**Evaluations of pilots to reduce family court delays**

**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 a virtual event on Tuesday 12th December 2-3 to gauge level of interest for three children’s social care mixed-methods evaluations.**

**If you are interested in attending this event, please forward your email address to** [**CSC.RESEARCH@education.gov.uk**](mailto:CSC.RESEARCH@education.gov.uk)**.** Please include any specific questions you would like covered at the event. The event will include an overview of the policy background, proposed evaluation methods, and a Q&A. A question and answer log will be circulated after the session has taken place.

A high-level introduction to the policy background, evaluation aims, and proposed approaches can be found below.

**We** **are looking for a supplier to conduct all three evaluations**. We welcome consortium bids.

**Background:**

Delays in the family courts have been a long-standing issue for over 10 years. The estimated cost of the Family Justice system is £1.2bn, which equates to over 10% of all direct expenditure on the children’s social care (CSC) system (2019/20). The Children and Families Act 2014 established a statutory requirement of 26 weeks for a family case to conclude, using a new process called the Public Law Outline (PLO), the process from when a social worker makes the decision to take a child’s case to court, to when an Order is made by the Judge. This system-wide push to follow the PLO principles supported a successful decrease in case duration, achieving an average of 28 weeks in 2016/17.

However, despite an initial fall following the introduction of the new process, case duration has increased again, reaching an average of 46 weeks in 2022/23. A variety of factors have been identified as contributing to this including: an increase in demand (exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic), behavioural changes due to lack of resource, and less trust and more risk-aversion across the system.

The pilots described below are aiming to reduce the case duration to be more in line with the PLO guidance of 26 weeks.

* **Pilot 1** – Five eligible Trailblazer areas across England to identify and co-design solutions to support five Designated Family Justice (DFJ) areas to reduce delay.
* **Pilot 2** – Introducing and potentially scaling a pre-Case Management Hearing (CMH) meeting between the Cafcass Guardian and the local authority (LA) social worker. This seeks to improve understanding and court experience and reduce delay by improving the effectiveness of the CMH.
* **Pilot 3** - Pilot the feasibility and early delivery of a new service for children; the Suspected Inflicted Injury Service (SIIS). This will be a new, streamlined pathway for a team of medical experts to produce a report/review of medical impact, in cases where the cause of injury to the child is unclear.

Please see below the aims, timescales, and proposed approach for the evaluations.

**Broad research aims and objectives:**

* To understand, refine and monitor the development and delivery of the pilots, including the Theory of Change.
* To understand the early impacts of the pilots, including on the intended primary outcome: reducing the length of proceedings.
* To assess the costs and potential benefits of the reforms.

**Timescales:** February 2024 to March 2026 with a break clause in March 2025.

**Proposed approach:**

* Process and implementation evaluations (until March 2025).
* Early impact and economic evaluations for Pilot 2 and 3 (until March 2025).
* Longer term impact and economic evaluations for Pilot 2 and 3 (until March 2026).

**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>