

Family Hubs Q&A

Q: Will these slides and Q&A be shared after the meeting?

Yes. The slides and Q&A will be published on Contracts Finder but it may not be immediately.

Q: Would the Department expect and/or welcome partnership bids for the National Centre?

Yes. We would certainly welcome partnership bids for the National Centre. Though bids from individual suppliers are also welcome.

Q: The need for the National Centre and evaluators to work together is clear and would clearly benefit the impact of the programme. Can you say a little bit more about any specifics of your thinking here?

We anticipate evaluation protocols, evaluation findings, evaluation toolkits and evaluation guidance being disseminated via the national centre, as well as more traditional routes such as gov.uk. We expect some cross-over in governance arrangements as part of overall programme management and governance – we will describe this further in the tender documents. We would welcome ideas from suppliers for both the National Centre and evaluation fund on synergies between the contractors.

Q: When you say evaluations to work in partnership with Family Hubs, do you mean in their approach to research or do you mean formally through a contracted approach?

Both. For contractual purposes, contracts will be with research suppliers but these must be working in a genuine partnership with Family Hubs on evaluation of their model(s). Research suppliers will likely need to enter into sub-contracts or service-level agreements with the hub(s) to clarify roles and responsibilities.

Q: Could you elaborate on the rationale for having 3-4 mid-size projects of evaluation rather than 1 bigger one? having separately contracted evaluations might prevent one to build upon the other and compromise efficiency and ability to get the full picture.

This is partly to pool risks across projects: a large-scale single evaluation involving one contractor or consortium collecting data across multiple sites and on diverse and contrasting service models can run into operational and methodological challenges.

This was a key challenge for previous national evaluations of Children's Centres in England.

A one-size fits all approach to evaluation would be inappropriate due to the range and diversity of Family Hub models (including target users and outcomes). We believe that bespoke evaluations developed for different hub models will be more sensitive to local context, build-on evolving innovation and create greater local ownership and depth of collaboration between Family Hubs and evaluators.

We believe that projects bidding towards the upper-end of the contract value cap will have scope for evaluations at scale (e.g. of a group of Hubs or consortium of local areas).

We are considering how the governance framework for the evaluation innovation fund could support join-up of approaches and learning across the evaluations. We are considering setting-up a peer learning programme for the evaluations, to exchange knowledge and methods, enhance replication of measurement tools and evaluation approaches where feasible, and to explore opportunities for joint dissemination.

Q: Given there are different models (e.g. LA-led, schools-led, VCSE-led) will you be seeking to commission evaluations that vary in terms of the model they are evaluating if possible?

We welcome bids from a diverse range of research suppliers and a diverse range of models of Family Hubs to be evaluated.

As per any procurement exercise, we will appoint the bids that score highest against the criteria set out in the specification. Bids will be scored on the appropriateness of their evaluation methodology for the scale of hub(s) being evaluated, on the value for money of bids, plus other criteria to be set out in the tender documents.

Q: Roughly how long will the window be to submit tenders? Following December publish

To be confirmed. Will depend on the procurement route agreed with Commercial colleagues. We are conscious of the need to account for the Christmas period in timelines for the procurement and will ensure sufficient time in early 2021 for the tender process.

Q: Would the national centre be open to providers who deliver integrated services but are not necessarily called 'hubs' at the moment?

Q: Is the evaluation purely of 'family hubs' or can it consider other models of delivery of integrated services which are similar in all but name?

The fund will focus on integrated service models for families of children across a broad age spectrum (e.g. 0-19 year-olds) and not solely 0-5 year-olds. The tender documents will set-out the characteristics of hubs in-scope for evaluation – exact names will not be a determining factor.

Q: Will the results of the in-house data collection be open to bidders?

Findings are expected to be available from March and would be made available to successful bidders for both the National Centre and evaluation innovation fund.

Q: How do envisage partnerships between evaluation suppliers and family hubs working? Is there a preferred approach?

The Expression of Interest document for the Family Hubs Evaluation Innovation Fund will describe how partners within contracts should work together, the aims and objectives of the fund, and some expectations regarding dissemination activities.

Any questions received from bidders to the Evaluation Innovation Fund during the Expressions of Interest stage will be answered via published Q&As on Contracts Finder.