

SCiP Alliance Funders' Forum Action Plan 2022

March 2022

Scope

The SCiP Alliance Funders' Forum purpose is to

Improve the impact and efficiency of funding supporting thriving lives for Service children.

While the Alliance helps all organisations supporting Service children work together to enhance their lives, the Funders' Forum is for organisations funding (e.g. through grant-making or commissioning) work dedicated to Service children's support. Through the Forum funders seek to enhance their work through three themes of work:

- **Evidence-based funding**
- **Enhanced collaboration**
- **Equitable access**

Context and Rationale

Since its creation in 2016 by a diverse group of stakeholders keen to grow collaboration with each other and their collective support for Service children, the Service Children's Progression (SCiP) Alliance has grown considerably in scale and reach.

The Alliance's works for a vision of Thriving Lives for Service Children. The SCiP Alliance mission sets out its role and purpose in realising this vision:

We bring together practitioners, researchers, policymakers and funders to build a stronger evidence-base, better policy, and enhanced support for Service children's education and progression, placing their voices at the heart of all we do.

While the Alliance continues to further streams of work key to its foundation on research, practice and policy, our underpinning approach is to bring together the community of stakeholders so that the things we do and produce together (like research briefings, case studies, practical tools, insight reports, training, policy proposals, strategic plans etc.) draw on the diverse strengths, perspectives and contributions of all partners. In this way, the Alliance helps to combine the best of what we have and translate it into the best of what's possible for Service children.

Within this sector-wide conversation, funders have highlighted the need for enhanced collaboration and systematic approaches to supporting Service children. Discussions with funders supporting Service children highlighted three key needs:

- **Evidence-based funding**
Many funders struggle to access a rigorous and balanced account of needs on which to base funding strategies because there is no systematic mechanism for identifying sector-wide priorities for Service children's support.

- **Enhanced collaboration**

Considerable overlaps and gaps exist between the focus and scope of funding from diverse sources because there is no inclusive infrastructure to support well-informed discussion and collaboration between the diverse range of funders supporting Service children.

- **Equitable access**

Service children and those supporting them do not access funding equitably due to the difficulty of ensuring they are aware of opportunities and able to access them – especially for smaller and more isolated pockets of Service children.

The Funders' Forum is a funder-led response designed to address these priorities by aligning new approaches with complementary developments in the wider SCiP Alliance Community. The Forum was initiated through a collaboration between the Naval Children's Charity and the SCiP Alliance.

Principles

Autonomy

Each funder will, of course, maintain complete autonomy in their funding strategies and decisions. The Forum provides funders with the opportunity to share with peers their respective funding scopes, priorities and plans to improve the impact of their individual and collective work.

Inclusivity

The Forum must be accessible to all funders no matter their size, focus or reach, as long as they operate in ways consistent with the vision and values of the SCiP Alliance and work demonstrably for the benefit of Service children.


Equality

The Forum provides the opportunity to enhance the collective impact of funding from diverse sources and enhancing the overall impact on Service children is its purpose. As such, every member shares an equal stake in the forum regardless of their scale or status.

Partnership

The Forum exists to help funders do together what they cannot achieve alone, or what they can do better together than separately. Partnership is not one thing; it includes a spectrum of ways of working together that funders engage in in good faith on a case-by-case basis.

The partnership working spectrum below illustrates many ways of working together with differing degrees engagement and, with them, expectations of return on investment. It is not assumed that closer engagement is better, but that partners should be clear about their respective levels of engagement and the specifics of their respective contributions, so that working together, whatever form it takes, is in good faith and adds value to each partners' work.

Inform	Network	Complement	Collaborate	Integrate
Partners share information about their work without expectation of reciprocity	Partners share information with each other about respective activities/plans and explore overlaps	Partners change their activities/ plans in response to information from partners and/ or agree to develop discrete activities/ plans in complementary ways	Partners work together on activities/ plans of shared interest each contributing complementary or similar elements to support a shared set of priorities	Partners combine existing or new activities/ plans into a single, novel shared initiative that is co-owned or established under new combined and separate arrangements
 Depth of engagement and expectations of return on investment grow				

Purpose

In response to the identified needs, the Funders' Forum will pursue three central themes in pursuit of the central purpose to **improve the impact and efficiency of funding supporting thriving lives for Service children's**, which are:

1. Evidence-based funding

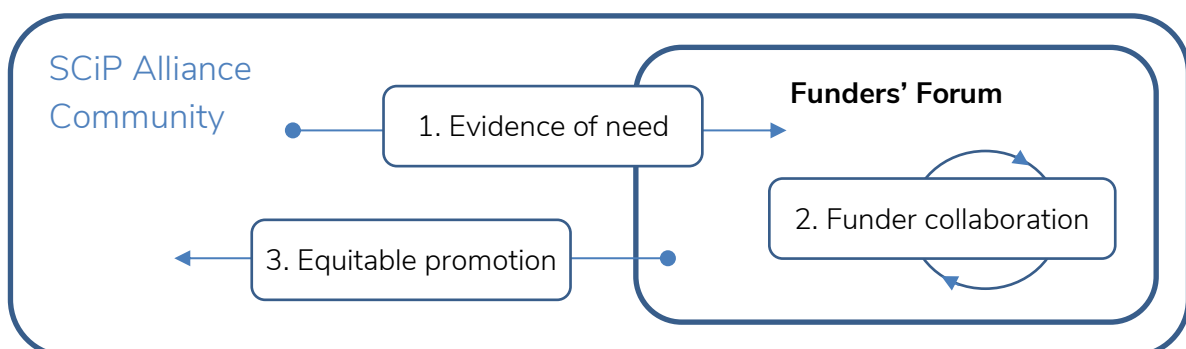
Draw on a rigorous and balanced account of the priorities for Service children's support through the SCiP Alliance Community, so that funders' strategies and activities respond to the best available evidence.

2. Enhanced collaboration

Support enhanced collaboration between funders to reduce duplication and aid the development of complementary approaches and a more coherent sector-wide package of funding support for Service children.

3. Equitable access

Support funders to enhance relationships with other SCiP Alliance partners and provide routes to enhance promotion of funding and support opportunities to Service children and their supporters.



Plan

In response to the principles and priorities herein, the following outcomes and outputs represent the objectives for the Funders' Forum in 2022. Outcomes and outputs under each priority capture what success looks like at the end of an initial 12-month period of establishing the foundations of the Forum.

Objective 1 (evidence-based funding) – establish mechanisms for connection

Objective 2 (enhanced collaboration) – agree well-informed priorities

Objective 3 (equitable access) – explore routes to equitable access

Evidence-based funding

2022 Objective 1 – establish mechanisms for connection

One year on, the Funders' Forum will have established mechanisms for connecting the Forum with the wider Alliance Community infrastructure, so that it is set up to translate evidence of need from the SCiP Alliance Community consultation cycle into informed discussions about funders' priorities and collaborations.

Outcomes and outputs

- 1.1 Funders will be engaging with the SCiP Alliance Community consultation cycle, so that funders' perspectives are represented in the Alliance's systematic account of the sector's priorities.
- 1.2 The Funders' Forum Chair will have established sustainable connection with the SCiP Alliance Management Group.
- 1.3 The Funders' Forum will be established on the SCiP Alliance Community online platform.

Enhanced collaboration

2022 Objective 2 – agree well-informed priorities

One year on, the Funders' Forum will have developed its understanding of the principal challenges to and opportunities for improving the impact of the range of funding supporting Service children and will have met regularly so that individual and shared priorities and plans have developed.

Outcomes and outputs

- 2.1 The Funders' Forum will be meeting regularly remotely to develop the routine agenda and cycles of activity useful for improving collaboration and the development of shared priorities.
- 2.2 Scoping research will have established a shared understanding of the funding landscape for Service children's support and have identified the principal challenges to and opportunities for improving the impact of funding from diverse sources throughout the sector.

- 2.3** One face-to-face event will have connected funders to reflect together on and respond to the report findings, and developed priorities key to improving the impact of funding for Service children's support and for the Funders' Forum's development.

Equitable access

2022 Objective 3 – explore routes to equitable access

One year on, the Funders' Forum will have explored ways to improve the access to funding for a wider and more diverse range of organisations helping Service children thrive and identified priorities key to establishing equitable access to funding, especially for more isolated Service children.

Outcomes and outputs

- 3.1** The Funders' Forum will have worked with SCiP Alliance Community partners to better understand the barriers and enablers of equitable access to funding, especially for those supporting more isolated Service children.
- 3.2** The Funders' Forum will have identified key actions and opportunities to improve the diversity of those accessing funding.
- 3.3** Funders will have reflected on their approaches and some will have developed their approaches to reach more and different organisations and Service children; some may have collaborated to develop new initiatives.