

# Expression of interest

# Title: SEN Futures Longitudinal Study Discovery Phase

**Project reference:** EOR/SBU/2018/078

**Deadline for expressions of interest:** 10am, 14th January 2019

## Summary

Expressions of interest are sought for a research project seeking to examine survey response and retention amongst children and young people (CYP) with Special Educational Needs (SEN) in England. This work will be used to inform the viability of a potential future longitudinal study of CYP with SEN currently being considered by the Department.

## Background

14.6% of the school population in England are identified as having SEN or a disability, with 2.9% having complex or high-level needs.[[1]](#footnote-1) Outcomes for these pupils are poor: there is a wide gap in the headline attainment indicators between those with/without SEN at all key stages[[2]](#footnote-2), and pupils with SEN are significantly more likely to be excluded from school[[3]](#footnote-3), to be NEET[[4]](#footnote-4), and to realise worse labour market outcomes than those without SEN[[5]](#footnote-5). However, there is currently little evidence to indicate why this is the case or how outcomes vary with different types of provision. There is also a dearth of evidence on outcomes other than academic attainment for CYP with SEN, including on educational engagement, character and resilience, happiness and wellbeing and preparation for adulthood.

Securing positive outcomes for disadvantaged CYP and supporting those with SEN to live happy and fulfilled lives is a DfE priority. In order to take an evidence-based approach to achieving this aim and to fill the evidence gaps outlined above, the Department is considering designing a longitudinal study of CYP with SEN in England (and their parents/carers) to track participants over the course of their journeys through education and to gather evidence on a wide range of topics including happiness and wellbeing, independent living and experiences of different types of provision.

## Research aims

The Longitudinal Study Discovery Phase is intended as a standalone project seeking to inform the design of the potential future longitudinal study described above.

CYP with SEN are under-researched on a national and global scale, and there are few examples of longitudinal studies or other large-scale pieces of research focussing specifically on this population. This means that we do not currently have a robust evidence base to inform estimates of response and retention for a possible future study, and that we do not have good evidence on which strategies are effective in engaging and retaining participants (CYP with SEN and their parents/carers). The Discovery Phase will seek to fill these evidence gaps in order to ensure that any future work commissioned by the Department is methodologically robust and offers good value for money.

Within this overarching aim, the Discovery Phase will address four key objectives:

1. To allow us to **test different interventions** for increasing survey response and retention among our target population (CYP with SEN and their parents/carers)
2. To provide us with **evidence on the response / retention rates** we can expect for this population
3. To **test the viability of different questions and question topics** ahead of a potential future longitudinal study
4. To **provide rich evidence on outcomes and experiences of education** for CYP with SEN

It should be noted that any future work that the Department chooses to commission following completion of the Discovery Phase will be procured via open tender, without prejudice or favour.

## Methodology

We suggest a research design comprised of two key stands of work:

**Strand 1: A randomized control trial (RCT) to test the effect of different interventions on response rates among the hardest-to-reach members of the SEN population.**

* + This strand of work would include face-to-face interviews with all participants (parents/carers of CYP with SEN and CYP with SEN themselves, where possible and appropriate) at two separate time points, in order to mimic the nature of a longitudinal study and to test retention as far as possible within a set time period. Both CYP with EHC plans and those receiving SEN Support will be in scope for this study.

Data collections should take place in two separate academic years to allow us to test retention during CYP’s transition between different provision types. We would prefer that the first wave of data collection takes place in summer 2019 and that the second takes place in autumn 2019: however, we will consider proposals that detail and justify alternative timelines.

* + We suggest that the target population for the RCT should include only participants within the SEN population who are considered to be ‘hard-to-reach’. Contractors who are invited to tender for this work will be asked to suggest an appropriate sample structure, including defining which participants should be considered hard-to-reach. We would expect this to include CYP who have SEN and who also have at least one other characteristic associated with low participation in research: those who have SEN and receive free school meals (FSM), those who have SEN and are also Looked After Children (LAC) and those who have SEN and are also members of Black, Asian or Minority Ethnic (BAME) groups, for example. We anticipate that this work will include a review of relevant literature and data to inform any choices made, and that any proposed sampling strategy will be finalised with reference to this.
  + Contractors who are invited to tender for this work will be asked to suggest an appropriate sample size: we would expect this to be large enough to provide robust evidence on the efficacy of at least three different interventions (plus a control group), and to collect rich data on outcomes and experiences that can be broken down by a range of characteristics of interest.
  + Contractors who are invited to tender for this work will be asked to suggest possible interventions to be tested via an RCT. However, we also anticipate that the first stage of this work will be a review of relevant literature and data to finalise a sample design and identify the most appropriate interventions to test.

**Strand 2: An online survey of the wider SEN population, in order to further explore patterns of non-response and to provide a larger sample from which to gather policy-relevant evidence.**

This survey would be rolled out to the wider SEN population (those with EHC plans and those receiving SEN Support), including both hard-to-reach and non-hard-to-reach participants. It would have three key aims:

* + To provide an increased sample for evidence on CYP’s outcomes and experiences of education
  + To allow us to conduct non-response analysis and to see to what extent an online mode may be a feasible way of engaging this population

To test questions and question topics ahead of a potential future longitudinal study with this population

Like the RCT, the online survey should be administered at two separate time points in order to test retention for this mode as far as possible.

## Timing

The timeline below is indicative and reflects our preferred approach of conducting all fieldwork for the Discovery Phase within 2019. However, we recognise that this schedule is ambitious given the scope of the project and will consider proposals which set out a robust alternative.

Suggested timeline:

* Issue request for EOIs – 17th December 2018
* Deadline for receipt of EOIs – 10 am, 14th January 2019
* Invitations to tender issued – w/c 14th January 2019
* Deadline for ITT submission – 10am, 8th February 2019
* Contract awarded – w/c 18th February 2019
* Wave 1 fieldwork rolled out – May – July 2019
* Wave 2 fieldwork rolled out – September – December 2019
* Final report – March 2020

## Assessment criteria

Expressions of interest will be assessed against the following criteria:

* Capacity to complete work to an appropriate timescale in line with the details above (25%)
* Methodological expertise and experience with similar projects, including longitudinal and online survey design/administration, RCTs and qualitative research (25%)
* Experience of conducting research with the SEN population (CYP with SEN and their parents/carers) and an understanding of potential issues related to this (25%)
* Capacity to develop an appropriate methodology that offers value for money (25%)

| **Closing date for EOIs: 10am, 14th January 2019**  **Send your EOI form to: rebecca.story@education.gov.uk** |
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## How to submit an expressions of interest

You must submit an expression of interest (EOI) in order to be considered to be invited to tender. To do so, please complete the NEW EOI Form which can be found under attachments. A submission of an EOI does not guarantee an invitation to tender and the Department does not routinely advise organisations that they have not been successful in being invited to tender. Feedback is however available on request.

All contracts are let on the basis of the [Department’s Terms and Conditions](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/eoi-guide). You are encouraged to check these before submitting your expression of interest, as these form part of your contractual obligations.

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1. https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/special-educational-needs-in-england-january-2018 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Source: National curriculum assessments: key stage 2, 2017 (revised) <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/national-curriculum-assessments-key-stage-2-2017-revised> Revised GCSE and equivalent results in England: 2016 to 2017https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/revised-gcse-and-equivalent-results-in-england-2016-to-2017 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Source: Permanent and fixed-period exclusions in England: 2015 to 2016 https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/permanent-and-fixed-period-exclusions-in-england-2015-to-2016 [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Source: Destinations of KS4 and KS5 pupils: 2016https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/destinations-of-ks4-and-ks5-pupils-2016 [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Source: <https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/730977/FSM_and_SEND_outcomes-statistics.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-5)