

News story: Education Minister unveils new support for schools

A new service offering schools advice on how to get the best value for money when buying support from businesses has been launched by the Department for Education.

The new scheme – which is being trialled initially in the north-west and south-west – will provide free advice and guidance to schools looking to procure services from local or national businesses. This could include catering, cleaning or technology support.

School Systems Minister Lord Agnew said:

Academic standards are rising, with 1.9million more children now in good or outstanding schools than in 2010 and nine out of ten schools given this rating at their latest inspection. We know that how schools use their money is important in delivering the best outcomes for pupils and this new service will help School Business Professionals to make better financial decisions. It builds on our wider package of support to help schools to be more cost effective, with the aim of ensuring every child can access a world-class education.

The service is free for schools in the chosen regions to join immediately, with service delivery beginning from today (1 February) offering:

- expert advice and guidance on buying;
- template documentation for buying;
- help with complex contracts, particularly services such as catering, cleaning, premises and technology services;
- promotion of local collaboration, where there is an opportunity to reduce costs on areas such as learning resources and administrative supplies;
- market intelligence; and
- contract management support.

This service will add to the existing range of government tools, information and guidance already available to schools as part of our plans to help them improve their efficiency and save £1bn on non-staff spend in schools by 2019-2020.

It is part of the Department for Education's drive to ensure every child has the opportunity to make the most of their lives, no matter where they live or their background.

The new initiatives build on the work already being done by the department to support schools to improve their financial health and efficiency. This

includes:

- a top 10 planning checks for governors. This checklist sets out key metrics for school and academy governors to help make sure schools manage their resources efficiently; and
- team of school efficiency advisors who provide expert support to the schools that need them most.

Interested schools can find out more [here](#)

Schools in other regions around the country are not able to apply currently, but can look for support from their local School Business Professional Network instead. The Networks provide opportunities to share good practice and knowledge and can provide the opportunity to potentially save money, for example joining together to bulk purchase.