

# Expression of interest

# Title: Process Evaluation of the Extended and More Flexible Government Traineeships Programme 2020/21

**Project reference: DFERPPU 20-21/027**

**Deadline for expressions of interest: 5pm Friday 22nd January 2021**

## Summary

Expressions of interest are sought to design and deliver qualitative research with end users and key stakeholders involved in the delivery of the Government Traineeships programme.

The primary aim of the research is to contribute to the process evaluation of the recent expansion of the Traineeships programme, which includes several flexibilities that were introduced as part of the Government’s ‘[Plan For Jobs’](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/a-plan-for-jobs-documents/a-plan-for-jobs-2020), in response to Covid-19.

We anticipate data collection from a range of stakeholders including employers, providers and trainees to ensure that a good mix of perspectives and experiences are explored.

Bidding organisations should note that we would like this study to generate some usable findings for the week commencing 5th July 2021, although final reporting can go beyond that deadline.

## Background

[Traineeship](https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/traineeships--2)s are a fully funded education and skills development programme for young people aged 16-24 (or 25 with an Education, Health and Care Plan, EHCP), which includes a work placement element, as well as providing support with English, maths and digital skills. An impact evaluation (2015)[[1]](#footnote-2) was conducted with a cohort of trainees when the programme launched in 2013/14 and found positive results, with 75% of trainees entering any positive destination within a year of starting their Traineeship, including 33% of trainees starting an apprenticeship within that time, compared with only 7% of the matched comparison group.

Given the detrimental impact of Covid-19 on the UK labour market, many young people are likely to experience challenges finding a job or an apprenticeship and are at risk of becoming NEET. The Government’s response, ‘A Plan for Jobs’ was announced in July 2020, comprising a package of support to ensure that young and unemployed people affected by the pandemic have the skills and training to go on to high quality, secure and fulfilling employment.  The DfE measures within the Plan for Jobs are known as the ‘Skills Recovery Package’ and includes £111million investment, to triple the total number of Traineeship starts for the 2020/21 academic year; providing an additional 30,000 places in 2020/21, to ensure that more young people have access to high-quality training. 16-18 age group.

The ‘Plan for Jobs’ launched several changes to strengthen the existing Traineeships programme on 1st September 2020, with the aim of widening access to a) improve positive outcomes and b) ensure the programme is deliverable and focused on priorities, including increased capacity that is responsive to employer demand in the post-Covid labour market.  The changes include:

* Procuring new providers to deliver Traineeships to ensure supply meets regional demand
* Expanded eligibility to include young people with Level 3 qualifications (rather than Level 2 previously)
* Employer incentives of £1000 per learner where an employer delivers work placements between 1st September 2020 and 31st July 2021.  The incentive applies for up to 10 learners per region per employer, to a maximum of 90 for an organisation overall (there are 9 regions).
* Extended the maximum duration of the programme from 6 months to 12 months to give trainees further from the labour market more time to transition into work (although most will still last for less than 6 months).  The minimum duration remains at 6 weeks and the Traineeship should be as short as possible.
* Reduced work placement hours from 100 to 70 hours
* Focus on digital skills provision alongside English and Maths
* Focus on sectors that link to Apprenticeships

Early findings from this study are needed to feed into a cross-Government assessment of the impact of the DfE Skills Recovery Package at the end of the 2020/21 academic year.

## Evaluation aims

The aim of the project is to gather insights from key stakeholders about the expansion of Traineeships and how the recent changes to the programme are working, with particular focus on:

* How the changes have been received and implemented
* Successes, challenges and lessons learnt from participating in / delivering the expanded, more flexible programme
* Short/medium term outcomes for trainees

Further detail about the specific research questions of interest for each group will be shared with shortlisted organisations in the Invitation to Tender.

This research forms part of a wider evaluation programme, which also includes monitoring of administrative data by DfE analysts to assess whether the number and characteristics of Traineeship starts has changed compared to previous years.  This commissioned element, which comprises primary research with key stakeholders is intended to complement the data monitoring by gathering valuable insights about the experiences of a sample of end users and key stakeholders, which will help the Department to understand how the policy changes been implemented in the short-term and what has worked well/less well, and what could be improved for future cohorts.

## Methodology

A qualitative approach is best suited to our research questions of interest; using depth interviews and possibly focus groups (45-60 minutes) to generate rich insights from key stakeholders.  Given current Government guidelines to work from home, we propose a series of telephone / videocall interviews with purposively selected samples from each of the stakeholder groups identified:

* **Traineeship Providers,** to include a mix of new and existing providers of Traineeships, and a mix of provider types
* **Employers** that have provided Traineeship work placements since 1st September 2020 (some of these employers will have also delivered work placements prior to September, which will provide an opportunity to explore the changes from a ‘before and after’ perspective)
* **Trainees**who began a Traineeship since 1st September 2020. The sample should include trainees with additional learning needs, trainees with existing Level 3 qualilfications and trainees from BAME backgrounds

We welcome alternative suggestions from potential bidders about how to approach the fieldwork to meet our objectives, providing that the approach ensures coverage across the three main stakeholder groups of interest.

## Timing

**The deadline for EOIs is 5pm on 22nd January 2021**

Invitation to Tender (ITT) will be issued on 29th January 2021

Deadline for ITTs is 5pm on 19th February 2021

Contractor interviews (if needed) will be held remotely during w/c 22nd February 2021

Inception meeting to be held remotely during w/c 1st March 2021

Early insights are required in w/c 5th July 2021

## Assessment criteria

Expressions of interests submitted must be no more than 1,000 words. Anything longer will be disregarded.

Expressions of interest will be assessed against the following criteria, which are equally weighted at this stage:

1. Relevant methodological knowledge, understanding and experience.
2. Clear knowledge and understanding of the aims of the project and how these aims respond to the current policy context.
3. Project management skills and ability to deliver to timescales.

| **Closing date for EOIs: 5pm on 22nd January 2021**  **Send your EOI form to:** [**Hannah.rhodes@education.gov.uk**](mailto:Hannah.rhodes@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’ form which can be found under attachments in the ContractsFinder listing. 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 & Conditions, a copy is available attached to the ContractsFinder listing. 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://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/847346/Traineeships_Impact_Evaluation.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)