



Accelerating Reform Fund FAQs

General

What is the Accelerating Reform Fund?

The Accelerating Reform Fund Department is a £42.6 million fund launched by the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) to boost the quality and accessibility of adult social care by supporting innovation and scaling, and kickstarting a change in services to support unpaid carers. The fund is open to local authorities with adult social care duties.

The DHSC has provided grant funding to Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE) to provide hands-on support to local areas in developing local partnerships and delivering projects, ensuring participants benefit from valuable shared learnings, peer support and expert insights across the country.

How do I find out more?

SCIE is holding webinars, open to local authorities/representatives and their local partners.

- The first two SCIE webinars took place on Tuesday 14 November and Monday 27 November, please find the recordings and slides [here](#).
- Four regional events are taking place in December, for local authority leads only, to explore the EOI in detail, covering any queries local authorities might have, while sharing learning and increasing awareness about potential projects/providers in your area:
 - Monday 11 December 12 to 1.30pm - East of England and London
 - Tuesday 12 December 12 to 1.30pm - North East, Yorkshire and North West
 - Wednesday 13 December 12 to 1.30pm - The Midlands
 - Thursday 14 December 12.30 to 2pm - South East and South West.
- Please contact us on innovation@scie.org.uk for further information, and to register.

How do local authorities apply for the Accelerating Reform Fund?

- A lead local authority needs to submit an [Expression of Interest \(EOI\)](#) with the DHSC by 12 January 2024, in partnership with other local authorities in their Integrated Care Systems (ICSs), to fund local innovation projects. Only one EOI should be submitted per ICS. At least two projects will need to be supported in each area, one of those having a particular focus on unpaid carers.
- Local authorities will be guided by a [list of priorities](#), and are expected to work collaboratively with others such as the NHS, care providers, voluntary and community sector groups, including unpaid carers.
- If it makes sense from a service provision/population perspective, ICS consortia can join-up to submit applications

Is the fund for England only?

- Yes, it has been launched by the DHSC for local authorities to access in England, to make progress towards the [Government's 10 Year Vision](#).

Is the fund just for adult social care?

- The £42.6 million fund has been launched by DHSC to boost the quality and accessibility of adult social care by supporting innovation and scaling, and kickstarting a change in services to support unpaid carers. As part of the communications about the fund, health colleagues in NHS England will be informing health leaders of the Accelerating Reform Fund and its purpose.
- The fund will focus on embedding and scaling approaches to transform care and support including for unpaid carers, who play such a vital, selfless role in our society. This will accelerate progress towards the government's social care vision where people have choice, control and support to live independent lives, and where care and support is of outstanding quality and is provided in a fair, accessible way.

What are DHSC/SCIE doing to ensure that health and other partners know about the funding so that they can work with their ICS areas to develop projects?

- The DHSC is working with NHS England to inform health leaders of the Accelerating Reform Fund and its purpose including via a recent ICS learning network summit, delivery partners group and fortnightly ICS bulletin.
- DHSC is working with local government and voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) partners, including members of the Health and Wellbeing Alliance, to disseminate information through their channels to ensure partners know how they can participate.

Some of the list's priorities have a specific focus on unpaid carers, why is this?

- For the vast majority of people care begins at home. Many people wish to play a role in caring for their friends and family, and we recognise that, for some, this can be a significant commitment. 'People at the Heart of Care' and 'Next steps to Put People at the Heart of Care' highlighted the importance of kickstarting a change in the services provided to support unpaid carers, by building and sharing the evidence. At least one project per area will need to be focused on unpaid carers.

Why has DHSC chosen the case studies alongside the innovations?

- DHSC knows there are some fantastic examples of innovation happening across the sector. While the priorities are intended to be broad to enable local authorities to adapt them to their local priorities, the case studies are intended to illustrate an example of how this priority could be delivered. They are intended to help local authorities bring to life each innovative priority. DHSC and SCIE are keen to hear about more examples under each of these innovations and would welcome local authorities getting in touch to share existing work. Please email innovation@scie.org.uk

What about other innovations in adult social care? Can we use the funding for those instead?

- The purpose of the Accelerating Reform Fund is to embed and scale innovations. The funding is to support local authorities to develop projects that fit within at least one of the identified priorities for innovation and scaling, meets their local population needs and is based on relevant statutory duties and legal requirements.
- Local authorities can take forward any project they choose to meet their local populations needs, if it falls under one of the 12 priorities for innovation and scaling. Projects that do not contribute to any of the 12 priorities cannot be funded through the Accelerating Reform Fund.

Does the Accelerating Reform Fund include parent carers (of under 18-year-olds)?

- The list of priorities for innovation and scaling is focused on adult social care reform. Therefore, the focus is on carers for over 18-year-olds, as well as transitions into adult social care.
- Local areas may also wish to consider how innovations can be designed to take a whole family approach as outlined in both the Care Act 2014 and the Children Act 1989.

Does the Accelerating Reform Fund include young carers?

- The list of priorities for innovation and scaling is focused on adult social care reform.
- As highlighted in the list of priorities, local areas might, for example, wish to consider how they can use innovations to also support young carers - such as for priority 7, carers assessments, this could include effective collaboration between adult social care and children's services and assessments for young carers as they transition into adulthood.
- Local areas may also wish to consider how innovations can be designed to take a whole family approach, as outlined in both the Care Act 2014 and the Children Act 1989 (as well as the Young Carers Needs Assessment Regulations 2015).

How do the DHSC work with SCIE on the fund?

- The DHSC has launched the Accelerating Reform Fund and will oversee the fund, including receiving the Expressions of Interest. The DHSC has provided grant funding to SCIE to provide hands-on support to local areas in developing local partnerships and delivering projects, ensuring participants benefit from valuable shared learnings, peer support and expert insights across the country.
- With a wealth of trusted expertise in working collaboratively to help local areas transform care, SCIE will help identify issues and challenges, galvanising co-production and ensuring people who need care and unpaid carers are at the heart of the programme.
- This is a learning programme, so SCIE has an essential leadership role in gathering evidence on how to successfully tackle the barriers to scaling up innovation in social care, alongside a national evaluation partner.
- The Accelerating Reform Fund is split into two phases: please see diagram below to illustrate responsibilities for the different phases.

SCIE support

What support will SCIE provide?

- SCIE will be leading the support programme for local authorities and their partners, This will include:
 - a. Support to local areas to participate in the Accelerating Reform Fund by helping them to form consortia of interested partners in their Integrated

- Care System (ICS) geography; identify priority issues and select the innovations they wish to scale; and to develop expressions of interest.
- b. Support to consortia to set up and deliver their chosen projects through a series of group sessions and webinars that will help identify challenges; share learning; and facilitate peer support.
 - c. Facilitate expert input and hands-on support for projects that need it, delivered by organisations that have developed or successfully delivered the innovation in other areas, and partners delivering the broader DHSC funded improvement offer.
 - d. Share learning across the programme and with the wider sector.
 - e. Ensure the collection of evidence to support the Fund's evaluation.

How do we access SCIE support, as we plan our submissions?

- All local areas are strongly encouraged by the DHSC to contact SCIE to understand how you can work with us and other partners in your local area to develop projects. Please email us at innovation@scie.org.uk

How can SCIE help us with:

a) Developing Expressions of Interests

- With a wealth of trusted expertise in understanding the challenges faced in scaling innovation, and working collaboratively to help local areas transform care, we can help identify issues and challenges, advise on co-production, and provide general information and guidance including via webinars (there are two taking place in November).
- We can connect you to other local authorities in your area through regional sessions due to be held in December, and to the case studies and case study providers included in the priority list. We have a list of providers which we will update ongoing, as we become aware of any additional providers supporting local authorities or with capabilities to support, in priority areas.

b) Identifying priorities

- The purpose of the Accelerating Reform Fund is to embed and scale innovations, so Local authorities within an Integrated Care System (ICS) are expected to work together to agree the most appropriate projects that can be taken forward based on local need. SCIE's expertise in understanding the challenges in scaling innovation means we can advise.
- As part of the support offer, SCIE will be available to support local areas to form partnerships and develop projects and facilitate peer support. This will include connecting you with other local authorities through a series of regional sessions that will be held in December.
- Working in partnership with health partners, care providers, and voluntary and community groups will be essential to designing effective projects.

c) Linking local authorities to each other and providers

- As part of our support offer, SCIE will be available to support local areas to form partnerships and develop projects and facilitate peer support.

- If it makes sense from a service provision/population perspective, ICS consortia can join-up to submit applications.
- We can connect local authorities with the providers included in the case study examples in the DHSC list of priorities; and similarly are happy to put providers in touch with local authorities. A series of regional webinars will be held in December.

Local responsibilities/working together

Why do the Expressions of Interest have to come from local authorities?

- Local Authorities have been asked to submit Expressions of Interest because they have a statutory responsibility for delivering care. They are being asked to come together in their Integrated Care System (ICS) geography, because ICSs are critical to collaboration between health and social care. The DHSC is allocating funding to local authorities through ICS geographies to encourage collaboration between local authorities and local health boards and provide opportunities to share knowledge, expertise and resources to overcome barriers to innovation.
- Local authorities are invited to register their interest with the DHSC by 12 January 2024, in partnership with others in their integrated care systems, to fund local innovation projects. Only one Expression of Interest (EOI) can be made per integrated care system. Local authorities will be guided by a list of priorities, and are expected to work collaboratively with others such as the NHS, care providers, voluntary and community sector groups, including unpaid carers.

How are you expecting local areas to work together?

- Local authorities within an Integrated Care System (ICS) are expected to work together to agree projects that can be taken forward based on local need.
- Working in partnership with health partners, care providers, and voluntary and community groups will be essential to designing effective projects.
- As part of the support offer, SCIE will be available to support local areas to form partnerships and develop projects, and facilitate peer support.

What is the role of providers, voluntary organisations, health, in completing the Expression of Interest?

- Local authorities are expected to work collaboratively with others such as the NHS, care providers, voluntary and community sector groups, including unpaid carers. These partners need to be part of the project(s) in completing the Expression of Interest (EOI), depending on arrangements, and the EOI needs to be submitted by a lead local authority.

Given the short turnaround time, would a technology supplier need to be identified in an Expression of Interest?

- We recognise local authorities will need to follow all local procurement procedures and there is flexibility to appoint providers after the Expression of Interest (EOI).

Could an ICS propose a range of projects with all local authorities opted-in overall, but some involved more in some projects than others?

- Yes, there is local flexibility as long as each local authority is involved in the consortium in some way and can benefit either directly from the project or the evaluation of impact.
- If an ICS area has four local authorities in it, there is flexibility of how you approach the two projects. It could be one project per two local authorities, or each project could be spread across all four local authorities.

Can a local authority be part of more than one ICS area Expression of Interest submission?

- No, a local authority can only be part of one ICS bid, although we encourage best practice-sharing across consortia.
- The entire funding allocation for the local authority (i.e. their Relative Needs Formula share) will be allocated to the lead local authority of the consortium they choose to join.

How much flexibility do we have to work across ICS areas?

- Where it makes sense for the population being served or provision of services, two ICS consortia can submit a joint Expression of Interest (EOI) outlining one lead local authority. The EOI should include all local authorities

that want to opt into the fund and proposals should cover the whole geography represented.

Do you need commitment from all ICS partners or can one or more of a larger number put an Expression of Interest in?

- Local authorities need to talk to all local authorities within the ICS area, as there is only one Expression of Interest (EOI) per ICS area, but some local authorities may decide not to be part of one or more of the projects within the EOI, and that is fine. In terms of health and voluntary organisations and provider partners, the more collaboration the better.

Do all local authorities within one Expression of Interest have to have the same priorities in relation to each project? Can one local authority be ahead on the implementation of one initiative and wanting to develop it further, while others use the funding to catch up?

- Yes, as long as it is clear and agreed by all local authorities what funding is necessary for each project and how the learning from the most advanced project will benefit in scaling up the project in other local authorities.
- Local authorities can also create a programme that has several projects where not all local authorities participate in all projects within the programme.
- Local authorities within ICS footprints will need to agree on priorities that they are taking forward but there is flexibility in terms of how they spend the funding and set up the projects locally.

Could there be a different lead authority for each of the two or more projects within one consortium?

- The lead local authority is for the Expression of Interest (EOI) submission process to DHSC and for allocating funding to the consortium. If, in practice when implementing your projects, it makes sense for another local authority to lead on the implementation, those arrangements can be made at a local level.

Within an ICS consortium, can projects be split across different local authorities?

- Yes. While there needs to be one application from the lead local authority, it could include Project 1 (spans all local authorities), Project 2 (spans just four),

Project 3 (spans a different four) etc., just note that the funding will not increase if you undertake more projects.

How can we find out which local authorities are in which Integrated Care System area?

- Information on the mapping of ICS areas is available on the [NHS page](#) under 'ICB partner organisations'.

Do Integrated Care Boards have a role in the Accelerating Reform Fund?

- Integrated Care Boards do not have a specific role in the Accelerating Reform Fund and do not need to be involved or sign off proposals. Consortia will be formed within Integrated Care System geographies, and the designated lead local authority will submit an Expression of Interest for the Accelerating Reform Fund, working in partnership. Funding will be allocated directly to the lead local authority.
- This is completely separate to and differs from the Better Care Fund, which requires Integrated Care Boards and local government to agree a joint plan, owned by the Health and Wellbeing Boards.

Evaluation

Who is the evaluation partner and will it need to be paid from the area's fund?

- The evaluation partner will be appointed by the DHSC soon. They will be paid by central funding.
- The evaluation partner will not be SCIE, as the evaluator will need to independently evaluate the implementation of the SCIE support offer.

What are you intending on evaluating within the Accelerating Reform Fund?

- An independent evaluation partner will be appointed by the DHSC. They will be paid by central funding.
- The evaluation of the Accelerating Reform Fund led by the national evaluation partner will assess where and how the programme supports local areas to overcome barriers to scaling innovation; the implementation of the SCIE support offer; and the ways local areas can scale up innovations after the

grant has been delivered. Learning from the programme will contribute to future innovation in the sector.

- Local areas are encouraged to conduct their own assessment of impact for their project, funded by their allocation from the fund, of which the national evaluation partner will collate and consider the findings.

Does SCIE support include evaluation of projects for local authorities, ICS and other local stakeholders?

- ICS consortia are encouraged to conduct their own assessment of impact for their project, funded by their allocation from the fund, separate to, but feeding into the national evaluation. The national evaluation partner will collate and consider the findings.
- SCIE would not be able to carry this out, given our involvement in supporting the fund more widely. You can choose whichever evaluation partner you would like.

Funding

How has the funding been calculated per ICS geography?

- All areas are being provided with a base investment to cover initial start-up costs and then additional funding that is more representative for their local population. Therefore, each consortium will receive an initial £300,000 floor (so even for all, not adjusted) to help with set-up costs for projects, in recognition that these are likely to be the same for all areas. This floor represents £12.6 million of the £42.6 million pot.
- The remaining £30 million is intended to cover some ongoing programme costs and how it is distributed will be calculated based on the Adult Social Care Relative Needs Formula (RNF) at a local authority level and summed to the ICS consortia level - indicative local authority top-up allocations have now been published on [Gov.uk ARF: Guidance for Local Authorities](#). The amount will be calculated based on the total number of local authorities opting into the consortium – so, for example, an Expression of Interest with a larger number of local authorities, larger number of people and greater demand and/or needs would result in higher levels of funding.
- For local authorities that span multiple ICS geographies, their RNF funding allocation will be added to the consortium they choose to join. Local authorities can only join one consortia. However, if it makes sense from a service provision/population perspective, ICS consortia can join-up to submit applications.
- If local authorities choose **not** to opt into the Accelerating Reform Fund, the DHSC intends for most or all of their RNF funding allocation to be redistributed amongst all ICS consortia across the country, based on the ASC RNF.

- Following the deadline of 12 January 2024, DHSC will confirm final allocations for each consortium.

How many projects can we submit? Do we get more funding for more projects?

- The Accelerating Reform Fund (ARF) will support at least two projects per region (Integrated Care System (ICS) area), one of which will focus on unpaid carers – and needs to consider co-production with both those cared for and unpaid carers, ensuring they are inclusive of local diverse needs.
- The Expression of Interest (EOI) has space to submit three projects, but there is no limit. Regardless of project numbers, each consortium will receive an initial £300,000 floor (so even, not adjusted) to help with set up costs for projects. The remaining £30 million is intended to cover some ongoing programme costs and how it is distributed will be calculated based on the Adult Social Care Relative Needs Formula (RNF) at a local authority level and summed to the ICS consortia level - indicative local authority top-up allocations have now been published on the [ARF: Guidance for Local Authorities page](#). The amount will be calculated based on the total number of local authorities opting into the consortium.

Do you expect consortia to split the funding 50:50 across projects equally or is that funding is determined by the consortium itself??

- Within the consortium, different local authorities and partners will have different contributions, participation and a different role within each of the projects. You should agree in advance the distribution of funds and clarify in the EOI in a way that demonstrates the objectives and outcomes of the projects put forward including sustainability. The funds are then distributed based on needs identified to support the projects in the EOI.

How long is the funding available for?

- The funding is available in financial years 2023/24 and 2024/25, however, the funding is being issued as a non-ringfenced grant and therefore there will be flexibility to roll over funding.
- The aim of the grant is to incentivise the scaling-up of projects to new areas that can be further supported through existing local authority funding.

Can local authorities use some of the funding for services they are already delivering for scaling, and/or to backfill their existing work?

- The ARF is about encouraging scaling up of innovative projects. The funding shouldn't be used for backfill. If a local authority is already implementing a

project that meets the criteria of the fund and falls under one of the 12 priorities, they should consider how to scale it or expand the scope in some way to ensure the funding is additional.

Can we use the fund to pilot new projects?

- Ideally the fund is to scale up innovations that have some evidence that they work. Due to the need to ensure sustainability and robustness of the projects within one year, we would expect that local authorities used the fund to mainstream or scale up local pilots or innovative initiatives that have some evidence of success and track record.

Can some of the project funding be used for local authorities to fund consortia members to be part of the project group, e.g. VCSE providers/carers organisations?

- Yes. As it is not a ringfenced grant, there is local flexibility to local areas to spend the funding however they best see fit to scale their projects.

If it is not ringfenced, can local authorities use the funding to cover other costs they have for example in relation to workforce or packages of care?

- No, the fund has to be spent against the activities described in the Expression of Interest (EOI) in general terms and later on in a detailed project plan.
- SCIE will monitor and quality assure the progress of the projects for DHSC to ensure the fund is being used appropriately in relation to its objectives.

When will the funding be sent to local authorities?

- The funding will be provided to the designated lead local authority in each consortium. Once the lead local authority has received the funding allocation, they will distribute across the consortium as required.
- The funding will be provided in two tranches, the first will be provided to local authorities in March 2024.
- The second tranche will be provided in 2024/25, conditional on completion of mid-grant reporting.

How much of the total funding is dedicated to family carers??

- The Fund includes the commitment of up to £25m for unpaid carers, and all areas will need to submit one project relating to unpaid carers.

How will you make sure projects are sustainable beyond the lifetime of the Accelerating Reform Fund?

- It is important that projects are sustainable beyond the lifetime of the Accelerating Reform Fund (ARF), and we are asking local areas as part of the Expression of Interest to consider how they can ensure projects have a lasting impact.
- As part of the support programme, SCIE will help projects consider sustainability. They will collect and share learnings from projects across the country to enable projects to be successfully embedded and scaled. The national evaluation partner will also assess how local areas can be best supported to continue to deliver and scale-up innovations post-delivery of the grant.