

# Expression of interest

# Title:Delivery evaluation of the National Assessment and Accreditation System (NAAS) for social workers - Alpha and Beta phases

**Project reference: 2017/043**

**Deadline for expressions of interest: 12pm (Noon) Monday 9th October**

## Summary

Expressions of interest are sought for a two year, real time, formative study to evaluate the delivery of the National Assessment and Accreditation System (NAAS) for social workers – Alpha and Beta phases.

## Background

As part of our wider reforms of children’s social care, the Department for Education has committed to roll out a new National Assessment and Accreditation System (NAAS) for social workers which will provide a consistent way of ensuring that child and family social workers, supervisors and leaders have the knowledge and skills for effective practice.

Our aim is to ensure that all vulnerable children – wherever they are across the country – receive the expert, high quality support and protection they need. The Chief Social Worker drafted [Knowledge and Skills Statements for approved child and family practitioners](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/524743/Knowledge_and_skills_statement_for_approved_child_and_family_practitioners.pdf), [practice leaders and practice supervisors](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/478111/Knowledge_and_skills_statements_for_practice_leaders_and_practice_supervisors.pdf) setting out what child and family social workers should know and be able to do. After public consultation, these statements were published in 2015 and 2016.

Following this, the Department developed a rigorous system based on the statements to assess social workers in order to gain accreditation as child and family practitioners and practice supervisors. This assessment process was tested with 954 social workers between December 2015 and February 2016 through the ['Proof of Concept Phase'](https://consult.education.gov.uk/social-work-reform-unit/naas-consultation/supporting_documents/PoC_report_WEB.pdf).

The Department held a public [consultation](https://consult.education.gov.uk/social-work-reform-unit/naas-consultation/supporting_documents/NAAS_consultation_WEB_FINAL_20170114.pdf) on the future of the National Assessment and Accreditation System (NAAS), which closed in March 2017. It covered the key questions about the future implementation of the system, including whether accreditation should be made compulsory and, if so, for what roles or functions, and the consequences of not achieving accreditation.

The consultation responses drew in a broad range of views across the sector on how we should implement NAAS. The responses also identified a number of key questions that the Department needs to be able to answer in order to roll out NAAS effectively. The Department has revisited roll out plans in light of the consultation, and has decided to operate an Alpha- and Beta-phased approach, supported by in-depth analysis and evaluation, before progressing with a full national rollout.

The Alpha phase (involving 5 or 6 LAs) is expected to run for eight months from July 2018 to March 2019 and the Beta phase (involving 12 or 13 LAs) is expected to run for seven months following completion of the Alpha phase - ending in January 2020. By the end of Alpha we expect to know what systems LAs need to put in place, what support LAs need to do this and if there are workforce implications as a result of social workers being accredited that we need to be aware of. The Alpha phase informs Beta. By the end of Beta we will have trialled a prototype that addresses the needs raised by the Alpha phase for national rollout.

Using an agile, iterative way of working, the evaluator will work closely with the delivery partner and the Department, allowing us to make phased adjustments as the final assessment system develops. The research recommendations will need to be communicated as rapid, actionable change plans for the delivery partner to act on. The evaluator will also need to be able to assess the impact of any service model changes quickly and easily.

## Evaluation aims

The aim of the project is to work alongside the delivery partner and the Department to:

1. Carry out a formative process evaluation to assess the service design and operational delivery of the assessment and the initial impact during the Alpha/ Beta phases on key stakeholders – including an analysis of fixed and marginal costs of delivering the assessment
2. Provide real time (weekly/monthly) recommendations on the delivery model to allow the Department to continuously improve the service design and operational delivery on an iterative basis both within the Alpha and Beta phases and for the national roll-out
3. Identify data that can be used over the longer term to examine the impact of NAAS on individual social workers, local authority employers, the wider child and family social worker workforce and outcomes for children and families.

## Methodology

We propose a mixed methods approach of qualitative and quantitative data collection. This will be carried out alongside, and where required embedded within, the service to assess delivery of the system. The DfE is setting up a Leeds Office Hub for the Alpha group rollout which the winning contractor will have access to. The evaluator will provide frequent feedback to the Department and delivery partner throughout Alpha and Beta phases to ensure that timely amendments can be made both during these phases and prior to national roll-out. We will invite views from tenderers on the best ways to collect the data, including the possibility of including a counterfactual (comparison group), at the invitation to tender stage.

## Alpha phase (July 2018- March 2019):

This will involve research in each of the 5 or 6 local authorities in Alpha and is likely to include: staff surveys with social workers; qualitative research with the delivery partner, local authority managers and supervisors, social workers who have been selected to take the assessment and those who have not; and collection of cost data and management information.

## Beta phase (April 2019 - Jan 2020):

The number of authorities to be involved in the evaluation of Beta phase will depend upon the success of Alpha. If little change needs to be made for the Beta phase, then it may be enough to study a sample of the 12 or 13 Beta authorities, ensuring a good spread of types. If a large number of changes are made to the delivery process following Alpha, then it may be necessary to include more of the Beta authorities. Data collection methods will be similar to those used in Alpha.

## Longitudinal data identification and collection:

This will involve a scoping review to identify workforce and managementdata collected by local authorities, the Department and others that can be used to monitor the impact of NAAS over time.

## Timing

* Deadline for EOIs – 12pm Monday 9th October
* Invitation to Tender issued – Wednesday 18th October
* Deadline for Invitations for Tender – Monday 13th November

The work is expected to start in January 2018 and run until March 2020.

## Assessment criteria

Expressions of interest will be assessed against the following criteria:

* Demonstrating an understanding of the Department’s requirements
* Knowledge and/or experience of research and evaluation in the field of child and family social work (or closely allied professions), particularly in relation to workforce training and development/ assessment of skills
* Experience of using quantitative and qualitative methodologies to evaluate the delivery and impact of large scale programmes, including value for money and cost/ benefit analysis
* Experience of collaborative working in a fast-paced, agile and iterative way with delivery partners and research commissioners, to provide rapid actionable recommendations that deliver service improvements
* Experience of working on high profile Government research projects/ evaluations, delivering to tight deadlines and writing good quality reports with clear conclusions and targeted to their audience.

Each of these criteria has equal weighting.

The Department welcomes collaborations between organisations in order to meet these criteria.

Expressions of interest submitted must be no more than 1,000 words – anything longer will be disregarded.

| **Closing date for EOIs: 12 pm (Noon) Monday 9th October****Send your EOI form to: jessica.dunn@education.gov.uk** |
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## How to submit an expression 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 Expression of Interest Research template found on the Department’s research website. 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.

In order to express an interest you must be registered with us and you will need your ID number. If you need to register then please do so using the online supplier registration form. If you have already registered and have forgotten your ID number, please send an email to Enquiries.RBU@education.gov.uk

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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