**Invitation to Tender**

**Aspiring to Excellence – Quality Improvement Design and Delivery**

**INTRODUCTION**

Tenders are invited for the design and delivery of a three-year service improvement programme, building on a set of design parameters set out in this document.

**What is Aspiring to Excellence?**

Aspiring to Excellence is an award programme designed to encourage and recognise service improvement in axial SpA care. It will provide a focal point from which professionals can explore and test approaches to reduce the delay to diagnosis and improve axial SpA care and patient experience. The knowledge and experience generated will be shared in real-time across the UK and internationally to help stimulate across-the-board improvements in care.

*Aspiring to Excellence* is a strategic partnership between NASS, BRITSpA (the British Society for Spondyloarthritis) and three companies whose sponsorship provides the programme with its funds: AbbVie, Novartis and UCB.

We want to ensure that ‘every patient, every time’ receives high quality patient-centred axial SpA care. To do this we will work with rheumatology services across the UK that are aspiring to achieve excellent care, support them, understand what it is that they are doing well that others could learn from, and develop and disseminate learning material in order that others can improve their care too. Selected through a competitive award process, they will work together in a national network, with an ‘all teach, all learn’ approach. Key to the long-term impact of this strategic programme will be the development of innovations that lead to new systems and structures that create sustainable high-performance.

**About NASS**

The National Ankylosing Spondylitis Society (NASS) is the only registered charity dedicated to supporting people affected by axial spondyloarthritis, including ankylosing spondylitis (AS) in the UK.

Since 1976 NASS has played a crucial role in providing accurate and up to date information allowing people with AS to have a greater understanding of their disease and in turn, make more informed choices in the management of their symptoms. We do this by:

* Responding to daily Helpline requests for advice and information by telephone, email and letter on a wide range of topics including associated diseases, medication, practical aids, employment, insurance, benefits and more;
* Producing a variety of resources including patient guides, fact sheets, audio podcasts, exercise apps, exercise DVDs and materials for people with AS and healthcare professionals;
* Providing regular supervised hydrotherapy and physiotherapy sessions through a network of volunteer branches around the UK;
* Keeping people up to date with the latest developments in effective treatment of the disease via the website, email alerts and our bi-annual newsletter for members and health professionals;
* Acting as advocate for people with AS working alongside the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE), health service providers and policy makers in raising the profile of AS and in particular, the need for earlier diagnosis and access to appropriate care; and
* Actively encouraging participation into research into the cause, genetics, treatment and management of the disease.

**PROGRAMME DESIGN**

A programme steering group has agreed a broad set of design parameters for Aspiring to Excellence. We will work with the Delivery Team (made up of QI specialists and axial SpA clinicians) to develop the design in time for the first network meeting in early December 2019.

Our assumptions at this stage are that:

* the programme will be based on the IHI Breakthrough Collaborative model, with a series of network meetings and support online in between meetings
* the programme will be underpinned by the Model for Improvement
* participating rheumatology services will work on some common problems and some site-specific ones
* participants will develop tests of change using PDSA cycles, statistical process control, etc. and share their data and experiences at network meetings.

**Network meetings**

* The network will meet four times a year for three years, starting in December 2019, and will be supported outside of the meetings by webinars, etc.
* A first cohort of around six centres will be awarded in early November (running for three years)
* A second cohort will join the programme, and work alongside cohort one, in the autumn of 2020 (running for two years)
* There may be a third cohort
* Each cohort meeting will last one day with 2-3 participants from each rheumatology service attending each meeting
* Our aim is to share learning nationally and internationally. A dissemination plan will include proposing integrated sessions for relevant UK and international conferences to showcase the approach and the learning; a suite of improvement stories; webinars; site visits; learning reports; and peer reviewed publications.

**Programme components**

We propose three core components:

* Improvement areas in axial SpA clinical care
* An introduction to healthcare improvement approaches
* Developing shared learning and spreading this to others.

*Improvement areas in axial SpA clinical care*

The programme’s [axial SpA Quality Framework](https://nass.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/020419_Aspiring-to-Excellence_Quality-frameworkJB.docx) will provide a starting point for identifying the improvement focus of each participating service. In determining the clinical focus, we will need to strike a balance between programme-wide topics and service-specific ones. Reducing time to diagnosis must be a core focus for each service. The axial SpA framework (see Annexe One) is drawn predominantly from the 2017 NICE guidelines for the diagnosis and management of Spondyloarthritis).

In parallel, we will commission research to develop a rigorous patient-derived view of what high quality care looks like. The results will have multiple uses including influencing the focus of the participating centres; this is unlikely to be available until late 2020.

*An introduction to healthcare improvement approaches*

Participating clinicians are likely to have variable understanding of the principles and approaches underpinning quality improvement. Service improvement is a learned set of skills that can significantly enhance award holders’ ability to be effective in creating changes that lead to improvements in care processes, structures and outcomes. However, a full quality improvement immersion will likely be outside the funding scope of the programme. What should be feasible is an introduction to the Model for improvement and the use of Plan Do Study Act cycles to identify and test changes in service, but we welcome discussion with those tendering for this work about the nature and depth of quality improvement work that is possible.

Participating centres will be able to bid for programme funds to undertake local audit as part of their improvement work.

*Developing shared learning and spreading this to others*

We want the programme to provide a focal point and be a catalyst for change across the UK – to create dialogue about different approaches to improving care. We want to build learning and dissemination into the design to create:

* A programme microsite on the NASS website or some alternative
* Insight webinars for teams to share their insights with the broader axial SpA community
* Site-specific and topic-specific learning reports
* A learning culture between teams outside of the sessions.

**INTENDED PROGRAMME BENEFITS**

***Participating clinicians***

* Be part of a learning environment to explore problems in the delivery of high-quality axial SpA care, identifying and testing solutions through 4 network meetings each year for 3 years
* Access to a team of clinical, improvement and learning experts who will provide support to achieving local improvement goals
* Peer support from other participating rheumatology services
* Opportunities to share results through webinars, conferences and publication and help shape future health policy on axial SpA
* Additional funding on a competitive basis to support local audit
* Promote your service locally as a potential model of excellence.

***The axial SpA rheumatology community***

* The programme will test out potential ways to reduce the delay to diagnosis, achieve cost efficiencies and improve care; this will be relevant to all rheumatology services
* Services will have access to learning and materials, including webinars, learning reports and conference presentations
* The learning will be presented to parliamentarians and policy makers in order to give axial SpA a higher profile and policy priority.

***Patients***

* There should be demonstrable benefits to patients treated at award holding services as well as a positive effect to axial SpA patients more generally through the dissemination and spread work of the programme
* Patients treated at Aspiring to Excellence services should experience:
	+ - A shorter time to diagnosis from symptom onset
		- A shorter time to effective treatment
		- Improved satisfaction with axial SpA services.

**PROGRAMME DELIVERY**

There is likely to be a core delivery team of three people who will facilitate the network as well as provide input remotely, with expertise in: axial SpA care; quality improvement approaches; and learning and dissemination. The team will need strong facilitation skills to:

* enable teams to support and coach each other
* help award holding sites work together to identify care problems, identify potential solutions, share data on tests of change / service innovation etc.
* create an environment to capture and share learning.

We anticipate that the successful QI consultants will make up two of the delivery team. We will separately recruit an axial SpA clinician to work alongside the QI consultants.

**Steering group**

A steering group will support the design of the programme and provide oversight of its implementation and review. The QI consultants will attend steering group meetings.

**Key deliverables for the QI consultants**

* The design and delivery of 12 learning sessions from December 2019 to September 2022
* Attendance at 9 Steering Group meetings
* Facilitation of 6 webinars
* Creation of content for 9 programme learning reports and for the programme microsite
* Support to participating rheumatology services outside of network meetings.

**What NASS will provide**

NASS will provide the following:

* Logistical support associated with network meetings and steering group arrangements
* Support with the design and production of learning content and reports
* Support with the creation of a programme microsite

**Budget**

Your proposed budget should cover all the time that will be required to achieve the above deliverables. You do **not** need to include costs for accommodation (which will be arranged by NASS) or travel (NASS will reimburse the costs of standard class travel).

A budget of £60,000 - £72,000 inclusive of VAT.

**Next steps**

If you wish to tender, please complete the [Invitation to Tender form](https://nass.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Aspiring-to-Excellence_tender-form.docx) and submit this to Anna McGilvray by Wednesday 31st July 2019. Interviews will be held with shortlisted applicants on Thursday 8th August 2019.

We welcome informal enquiries so please don’t hesitate to get in touch if you have any questions.