

**Tenders sought for research project**

**The impact of disabilities on social mobility**

**Overview**

The [Social Mobility Commission](https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/social-mobility-commission) is inviting proposals for research to understand the relationship between disability and social mobility. This research forms part of the Social Mobility Commission’s role to produce relevant research that provides new data and insights on social mobility in the UK.

Half of households in poverty have a person with a disability in them, and a quarter of pupils on free school meals have a special educational need – twice the rate among better-off peers.[[1]](#footnote-1) Disabilities are both a cause and consequence of poverty, but their role in social mobility is often neglected.[[2]](#footnote-2) Disadvantaged children with disabilities are less likely to receive support (or even accurate diagnosis) compared to better-off peers with disabilities.[[3]](#footnote-3) This contributes to worse outcomes at school and work – as well as higher rates of entering custody – compared to more advantaged people with disabilities.[[4]](#footnote-4)

Despite clear evidence that disability is often a barrier to social mobility, there is too little understanding of how better support for disability would boost social mobility – either for individuals with disabilities or their children.

The Social Mobility Commission wants better to understand the relationship between disability and social mobility – looking across all stages of life – to inform policy by commissioning a research project that aims to answer the following research questions:

* How common are different types of disability for people from lower/higher socioeconomic groups (by age and other factors) and what might explain any correlation?
* How do educational and employment outcomes for people with disabilities vary by background? How common are other issues, such as exclusion from school or rates of entering custody? Why? How has this changed over time?
* How do diagnosis rates and access to support vary by background and why? How has this changed over time?
* What are specific barriers to social mobility faced by people with disabilities at each stage of life? And what are the barriers for the children of people with disabilities? (E.g., low levels of digital connectivity, smaller networks, lack of role models etc.)
* Which interventions work well – particularly for those from lower socioeconomic groups?
* How much could increased support for people with disabilities boost social mobility?

**Please note that we do not expect the researchers to answer every question in equal depth. We request that bidders indicate which questions and issues they will focus on primarily.**

Existing literature and data analysis should be able to answer most of the above questions. However, a workshop with relevant experts (e.g., charities supporting people with disabilities) may be helpful to understand which interventions work well for those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds – as well as providing greater insight into barriers faced by those on lower incomes. The Commission could help facilitate such a workshop at very low cost. Any proposals should propose this or another low-cost solution.

**Data sources**

The Labour Force Survey (LFS), Family Resources Survey (FRS), and Longitudinal Educational Outcomes (LEO) dataset should all provide useful insights on our research questions – as well as birth cohort studies.

* LFS: This includes both disability and health data, as well as employment/earnings data. It could be used to understand correlations between disability and earnings/employment outcomes by area, industry, age and other factors. It may also provide some data on children of parents with a disability.
* FRS: This provides information on living conditions and levels of material deprivation for children and adults with disabilities, as analysed previously in [this study](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2873517/) and [this study](https://www.npi.org.uk/files/7414/7087/2444/Disability_and_poverty_SUMMARY_REPORT_FINAL.pdf).
* LEO: Given time constraints, this dataset may only be available to institutions that already have access to LEO. It includes information on educational and employment outcomes for those with special educational needs who are or are not eligible for free school meals. It could be used to analyse the incidence of different types of need by socioeconomic background, as well as educational and employment outcomes by need type and area, for example. This could include exclusion rates. This [recent study](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/730977/FSM_and_SEND_outcomes-statistics.pdf) provides some insights, but looks at special educational needs and free school meals separately, not together.
* Birth Cohort studies: There may also be new insights on the topic to be drawn from birth cohort studies, as previously analysed [here](https://councilfordisabledchildren.org.uk/sites/default/files/field/attachemnt/CLS%20WP%202013%2811%29%20-%20Disability%20among%20young%20children%20Prevalence%20heterogeneity%20and%20socio-economic%20disadvantage%20-%20S%20Parsons%20and%20L%20Platt%20-%20Nov%202013.pdf) (for example).

**Methodological requirements**

The Commission seeks ambitious and robust proposals. Bids will be judged on the proposed approach, expertise of team, and value for money.

This research will influence future policy recommendations as well as actions by charities, schools, and local government. It should offer insight into the barriers faced by people with disabilities as well as the children of people with disabilities, and what could be done to address those barriers.

Bidders are asked to set out the proposed methodology for answering the research questions. **It is important to reiterate that we do not expect every bid to answer each research question in a similar depth of detail.** We are seeking out ambitious proposals and suggest that the following methodological approaches are the minimum that a bidder should consider:

**Research considerations and detail**

* Literature review and data analysis: We envisage that this will form the bulk of the research. This should include an in-depth look at a few of the most common disabilities, covering incidence, outcomes, barriers to success and effective interventions. Bidders should indicate how many specific disabilities they will explore in depth and how they will select which disabilities to include. We would suggest at least considering the following categories: mental health issues, moderate learning difficulties, physical disabilities, behavioural difficulties, dyslexia.
* A workshop/potential short survey: To understand which interventions work well/less well for those from low-income backgrounds, we imagine that a workshop and/or a short survey of practitioners may be of use. Both should be achievable at low cost and the Commission could help set up a workshop.
* Controls: Appropriate controls will need to be in place to allow conclusions to be drawn.
* Measures of socioeconomic background: These could include any of, or a combination of, the common measures used by government. These include: eligibility for Free School Meals, parental occupation (measured by the NS-SEC), parental education, parental income, type of school attended, name of school attended, home postcode, local area deprivation.

**Report drafting**

The audience for this research will be UK policy makers, local government, educators, charities, and other stakeholders addressing social mobility issues – as well as the public.

The final product should include a literature review, a concise and newsworthy summary of findings, plus the full details of the methodology, data and analysis, and a few case studies.

Ideally, the report would include chapters on specific disabilities (e.g., mental health issues; moderate learning difficulties; communication difficulties such as dyspraxia, dyscalculia, dyslexia; dietary and fatigue conditions).

We also welcome recommendations – for policy makers, other stakeholders, and the Social Mobility Commission – about support for people with disabilities on low incomes. If possible within budget, we would also value a practical toolkit of solutions (e.g., a summary of barriers and recommendation interventions at each stage of life).

The study will result in a report, to be published on the Social Mobility Commission gov.uk website, which sets out the findings to the research. This research will support the work of the Social Mobility Commission in developing our analysis and policy recommendations.

**Acceptable bidders**

The successful bidder will have a track record of working in the subject area of social mobility, wider diversity and/or disabilities. They should be an individual or group experienced in producing well-evidenced, newsworthy, conclusions. They will need to show evidence of how they can manipulate data effectively. They will also need to show evidence of how they can recruit for and conduct focus groups to produce meaningful insights.

**Commissioning process**

This research will be commissioned via a single procurement phase, for which succinct proposals are invited. Assessment of tenders will be on the basis of the criteria at the end of this document. The contract between the Commission and the successful bidder will run from the date of issue until no later than the second week of March 2019. Research will be published on the Commission’s website and should be drafted with Social Mobility Commission branding and format.

Tenders should be submitted to [contact@smcpcommission.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:contact@smcpcommission.gsi.gov.uk) no later than 5pm on 30 October 2018. They should be in Word or PDF format and include:

* Your proposed approach to the research (2 sides max). You may wish to set out in this section:
  + Overview of method, for each research question;
  + Details of the proposed approach;
  + Methodological constraints and possible solutions;
  + How you can add value and why you should be selected;
  + How the findings would be presented;
  + Timeline and risks.
* Examples of key relevant experience and individual/staff expertise and qualifications. Proposed distribution of duties should be clearly stated if the bid involves sub-contracting or collaboration between different providers. (1-2 sides max);
* Summary of costs (1 side max).

Communication of complex information in a straightforward way is necessary to this project. Therefore **tenders that exceed 5 sides of A4 will be not be considered**.

**Acceptable standards of bidders**

The following sets out the acceptable standards of bidders for this research and how these should be evidenced:

* Experience of working flexibly with clients in developing complex research and analysis;
* Clarity in communicating progress of work to clients and explaining issues that arise in a timely manner;
* Risk management expertise including track record in escalating risks to clients for discussion;
* If necessary, experience in working with other organisations as part of larger research programmes;
* A track record of research drawing on quantitative data resulting in news-worthy conclusions;
* If necessary, a track record of running interviews, workshops or focus groups to produce reliable and news-worthy conclusions.

**Evaluation criteria**

Tenders will be evaluated against the criteria below. A primary weighting means the criteria will be given greater consideration in assessment of bids.

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| **Criteria** | **Potential examples** | **Weighting** |
| An original, robust and ambitious method | * Clear articulation of a method that will answer our research questions * Articulation of proposed data collection and analytical techniques to be used in the project | Primary |
| Team and organisational experience in conducting and presenting qualitative research | * Experience of staff in relevant research techniques * Experience of presenting findings in catching and clear ways * Experience of specific research in this area and familiarity with subject area | Primary |
| Cost and value for money | * Estimation of cost * Value add to the project | Primary |

**Delivery Requirements**

Based on selection of a provider for this research in October 2018 the deadline for final products will be the second week of March 2019. Final products should be in electronic format, using a style guide as supplied by the Social Mobility Commission.

We estimate the research should cost around £15,000 (excluding VAT).

All costs should be quoted exclusive of VAT but please indicate if the project will attract VAT.

If your proposal includes costs for sub-contractors these costs must be shown inclusive of any VAT element (e.g. sub-contractor’s costs to you are £5,000 plus VAT, your proposal should show sub-contractors costs as £6,000 inclusive of VAT @ 20%).

1. New Policy Institute, *Disability and Poverty,* 2016: <https://www.npi.org.uk/files/7414/7087/2444/Disability_and_poverty_SUMMARY_REPORT_FINAL.pdf>;

   LKMCO, *Special education needs and their links to poverty*, 2016: <https://cdn.lkmco.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/Special-educational-needs-and-their-links-to-poverty.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Ibid; Centre for Longitudinal Studies, *Disability among young children: Prevalence, heterogeneity and socio-economic disadvantage,* 2013: <https://councilfordisabledchildren.org.uk/sites/default/files/field/attachemnt/CLS%20WP%202013%2811%29%20-%20Disability%20among%20young%20children%20Prevalence%20heterogeneity%20and%20socio-economic%20disadvantage%20-%20S%20Parsons%20and%20L%20Platt%20-%20Nov%202013.pdf>; Clare M Blackburn, Patrick J Spencer, and Janet M Read, *Prevalence of childhood disability and the characteristics and circumstances of disabled children in the UK: secondary analysis of the Family Resources Survey,* 2010: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2873517/> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Children’s Commission [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Department for Education, Outcomes for pupils eligible for free school meals and identified with special educational needs, 2018 <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/730977/FSM_and_SEND_outcomes-statistics.pdf>; The Commission’s analysis of the Labour Force Survey shows that 19% disabled children with parents in routine/manual jobs enter managerial/professional jobs, compared to 42% of disabled children with parents in managerial/professional jobs [↑](#footnote-ref-4)