**Evaluation of the ‘Commissioning for the Future’ pilot training programme**

**SPECIFICATION**

**CONTENTS**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **1** | Introduction and background | Pg 1 |
| **2** | Evaluation of the ‘Commissioning for the Future’ pilot training programme   * Aims * Methodology * Timelines, deliverables and key milestones * Funding | Pg 2 |
| **3** | Contract requirements and key performance indicators | Pg 4 |
| **5** | Annex A: Example KPIs | Pg 5 |

1. **Introduction**

This contract is for an independent evaluation of the new and upcoming ‘Commissioning for the Future’ pilot training programme. The pilot programme, which is being designed and delivered by EY in partnership with Social Care Institute of Excellence (SCIE) and West Midlands Association of Directors of Adult Social Services (ADASS), will be open to 153 senior local authority adult social care (ASC) commissioners in England and aims to enhance strategic planning, leadership and data analytical skills.

Design of the pilot programme is now underway and will continue until June 2024 where it will then launch in July for nine months until March 2025. The Department has now made available up to £125,000 (inc. VAT) to fund an evaluation of the programme, which will run from April 2024 for fifteen months until the end of June 2025.

The future supplier of this contract will require expertise in adult social care and have experience in conducting research for evaluation purposes. The supplier will be required to work collaboratively with EY and DHSC to design an evaluation that understands how successful the pilot programme has been in achieving its objectives and the extent to its impact on ASC commissioners.

***Background***

In *Next steps to put people at the heart of care,* published in April 2023, the Department committed to delivering a package of support for commissioners to strengthen the use of strategic, preventative, and outcomes-based market shaping approaches. Central to this is our proposal for the ‘Commissioning for the Future’ pilot training programme which will:

* Have a focus on improving commissioners’ capability to utilise market and population data to inform commissioning decisions.
* Dedicate significant time to enhancing the practical application of skillsets of commissioners.
* Include taught days, provider visits and peer learning opportunities.
* Be delivered through a mix of methods including in-person and virtual to maximise accessibility and participant engagement.
* Introduce participants to new commissioning practice and market shaping interventions, using academic research and international examples to provide challenge and drive innovation.

The objectives of the programme are to:

* Strengthen strategic leadership skills by supporting participants to build relationships with providers, take a long-term view of their market and make effective market shaping decisions based on evidence.
* Enhance the practical application of key and specialist skills commonly used by ASC commissioners, including data analysis and using this to underpin commissioning decisions.
* Empower ASC commissioners to be the drivers of their own change and to devise and deliver on innovative market shaping strategies that suit their local context, making use of the benefits of working within an integrated system.
* Provide opportunities for building networks between commissioners and maximise the benefits of learning from and alongside peers.

1. **Evaluation of the ‘Commissioning for the Future’ pilot training programme**

## The aim of this procurement exercise is to award a single contract to evaluate the ‘Commissioning for the Future’ pilot training programme.

***Evaluation aims***

The evaluation should provide the Department with evidence on whether the pilot training programme delivered value for money, whether and how the programme should be continued and/or scaled up, and insight into existing commissioning practice as well as barriers to change.

The aims of this evaluation are to:

* Understand the quality of the programme and its content and assess how effective the training has been in setting participants up to be successful in meeting the programme objectives. This includes understanding what processes contributed to the programme’s successful elements as well as any areas for improvement.
* Assess the impact the training has had on participants and whether the programme reflects and meets the needs of others in the sector, as well as people who draw upon care and their families;
* Analyse the levels of LA interest, take up of commissioners on the programme, and line manager support for participants who applied/ enrolled. This should help the evaluator to understand demand for the training as well as how effective the advertising and branding for the programme has been.
* Collect examples of local practice shared through the programme, identifying barriers for improvement and understanding why some areas are resistant to change; and
* Highlight where participants and/or their line managers/ DASSs report improvements to commissioning practice as a result of the training. The evaluation supplier may be able to point to potential impacts we might see if the programme were to be delivered over a longer period, including potential productivity gains (5+years).
* Inform DHSC’s future policy thinking around continuation of the programme and potential scale up. The evaluation should make recommendations on what a longer-term version of the programme should look like, considering what worked about the pilot and identifying where improvements could be made. The evaluation should also seek to understand local authority willingness to part fund in the future, to inform DHSC’s consideration of different funding options for a future programme.

***Evaluation methodology***

We anticipate that this work will be a process evaluation, involving qualitative case studies, surveys and the development of a Theory of Change. We expect that due to the short duration of the pilot scheme, measuring impact will be difficult. Instead, we would like this evaluation to help inform us about participants’ perception of impact and identify potential medium to longer term outcomes and impacts that the scheme could have if rolled out.

Throughout the evaluation, the future supplier would be expected to work closely with EY, who will have the contacts and established relationships to enable these conversations with participants and their line managers. EY will also have collected baseline data on current commissioning practice, participants’ skills gaps and context around the current challenges in their local authorities, which an evaluation supplier will have access to.

Although the total number of participants on the programme is yet to be confirmed, in the scenario that all 153 places are filled, we anticipate that this evaluation will require surveys from around 100 participants, 40 line managers and 15 DASSs. Interviews or focus groups should be held with at least 50 of the participants on the programme. These numbers would reduce in the scenario that uptake to the programme was less than anticipated. On applying to take part in the programme, potential participants will be encouraged to confirm with EY their ability and willingness to engage in the evaluation process.

The number of case studies we expect may also depend on the final number and diversity of commissioners who participate in the programme across the country. If all 153 places are filled, we would anticipate around 15 case studies to be developed. Whilst we encourage potential suppliers to propose the types of case studies that they think would be most effective in achieving the aims of this evaluation, we anticipate that they may demonstrate:

* a change in participants’ confidence with carrying out specialist commissioning activities, as a result of the programme
* participants’ report of how the programme informed new thinking in their role and/or improved commissioning practice in their local authority
* an example of good commissioning practice by a local authority that has been shared with other participants during the programme

The pilot training programme will have a key focus on enhancing the practical application of commissioning skills and so where relevant and appropriate, the evaluation supplier may observe some elements of the programme (either virtually or in-person), to assess the levels and quality of learning transfer.

As the pilot training programme will be delivered across eight cohorts staggered across four date selections and locations, the evaluation should be delivered across four waves of research and periods of analysis between July 2024 – June 2025. This should capture any improvements made to the programme as it progresses through the cohorts and any regional differences in how the programme is received.

***Timelines, deliverables and key milestones***

Although the four waves of research and analysis will correspond with the dates that the cohorts attend the programme, there will be other fixed milestones and deliverables that a future supplier will need to meet. These include:

* **Evaluation design and production of an inception report, (April-July 2024):** During the contract inception, the future supplier should produce a report setting out the evaluation design and delivery plan. The supplier should scope the evaluation using the data EY will have collected on participants and local areas through the programme’s application process. The supplier should also collect information from EY and DHSC on the programme’s design process and on comms and marketing. It may also be beneficial for the evaluation supplier to hold some formal conversations with relevant sector stakeholders to fully scope the aims of pilot from a range of perspectives.
* **Interim report produced, (January 2025):** An interim report is produced on any early findings from the first cohorts going through the training.
* **Post-programme research, (April-May 2025):** The evaluation supplier conducts any final interviews and focus groups assesses the success of the programme across all cohorts.
* **Final evaluation report produced, (June 2025):** This should present findings, conclusions and recommendations.

We expect the future evaluation supplier to work closely with EY on any data collection and the development of processes that are relevant to the scope of this evaluation specification. Further information about relevant data will be discussed on commencement of the evaluation.

***Funding***  
The Department has up to £125k available (inc. VAT) to cover the costs of designing the evaluation, conducting both on-the-ground and desk-based research, and producing both interim and final reports.

Potential suppliers should set out a breakdown of costs in their bids for the Department to consider.

1. **Contract requirements and key performance indicators**

We envisage that the successful supplier will evaluate the ‘Commissioning for the Future’ pilot training programme over a fifteen-month contract. We aim to award the contract to the successful bidder in March/April 2024, with the intention of mobilising the contract in April 2024. The contract will then run for fifteen months until June 2025.

The successful supplier will be expected to work with the Department and EY to meet milestones and deliver the evaluation within the specified timescales. This will require the future supplier to have robust project management and reporting processes to be in place.

***Requirements of a future supplier***

A future supplier will need to meet all of the following requirements.

**Evaluation of the ‘Commissioning for the Future’ pilot training programme**

The future supplier(s) will be expected to:

* Work alongside EY to design and deliver a process evaluation of the pilot training programme, using a Theory of Change methodologies and knowledge of the ASC sector to understand its success.
* Design interviews, produce surveys and develop other resources to enable data collection.
* Assess the baseline data collected by EY on participants, as well as key information on the comms and marketing of the programme and the design process, as a way of understanding what contributed to success and what could be improved.
* Conduct interviews and/ or focus groups with participants on the programme, line managers, and DASSs, to gather feedback and understand if the programme addresses skills gaps and learning needs.
* Where appropriate and relevant, observe sessions on the programme to assess the levels and quality of learning transfer.
* Produce reports at inception, at an interim stage and at the end of the programme.

**Project management and reporting arrangements**

Robust project management and regular accurate reporting is essential throughout the entire contract period. This will enable the Department to monitor the contract delivery, manage risks, and fulfil internal governance-reporting requirements.

The supplier will be expected to:

* Ensure that day-to-day operational management of the evaluation is of the necessary quality and is conducted professionally by building a collaborative working relationship between the supplier(s) and the Department.
* Attend regular meetings with the Department to update on progress and risks, seek sign off at key milestones, and feedback on the success of evaluation.
* Work with the Department to design KPIs (example KPIs at Annex A).
* Ensure potential problems are reported to the Department as early as possible and corrective actions are taken to keep delivery on track.
* Develop a plan of comprehensive corrective actions, mitigations and specific timescales in the event of any slippage, in order to restore progress back to plan.
* Put in place clear internal governance arrangements that allow for rapid and effective decision-making and the escalation of issues requiring resolution.

***KPIs***  
The Department has provided example KPIs at Annex A but these are indicative only and will be finalised and refined with the preferred bidder based on the proposals. As bidders may take different approaches to achieve the outcomes of the contract, they may require different measures to assess performance and delivery. Potential supplier(s) should outline up to 10 KPIs in their bids and these will be agreed with the Department prior to contract mobilisation.

Before the contract begins, the Department will also agree on the timelines and means for reporting and updates. While bidders may have their own proposals for reporting to the Department, this should include a minimum of monthly updates and include both the interim and final reports. These updates should report on KPIs and where any have not been met, the future supplier(s) shall be expected to submit a plan to the Department that demonstrates how these KPIs shall be achieved at in the next quarter. Where KPIs are not met or where the resolution of the KPI has not been achieved in 30 business days, unless otherwise agreed, the Department may refer the matter through the appropriate escalation route (to be determined at contract award).

**Annex A: Example KPIs**

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| Activity | Proportion of activity completed |
| Design an evaluation that meets the aims of this contract and present in an inception report | 100% |
| Develop surveys to send to participants and their line managers/ employers about their skills and learning needs prior to the programme and their experience of the programme once it’s completed | Survey development completed and sent to 100% participants and line managers |
| Programme observation | 30% of sessions on the programme observed |
| Review virtual learning and assessments | Review 50% of virtual learning and 100% of any assessments |
| Interview participants and line managers post-programme | Interviews with 30% participants and/or line managers |
| Hold at least one post-programme theory of change workshop | 100% |
| Produce interim and final reports | 100% |