**This PIN is for market engagement only. It does not signify the commencement of any procurement process and does not constitute any commitment by the Department for Education. The requirements and values set out below may be subject to change.**

**The Department for Education (DfE) are excited to invite potential suppliers to two virtual events on Thursday 4th May to gauge level of interest for two long-term children’s social care mixed-methods evaluations:**

1. **Families First for Children (FFfC) pathfinder and Family Networks (FN) pilot evaluations – 10-11am, Thursday 4th May**
2. **Regional Care Cooperative (RCC) pathfinders evaluation – 3-4pm, Thursday 4th May**

**If you are interested in attending one or both of these events, please forward your email address to** **CSC.RESEARCH@education.gov.uk****.** Please include any specific questions you would like covered in the event. Each event will include an overview of the policy background, proposed evaluation methods, and Q&A. A question and answer log will be circulated after all sessions.

A high-level introduction to the policy background, importance of the evaluations, and evaluation approaches can be found below.

**Background to reform in children’s social care: ‘Stable Homes, Built on Love: Implementation Strategy and Consultation’[[1]](#footnote-1)[1].**

* The Department for Education has committed to spend £200m to deliver a package of children’s social care reforms.
* In 2019, the Government committed to a once in a generation review of children’s social care in its manifesto.
* In May 2022, the Independent Review of Children’s Social Care (hereafter “Care Review”) was published and provides an end-to-end review of the entirety of the children’s social care system. The Care Review looked at the needs, outcomes, and experiences of the children and families it supports, including what action is required for improvement. It made bold and broad recommendations for reform.
* In February 2023, the Government published ‘Stable Homes, Built on Love: Implementation Strategy and Consultation’ (hereafter ‘the Implementation Strategy’). The report is the Government’s response and detailed plan to address the recommendations to reform children’s social care set out by the Independent Review of Children’s Social Care, the Competition and Markets Authority’s report, and the Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel’s report into the murders of Arthur Labinjo-Hughes and Star Hobson.

**Importance of the evaluations**

* The FFfC pathfinder, FN pilot, and RCC pathfinder evaluations are key mechanisms for evidencing these reforms.
* There are three key high priority needs for these evaluations:
* Informing any future rollout of the programmes, including informing Spending Review negotiations with His Majesty’s Treasury.
* Supporting the Department for Education’s implementation of the children’s social care implementation strategy ‘Stable Homes: Built on Love’.
* Further policy development of the pathfinder and pilot models, ensuring the design and delivery is effective in improving outcomes for children and families.

**Important information:**

* You must be registered as a supplier on the CCS RM6126 Research & Insights DPS to be invited the tender. If you are not already registered as a supplier on RM6126, please register using this link: <https://supplierregistration.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/dps#research>
* Navigate to the RM6126 Research & Insights DPS, click on 'access a supplier' and complete your registration.
* The formal Call for Competition will be conducted via the Department for Education's Jaggaer e-Tendering Portal. You must also be registered on Jaggaer to receive an invitation to tender, ask clarification questions and submit a bid. Further information about how to register on Jaggaer be found here: <https://education.app.jaggaer.com/web/login.html>

**Evaluation overviews: background, aims, proposed approach, and timescales.**

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|  | **FFfC pathfinder evaluation** | **FN pilot evaluation** | **RCC pathfinder evaluation** |
| **Background** | Both the FFfC pathfinder and FN pilot respond to recommendations made within children’s social care. Learning from the evaluation will inform future rollout.**FFfC pathfinder**: includes the following reforms - (1) Family Help - a reframing of how the children’s social care system works with families, specifically, away from investigation and towards non-stigmatising, local support that is tailored to the family’s needs, (2) child protection – a more specialist and expert child protection system, including more integrated multi-agency approaches and expert child protection social workers, (3) family networks – supporting wider family networks to keep children, at any stage (e.g., child in need, child protection, and pre-proceedings) safely within their homes, including the provision of financial support where needed, and (4) safeguarding partners delivering across all reforms. It will be rolled out to up to 12 local areas over the next two years. The model will be developed iteratively over the next two years, including co-design with local areas.  | Both the FFfC pathfinder and FN pilot respond to recommendations made within children’s social care. Learning from the evaluation will inform future rollout.**FN pilot:** includes the following reforms: the pilot will only be implementing the family networks component of the pathfinder. This is to isolate this reform from the wider pathfinder because the policy is novel and has a limited evidence base. To enable a robust evaluation, the pilot will remain stable during delivery and will only be eligible to families with children at pre-proceedings stage. It will be rolled out to 7 local authorities over the next two years. | Government plans to deliver two Regional Care Cooperative (RCC) Pathfinders, outlined in the Department’s ‘Stable Homes, Built on Love: Implementation strategy and consultation’.  RCC pathfinders will be delivered in partnership with local authorities in two areas to test a new approach to planning, delivering and commissioning care placements for looked after children. A co-design process with local authorities will shape the exact model and approach taken in each area; on a national level we will convene an expert advisory group to provide specialist insight and expertise on areas including governance, funding flows and data/forecasting. RCCs are new, radical and will evolve over time. It has not been tried before on this scale or across all CSC placement types. Over the next two years the policy is being developed iteratively through the pathfinder programme and learning from the evaluation will help to inform rollout of RCCs and understand their impact. |
| **Aims** | **The aims of the evaluation are:*** To understand, refine and monitor the development of the pathfinder model, including developing clear theories of change and descriptions of models/approaches developed in each pathfinder LA.
* To understand how the pathfinder has been implemented and delivered, including barriers, facilitators, and unintended consequences.
* To develop an evaluation protocol and prepare for impact evaluation.
* To understand the impacts of the pathfinder on its intended outcomes, including impacts on children and families, workforce, and education.
* To assess the pathfinder’s value for money.
 | **The aims of the evaluation are:*** To understand how the pilot has been implemented and delivered, including barriers, facilitators, and unintended consequences.
* To understand the impact of the pilot on its intended outcomes, including impacts on children and families.
* To assess the pilot’s value for money.
 | **The aims of the evaluation are:**1. To assess the practicability of rolling out of the RCC model, including understanding implementation and delivery, and
2. To assess the long-term impact of RCCs on improving the sufficiency of high-quality placements, in the right places, to meet the needs of children and young people looked after by local authorities, and their outcomes.

Findings will be used to ensure that future investment is targeted correctly, and policies are developed in the most effective way. The key objectives of the evaluation are to: (i) test the hypothesis behind the Theory of Change; (ii) Assess the feasibility of, and prepare for, a high-quality impact evaluation; (iii) assess the impact of RCCs on its intended outcomes; and (iv) assess the value of money of RCCs and economies of scale. |
| **Proposed approach** | * Early evaluation, consisting of scoping stage, to develop data requirements, a theory of change, and an evaluation protocol for the long-term evaluation, an early implementation and process evaluation and an early impact evaluation (July 2023 – March 2025).
* Long-term evaluation, consisting of an implementation and process evaluation, impact evaluation, and economic evaluation (April 2025 – March 2028).
 | * Implementation and process evaluation, impact evaluation, and economic evaluation.
 | Given the iterative nature of this rollout we are proposing a longitudinal theory-based impact evaluation, based on a multi-method approach with the following key strands:* Strand 1: scoping phase to develop the Theory of Change and establish an evaluation protocol.
* Strand 2: Longitudinal implementation evaluation.
* Strand 3:  Longitudinal impact evaluation.
* Strand 4: Economic evaluation.

The evaluation will also be designed to maximise the learning opportunities presented by the phased roll out of the RCCs. |
| **Timescales**  | 5-year evaluation from July 2023 – March 2028, with a break clause at end of March 2025. | 6-year evaluation from July 2023 – March 2029, with a break clause at the end of March 2025. |
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1. [1] <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/childrens-social-care-stable-homes-built-on-love> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)