

# Expression of interest

# Title: SEN Futures value for money feasibility study

**Project reference: EOR/SBU/2018/67**

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

## Summary

Expressions of interest are sought to conduct a feasibility study to inform a potential future value for money study of SEN provision for pupils with Education, Health and Care (EHC) plans in England. The feasibility study will cover an investigation of the cost data available from local authorities (LAs) and educational settings, a review of relevant outcomes information and an outline of how value for money could be assessed. We envisage this including an evidence review as well as qualitative engagement with educational settings and LAs, resulting in a report that summarises the cost and outcomes information required to determine the value for money of SEN provision in England and the extent to which it is possible to obtain this. The feasibility study will aim to inform the Department’s decision of whether to commission a larger scale value for money study of SEN provision in England in the future, and will inform the design of such a study if commissioned. This work will contribute to the Department’s aim of improving the outcomes of SEN pupils.

## 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.

This lack of evidence is directly linked to a further evidence gap around the value for money of provision for pupils with SEN. The costs of provision for those with SEN can vary greatly, and yet we do not currently have robust evidence to help us assess whether or how spend is related to particular outcomes, or whether certain types of provision are better than others in supporting pupils with SEN.

Addressing the above evidence gaps is crucial in the context of the Department’s aim to improve outcomes for disadvantaged pupils and reduce the gap for those left behind.

## Research aims

This research will inform a potential future large scale study of the value for money of provision for pupils with EHC plans in primary, secondary and post-16 settings in England. If commissioned, we envisage the full value for money study comparing pre-16 settings (mainstream with SEN unit, mainstream without SEN unit, independent, state-funded special and non-maintained special) and post-16 settings (mainstream school, special school, specialist college, further education college and sixth form college) separately. The study would be subject to a separate procurement exercise to the feasibility study, under fair and open competiton, and will aim to:

1. Provide information on, for a given type of special educational need, the cost difference between a mainstream placement and placements in other types of SEN setting for pupils with EHC plans.
2. Determine the extent to which the outcomes of pupils with EHC plans depend on type of setting attended, once type of need, demographic and other relevant factors have been controlled for.
3. Combine the above to assess the value for money of different types of SEN provision.

However, there are a number of unknowns and potential issues that the Department would like a feasibility study to explore before any potential future value for money study is commissioned. The research questions for the feasibility study, categorised by the element of the value for money study that they will inform, are outlined below:

1. **Costs**

* What information is available from LAs and settings regarding the per-pupil cost of different types of SEN provision? Can this be broken down by type of need?
* What methodological approach to the collection of cost data would be most appropriate?
* What are the limitations of this information and how is the quality of it likely to vary across setting types and LAs?
* Which individuals within LAs, schools and post-16 settings are best placed to provide this cost information?
* To what extent does the funding allocated to pupils by LAs differ from the actual amount spent on them by settings?

1. **Outcomes**

* What outcome measures should be considered in a value for money assessment of EHC plan pupils? Are some conventional outcomes (eg. attainment) less relevant to this cohort than other pupils? What outcomes may be more relevant (e.g. independent living, wellbeing, self-esteem?
* What information is available on outcomes that could infom a value for money assessment of SEN settings for EHC plan pupils? What are the limitations of this information?
* Which of the identified outcomes will it be possible to monetise? How can relevant but non-monetisable outcomes be incorporated into a vaue for money assessment?
* When determining the relative effect of different setting types on pupil outcomes, how best can additional relevant factors be controlled for (eg. demographic factors, level of need etc.)?

1. **Value for money assessment**

* Given the available information on costs and outcomes, and consistent with Green Book[[6]](#footnote-6) principles, what are the potential ways of comparing the two to assess the value for money of different SEN setting types?
* Can the same approach be applied to both school-age and post-16 settings, considering we would like to assess them separately?

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

## Methodology

We envisage a methodology comprising an evidence review and qualitative research with LAs and settings.

**LAs: case studies, online survey and telephone interviews**

Half-day case study visits with a suggested sample of 8 LAs will provide an initial indication of the cost information that LAs hold. The findings from these will be used to inform the survey questions in the following stage and, to this end, the contractor will need to ensure that a representative sample is contacted.

An online survey of LAs, informed by the telephone interviews, will gather information on what cost information that LAs hold on a national scale. It will be the responsibility of the contracter to sufficiently prepare LAs for completing the survey in order to maximise response rates and to ensure a standard approach to interpreting survey questions.

Telephone interviews with LAs will address any issues highlighted by the survey. The number required will largely depend on the survey responses, however we envisage approximately 15 interviews being conducted.

**Settings: telephone interviews and online survey**

Similar to LAs, telephone interviews with settings will provide an initial indication of the information that they hold. The suggested sample for this stage is 30 settings, and will need to be representative across the different types of provision on offer to SEN pupils.

An online survey of settings will capture the extent to which conclusions drawn from the interviews can be generalised more widely. Unlike with LAs, it will not be possible to survey all providers in England. Instead, we propose the survey is sent to only the providers in the LAs participating in the case-study fieldwork visits.

**Evidence review**

This stage of the reseach will review the current evidence, literature and available data sources (eg. LEO) relating to outcomes of SEN pupils, as well as the potential sources of cost information. Regarding the research questions, this will largely inform the outcomes analysis that will be undertaken as part of the value for money study: determining the outcomes that should be considered for this cohort of pupils, the extent to which the effect of these on society can be monetised and how the relative effect of setting type on outcomes can be estimated robustly. Where the Department’s Longitudinal Educational Outcomes (LEO) dataset is a relevant source information but not publically available, this stage of the research will also involve interviews with DfE colleagues to understand how this, in combination with other datasets, can best be utilised.

## Timing

This timetable is indicative and is line with our preferred approach to this work as described above.

* 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 2018
* Deadline for ITT submission – 10am, 8th February 2019
* Contract awarded – w/c 11th February 2019
* Half-day case studies with LAs – February/March 2019
* Online survey of LAs – March/April 2019
* Telephone interviews with providers – March/April 2019
* Online survey of providers – April/May 2019
* Telephone interviews with LAs – April/May 2019
* Evidence review – May/June 2019
* Final report – June 2019

## Assessment criteria

Expressions of interest will be assessed against the following criteria:

* Capacity to complete work to timescale (33%)
* Experience with similar projects and methodological expertise, including online survey design/administration, qualitative research and value for money studies (33%)
* Understanding of the requirements of the work, including a good understanding of the different types of SEN provision (33%)

| **Closing date for EOIs: 10am, 14th January 2019**  **Send your EOI form to: thomas.warren@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)
6. <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/685903/The_Green_Book.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-6)