**Childminder Grants administration scheme – Q&A**

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**Market engagement presentation Q&A on 28th March (10am-11am)**

**Is this tender to develop the platform or manage the overall process including the allocation of funds?**

This tender will include both development of the platform through which applicants can apply for grants and managing the administration of funds, including undertaking eligibility checks.

**Would ex-Childminders looking to re- enter the sector be eligible or only new childminders?**

This scheme is for people who are new to childminding. However, we do understand that some childminders will leave the profession and chose to return at a later date. We will confirm eligibility criteria when issuing the invitation to tender.

**Will online or offline customer support be required?**

We anticipate that both online (e.g. email) and offline (e.g. phone helpline) customer support will be required.

**Can you provide some idea of what the eligibility rules will likely be and checks that will need to be done?**

The grant will be available to childminders registered with Ofsted or a childminder agency. This will be limited to England only. The successful bidder will be expected to confirm the applicant is a registered childminder, but will not be responsible for verifying the checks individuals must seek prior to becoming a childminder (for example – Disclosure and Barring Service checks).

**How have you identified target applications to be 8,500?**

This target is based on the overall budget available for the scheme across the two years and the number of grants that could be issued, using an assumption that 75% of applicants will register with Ofsted and 25% will register with a childminder agency. Suppliers informed us that there was an error in the original slides that presented this information. This has now been corrected.

**For backdating: will DfE set eligibility rules and communicate these to sector before the contractor is onboarded?**

Since the market engagement meeting on 28 March, the department has confirmed that childminders registering from 15 March 2023 will be eligible for the grant and can claim it when the scheme opens in the autumn.

**Has/are DfE worked/ing with any supplier to date on this policy matter?**

No, the department has not worked with any other supplier on the current grant scheme.

**Do you have any sense of the ongoing demand i.e. post the 8500?**

The scheme is due to run for 2 years. Demand will be dependent on many factors and the successful bidder will be expected to report uptake to the department on a regular basis to enable us to assess the popularity of the scheme.

**You mentioned the DfE has ran similar schemes in the past. Were these delivered by the DfE directly, or through an external supplier?**

The previous schemes were delivered by external suppliers. Ecorys delivered the Childcare Business Grants Scheme between 2017 and 2019.

**Would there be any requirement for the provider to support in further application attraction activities?**

This will not be a requirement; the DfE will be responsible for communications activities.

**Does DfE typically allow Delivery Partners to process payments using DfE bank accounts, which could open the opportunity to more suppliers?**

We are in the process of confirming details on the payment mechanism and this will be set out in the invitation to tender.

**Do you envisage any mid-term changes to the policies?**

What we have set out today is the current thinking, however we reserve the right to change this subject to further decision making.

**Is it one off payments to applicants?**

This is likely to be a one-off payment although we are still agreeing the design of the scheme and this is subject to change.

**If there are any fraudulent awards identified retrospectively, is the supplier going to be expected to recover payments?**

Details to be confirmed in the invitation to tender.

**Will the terms of RM6322 be retained e.g. liability caps etc?**

Our current position is that the terms of RM6322 will be retained. This is subject to change, however, and we will confirm details of this in the invitation to tender.

**During the subsequent 1-1 discussions, we confirmed the following with suppliers beyond the information covered in the slide pack and / or discussed during the presentation:**

* We anticipate that due to the numbers involved we are likely to expect suppliers to conduct spot-checking on how the grant has been spent, along with other anti-fraud measures.
* We do not expect a Key Performance Indicator (KPI) to be linked to reaching the 8500 target as the DfE is responsible for promotion of the scheme.
* There is a reasonable expectation that a relatively high percentage of applicants will be successful considering the number of checks and balances there are in the process of registering to become a childminder.
* Any application system would have to comply with the relevant requirements as set by Government Digital Service (GDS).
* The current expectation is the length of time of the KPI for processing applications would vary between online and manual applications (this is still to be determined).
* We are working with Ofsted and childminder agencies to understand the most effective process for releasing data required to verify registered childminders to the Supplier and the frequency with which it will be possible to do so.
* We are assuming that the DfE will facilitate data sharing between the supplier and Ofsted/childminder agencies, but will clarify in due course along with data security requirements.
* This is regarded as a new scheme, and so application forms and processes will need to be developed from scratch by the supplier.
* We are exploring what a potential helpline would need to look like in terms of operating hours, taking into account market feedback.
* We asked for feedback in the slide pack on the possibility of adding providers, other than childminders, to the scheme at a later date. If we chose to build in this flexibility, it would be made clear in the invitation to tender.
* Although we proposed a 30-day period, we are currently considering the length of the mobilisation period for this contract, taking into account market feedback.
* With regard to the publication of the invitation to tender, we will aim to launch it as early as possible in June 2023.
* We were asked about whether grant administration staff will require an enhanced DBS check, and will clarify in due course.
* The timescale within which we expect suppliers to deliver funding from the point of application will be set out in the invitation to tender.
* The department will clarify the social value category against which bids will be reviewed as part of the invitation to tender.