

# Expression of interest

# Title: National Careers Service Evaluation

**Project reference: Ref No: 20-21/034**

**Deadline for expressions of interest: 23:59 on Friday 5th February 2021**

**This EOI is subject to Ministerial Approval**

## Summary

Expressions of interest are sought to evaluate and calculate the Value for Money of the National Careers Service which will inform the National Careers Service re-procurement process. Specifically:

* We want to evaluation the benefits and costs of targeting the current priority groups and whether they are still relevant in the current economic climate;
* Evaluate the benefits and costs of the current funding and incentive mechanisms;
* And evaluate the benefits and costs of the three delivery methods with respect to their costs of delivery: face-to-face, telephone and online.

## Background

The National Careers Service is available to anyone in England over the age of 13 providing impartial information, advice and guidance about learning, work, skills and the labour market, in order to support them:

* Into sustainable employment, thereby reducing welfare costs as soon as possible; and
* To upskill/progress into ‘better’ jobs thereby supporting productivity gains.

The Service comprises:

* A personalised guidance service for adults over 18;
* A telephone help line; and
* A website digital offer.

The service is provided by a network of 900 professionally qualified careers advisers that support individuals to reskill and rethink their future careers. The service is currently being mostly provided virtually, rather than face-to-face but typically, careers advisers would be located in a variety of settings including Jobcentres (90%), libraries, housing associations, voluntary sector, the high street and employer premises.

The Service is focussed on supporting those who would most benefit from intensive careers advice and guidance.

The National Careers Service operates an outcome-based funding model that incentivises prime contractors to focus strongly on achieving job and/or learning outcomes for customers, depending on identified customer need. Targeting of resources to those customers with the greatest need is achieved by providing significantly greater financial incentives for outcomes achieved with and for priority group customers compared to non-priority group customers. Hence, most of the prime contractors claim approximately 95% of their outcome-based funding for outcomes achieved for priority group customers, with the remainder claimed for non-priority customers.

The current priority groups are:

* adults aged 50 and over and who are unemployed, or at demonstrable risk of unemployment,
* low skilled adults without a qualification at level 2 or above,
* people with learning difficulties and disabilities,
* adults who have been unemployed over 12 months,
* 18-24 year olds not in education, employment or training (NEET),
* Single parents with at least one dependent child living in the same household.

## Evaluation aims and research questions

The aim of the project is to gain a robust, up-to-date understanding of the Value for Money of the National Careers Service. This work will inform the re-procurement process of the National Careers Service by providing evidence to inform future decisions on priority groups, funding incentives and delivery mechanisms.

Research questions:

* What is the value for money of the National Careers Service?
  + What are the benefits and costs of targeting the current priority groups? And the proposed alternative groups?
  + What are the benefits and costs of the current funding and incentive mechanisms?
  + What are the benefits and costs of the three delivery methods (face-to-face, telephone, and online)?

Specifically, we want to evaluate the priority groups the Service is currently targeting and whether they are still relevant in the current economic climate;

* Including considering whether alternative groups should be prioritised
* It will be important to establish the degree of overlap between the current priority groups and any proposed priority groups.

Assess the current funding and incentive mechanisms;

* We want to understand whether the current funding mechanisms are providing the right financial incentives to contractors and are, ultimately, leading to the best outcomes for those using the service or if there are alternatives that might be more successful in driving policy aims

And evaluate the return of the three delivery methods with respect to their costs of delivery: face-to-face, telephone, and online.

## Methodology

### Proposed methodology

We propose the research works in two parts:

**Part (i):** to add most value and gain a robust understanding of the value for money of the National Careers Service, the focus should be on econometric methodology based on London Economics (2017) methodology, explained in detail below, but using up-to-date data, providing more granularity by different priority groups and looking to take on board London Economics’s suggestions for improvements to the methodology.

* London economics undertook an econometric analysis of the National Careers Service which was published in 20171[[1]](#footnote-1). This analysis uses several data sources including the National Careers Service dataset, Individualised Learner Record (ILR), Department for Work and Pensions database and HMRC P14 and P45 forms. This method uses Propensity Score Matching to compare the outcomes of those who used the National Careers Service with a counterfactual group, with similar characteristics, who have not used the National Careers Service to evaluate the impact on progress to employment. It also considered education and training outcomes both prior to and after the intervention.

This research uses data from 2013/14 so is out-of-date. It is also not focused on the current priority groups so does not provide sufficient granularity needed to inform the re-procurement.

We recommend this research uses the London Economics methodology to form the basis of the econometric analysis and also looks to consider whether we can implement their suggestions for improved methodology i.e. controlling for the unobserved characteristics between the control and treatment group.

**Part (ii):** use findings from part (i) alongside qualitative results already collected within Ipsos Mori surveys to form a well-rounded picture of the Value for Money of the National Careers Service

* Evidence on how consumers value the service is already collected through surveys run by Ipsos Mori[[2]](#footnote-2). The findings are a result of two surveys conducted: the satisfaction survey and the progression survey. The surveys run annually and the first customer satisfaction and progression report was published by Ipsos Mori in 2012, the latest results are to be published shortly. Within the report, findings are also broken down by priority group and delivery method. The report also looks at the customer profile of National Careers Service users. One limitation of this survey is that the responses are dominated by those who receive personal guidance (I.e. telephone or in-person guidance), compared to those who use the online service.

However, even with this limitation, we do not believe this research requires any further survey or qualitative research as we can draw on, and use, the insights from the Ipsos Mori survey, as part of the research.

#### Analysis and reporting

We expect the contractor to produce a final report (alongside methodology) after competition of both parts of the project, and share interim findings after part (i). We would also expect the contractor to have informal catch-ups throughout the project.

#### Data protection

As this project involves the sharing of DfE-held personal data, any potential bidder who wishes to submit a bid for this work will require extra checks. All individuals at the bidding organisation who require access to the sample data in any form will be required to have a current Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) certificate issued no more than two years ago, and to sign an individual declaration form.

## Timing

* Deadline for EOIs IS 23:59 5th February 2021
* Invitations to Tender (ITT) will be issued to short-listed organisations approx. W/C 15th February 2021
* Deadline for tenders will be approx. 5th March 2021

## Assessment criteria

* Evidence of suppliers' understanding of the policy area;
* Evidence of suppliers' technical/professional ability to undertake the work;
* Evidence of relevant research experience. This covers an assessment of the suppliers’ expertise and experience in econometric analysis, especially data matching, and propensity score matching.

**Expressions of interests submitted must be no more than 1000 words. Anything longer will be disregarded.**

| **Closing date for EOIs: 23:59 on 5th February 2021**  **Send your EOI form to:** [**laura.hurst@education.gov.uk**](mailto:laura.hurst@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. London Economics report: <https://londoneconomics.co.uk/blog/publication/2489/#:~:text=London%20Economics%20were%20commissioned%20by%20the%20Department%20for,and%20benefit%20dependency%29%20following%20receipt%20of%20NCS%20support>. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. 2018 Ipsos Mori survey: <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/809683/FINAL_NCS_Customer_Sat_and_Prog_Annual_Report_-Year_7_report_v2.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)