.

- 2 Demonstrate strong leadership, a commitment to customer service improvement and an awareness of local needs at chief executive level and throughout the organisation.
 - 3 Work with customers, local stakeholders, for example, private, public and third (including not for profit) sector partners, and frontline staff, to:
 - ensure service and remedy pledges and provision reflect and respond to local needs, desires and expectations; and
 - draft an improvement plan following use of the Toolkit, showing how they intend to take forward issues highlighted and improve their customer focus in local service and remedy provision and what impact they anticipate this will have.
 - 4 Demonstrate how they will work with customers, and other partners (including the third and private sectors) to deliver these improvements.
 - 5 Be able to demonstrate how involvement in the pilot has made an impact and helped improve the customer's experience of local service delivery.
 - 6 Conduct their role as 'regional champion' and mentor to other local authorities, sharing skills and expertise, including how they will design and deliver the dissemination of any learning from their use of the Toolkit.
- Track and evaluate immediate and longer term outcomes from the programme.
 - Identify learning outcomes to help further development of the Practitioners' Toolkit and wider dissemination of learning regionally – to support national improvement of the incidence of high-quality customer service delivery to local people.

Your expression of interest may wish to address one of the following areas, as three of the pilot areas will be chosen to focus specifically on:

- 7 **Support to those made redundant** – we would like at least one of the pilots to focus on multi-agency support to better deliver services and remedy for those recently made redundant. In particular, that local authorities work with other partners, including HM Revenue and Customs, Jobcentre Plus, and the Learning and Skills Council, to map and reduce the number of repeat visits and duplicated information needed for someone out of work in each locality.
- 8 **Customer Service Excellence** – another area we want one of the pilots to focus on is the links between the Practitioners' Toolkit and the Government's Customer Service Excellence (CSE) standard, so that

we can clearly identify how these two initiatives work together to the benefit of their shared aims.

- 9 **Total Place pilots** – we are also looking to test the links between the Practitioners' Toolkit and the Total Place pilots, which are looking at driving service transformation through leadership interventions, and removing barriers to joint working.

Please note that **pilots will be expected to commit to delivery of the following outputs**. You must take this into account when considering your expression of interest and outline costs.

- A. To write a report on their experience of using the Toolkit.
- B. To arrange, plan, design and deliver regional events and workshops to disseminate their learning.
- C. To join and establish a 'virtual' peer support network of local authorities who share ideas and work together to overcome challenges; spread good practice and provide learning dissemination beyond the life of the pilot programme. This will initially be made up of pilot areas.
- D. To contribute to and be involved in the development of an impact assessment of the use of the Toolkit detailing both the cost and resource impact.
- E. To assist in the further development of the Practitioners' Toolkit using the findings from their pilot programme, to support other local authorities hoping to improve their customer services. (We will work with successful applicants to determine the process for this.)
- F. To contribute data and qualitative input to any longer term research and evaluation programme to assess the long term difference made by the pilot programme.

Supporting documentation

Expressions of interest should be supported separately by:

- A breakdown of estimated costs incurred in delivery of the pilot programme aims and expectations, including how any costs will be met if proposals exceed the £100,000 available. Proposals must demonstrate value for money.
- A line statement from the chief executive demonstrating their commitment to the pilot and to customer service improvement, embedding customer focus throughout the culture of the local authority.

- A note of how the applicant intends to identify learning outcomes to help the further development of the Practitioners' Toolkit, and share that learning through their role as regional champion. Please bear in mind Section 2 (specifically points 6, 7 and 8) and the requirements for the applicant to plan and deliver this themselves.
- A statement of your ability to begin the pilot by the end of September 2009. The resources needed to meet this commitment and any risk to this being achieved needs to be considered and addressed by the applicant.
- A paragraph about how the pilot will link with:
 - any Total Place pilot status
 - any ongoing or intended work to meet the customer service excellence standard
 - any other pilot schemes (for which the authority currently receives funding) or other work being undertaken as part of the public services transformation agenda
- A brief note of any customer service awards/reviews the local authority has undertaken and achieved in the past.

Section 3:

Selection process

The Practitioners' Toolkit pilot programme is intended to test and further develop the Practitioners' Toolkit with a range of local authorities/partnerships working in different circumstances.

One pilot will be selected in each of the nine Government Office regions. Pilots will be expected to act as 'regional champions' and to work with virtual support networks to better aid learning dissemination and support to local authorities and partners throughout the region. We expect these networks to operate both during and beyond the life of the pilot programme.

In light of the above, the selection of the nine pilot areas will be made to ensure that all sections of the Toolkit are piloted and that the programme best includes the following spread:

- A range of local authorities/partnerships from those who may already have an established track record in customer service and wish to develop further, to those who are just starting out on their journey.
- A range of area (rural/urban)
- A range of local authority types (metropolitan, district, county, unitary)
- Three pilot areas specifically focusing on:
 - testing the toolkit in a partnership setting, looking at how to meet the needs of customers recently made redundant
 - testing how the Toolkit works with the Customer Service Excellence standard; and
 - testing how the Toolkit approach fits with that of a Total Place pilot.

Section 4:

Timetable

Expressions of interest should be sent both electronically and in hard copy to:

Alice.Wilcock@cdf.org.uk

Alice Wilcock
Co-director of Community Development
Community Development Foundation
Unit 5, Angel Gate
320-326 City Road
London
EC1V 2PT

Closing date for expressions of interest is **17 July 2009**.

Queries should be directed to Alice Wilcock at the above email address or Alexandra Boniface at Alexandra.boniface@communities.gsi.gov.uk

A request for a more detailed application will only be made to those areas selected to potentially become one of the nine pilot areas. The request will be made by 3 August 2009; with details to be submitted by 21 August 2009.

Please note that there will not be an appeals process for areas not selected.