



Department  
of Health &  
Social Care

Request for Information

**Reference:**

**Request for Information: DHSC: ASC: Better  
Care Fund Support Programme External  
Evaluation**

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Date: August 2022

## 1. INTRODUCTION

This information note and accompanying attachments are being made publicly available to any organisations which are interested in the Better Care Fund External Evaluation.

This exercise is intended to provide potential bidders with the opportunity to view and comment on a Descriptive Document for the Better Care Fund External Evaluation requirement, if they wish to do so. This builds on a commitment to engage with the market, by sharing information and seeking input from the market to enable us to develop the final Invitation to Tender (ITT) in a fair and transparent manner. This exercise is to ensure that the final Invitation to Tender provides all tenderers with a clear understanding of the Authority's requirement and helps reduce the number of questions that may be raised in the Tender Period.

**This request for information is being issued in conjunction with the Better Care Fund draft specification and Key Performance Indicator Annex.**

## 2. NEXT STEPS

The Department of Health and Social Care (The Authority) will make the final decision on the content of the Invitation to Tender documentation having considered feedback.

The ITT is estimated to be released to the market as soon as practical after receipt of potential bidder(s) comments though the procurement timetable has not been finalised at this stage.

**This market engagement does not commit the Authority to contract for any supply or service whatsoever or to releasing an ITT.**

Further, the Authority is not at this time seeking proposals and will not accept unsolicited proposals. The Authority will not pay for any information or administrative costs incurred in response to this market consultation; all costs associated with responding to this RFI will be solely at the interested party's expense, by responding, the responder accepts these terms. Not responding to this market consultation does not preclude participation in any future ITT, if any is issued.

The information provided in the document is subject to change and is not binding on the Authority. The Authority has not made a commitment to procure. This should not be construed as such a commitment or as authorisation, to incur cost for which reimbursement would be required or sought.

Potential future ITT will include the final specification, pricing schedule, evaluation criteria and terms and conditions.



### 3. GUIDANCE FOR COMPLETION

This questionnaire forms part of the market engagement activity to support the procurement of Better Care Fund External Evaluation.

The purpose of this questionnaire is to explore the market reaction to the proposed facility. We hope to identify critical success factors and potential barriers in order to inform the formal procurement process. To maximise the success of this subsequent procurement process we request that suppliers are open and honest in their responses and provide as much detail as possible.

Prior to completing this questionnaire, suppliers are requested to read the accompanying Market Consultation Document which sets out the background and the proposed service requirements

Participation in this Market Consultation is voluntary. It is not required to provide an answer to every question if particular questions are not relevant.

The Authority wishes to encourage participation at this stage in order to ensure a wide number of responses. The market engagement processes described above do not form part of the formal procurement process. When the formal procurement process commences any supplier may join the competition and all supplier bids will be evaluated on the same basis.

The completed questionnaire should be returned via the Atamis portal no later than **15:00 05/10/2022**

The Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA) applies to the Authority. You should be aware of the Authority's obligations and responsibilities under the FOIA to disclose, on written request, recorded information held. Information provided by you in connection with this procurement exercise, or with any Contract that may be awarded as a result of this exercise, may therefore have to be disclosed in response to such a request, unless the Authority decides that one of the statutory exemptions under the FOIA applies. The Authority may also include certain information in the publication scheme which it maintains under the FOIA.

In certain circumstances, and in accordance with the Code of Practice issued under section 45 of the FOIA or the Environmental Information Regulations 2004, the Authority may consider it appropriate to ask you for your views as to the release of any information before a decision on how to respond to a request is made. In dealing with requests for information under the FOIA, the Department must comply with a strict timetable and the Authority would, therefore, expect a timely response to any consultation within two working days.

You may provide information which is confidential in nature and which you may wish to be held in confidence. You must give a clear indication which type of material is to be considered confidential and why it is considered to be so, along with the time period for which it will remain confidential in nature. The use of blanket protective markings such as "commercial in confidence" will no longer be appropriate. In addition, marking any material as confidential or equivalent should not be taken to mean that the Authority accepts any duty of confidentiality by virtue of such marking. Please note that even where you have indicated that information is confidential the Authority may be required to disclose it under the FOIA if a request is received.

The Authority cannot accept that trivial information or information which by its very nature cannot be regarded as confidential should be subject to any obligation of confidence.

In certain circumstances where information has not been provided in confidence, the Authority may still wish to consult with you about the application of any other exemption such as that relating to disclosure that will prejudice the commercial interests of any party.

The decision as to which information will be disclosed is reserved to the Authority notwithstanding any consultation with you.

Whilst the Authority expects to proceed to procurement in due course, there is no obligation to do so as a consequence of this early market engagement activity.

The publication of any documents at this stage is intended to provide potential bidders with the opportunity to view and comment on a draft specification for the requirement. The Authority does not intend to be bound by any information at this stage. The Authority makes no commitment to accept recommendations or suggestions. If published, the Invitation to Tender will contain the final requirements in relation to this service. All previous versions, including any documents published at this stage should be disregarded.

## **2.0 Background to the Requirement**

**Better Care Fund Support Programme** Please note, this document should be read alongside the draft specification for the external evaluation of the BCF support programme.

The Better Care Fund externally commissioned support programme supports Local Systems to deliver their BCF plans by providing expert support to areas integrating health, social care, and wider services, to enable more people to live well and independently at home. As well as being important to the delivery of the wider BCF programme, this also supports good practice approaches to hospital discharge and recovery services, while helping to release hospital bed capacity.

As illustrated through the Integration White Paper and the White Paper on adult social care reforms, the Government is committed to the integration of health and social care in England. DHSC, together with DLUHC, LGA and NHSEI, have a joint responsibility for the BCF, the national policy for integration since 2015-/16 and an important element of this is the externally commissioned BCF support programme. The BCF team is a joint team, formed by the four organisations, which oversees the implementation and delivery of local area BCF plans.

The Authority have a requirement for a BCF support offer, given the complexity of integration, many Local Systems are unlikely to have the capability and capacity required to deliver consistently and at pace against all of the key elements associated with enabling good integration and therefore not all (including better performing systems) will be consistently delivering improvements in person centred integrated services. Furthermore, many Local Systems will not be receiving support in many aspects of integration (including BCF plan delivery) which presents a valuable opportunity to expand, differentiate and re-promote the support offer in a way that makes a compelling offer. Systems will be able to benefit from the availability of a broad range of support, both technical (for example modelling) and non-technical (for example facilitation support to help navigate difficult conversations and improve collaboration to bring about more joined up working). This is key to the success of the programme, since taking up the support offer is not mandatory for Local Systems, as the programme is demand-led. Therefore, the offer of support must be highly relevant and made as attractive as possible to ensure systems in every region take up the offer of support.

Key to the success of the BCF external support programme and evidencing its impact is separately commissioning an independent, external evaluation to run alongside delivery of support.

### **Main Aims of the External Evaluation**

The critical output from the independent evaluation is to build an evidence base to underpin the BCF external support programme and identify which aspects are

working well and where improvement is needed so that the Department of Health and Social Care ('the Authority') can take appropriate action.

At a high level, the main aims of the evaluation are to support the BCF team and partner organisations to:

- Examine the effectiveness of the support programme's delivery (identifying which parts of the support programme work and which ones do not) to gain a better understanding of the impact it has
- Evaluate how the core support programme is working and wherever possible, to help the core provider to clearly demonstrate the impact of external support in terms of measurable (including quantitative where feasible) and more intangible, qualitative benefits. This could potentially include proxy measures to show quantitative benefits that may be linked to showing where value for money has been delivered.
- Bring about continuous improvement in the design and delivery of a range of support offered to local systems (including interventions that have the potential to reduce health and care inequalities)
- Understand how the Authority can inform potential policy developments linked to external support.
- Support and enable collaboration between partners across health, social care and housing.
- Capture and feedback evaluation findings at the end of every quarter and throughout the duration of the contract (with initial findings to be provided at the end of the first quarter of evaluation delivery).
- Share good practice across systems. This could include adding rigour and an improved evidence base to outputs of the support programme that have been proven to work by the evaluation. Outputs may include case studies, toolkits, and how to guides.
- Lead work with the Authority to identify robust data collection processes that the Authority will require the core provider(s) of support services to put in place to support and enable independent evaluation in an iterative way that helps to demonstrate the effectiveness and impact of support.

An important aspect of this evaluation is being able to mandate that the core provider(s) of support services have robust data collection processes in place to support and enable independent evaluation.

This project shall mobilise as soon as possible after commencement of the BCF external support programme, which is estimated to be delivered from mid-November 2022 for a contract period of just under two and a half years.

## **2.1 Planned Service provision**

The BCF team is seeking to commission a flexible, mixed method evaluation which uses different forms of quantitative and qualitative evaluation to examine the effectiveness of the support programme's delivery, identifying which parts of the



support programme work well and which aspects need improving or developing further, to gain a better understanding of its impact. The evaluation should consist of:

- A process evaluation using qualitative approaches to gather feedback from a range of local system stakeholders on an ongoing basis across health, social care and housing and incorporating a method of gathering service user feedback. This should investigate local system's experience of support and their satisfaction levels and perception of value added.
- An evaluation approach that includes both formative and summative evaluation activities.
- Using the formative evaluation as a way to build robust theories of change for the proposed interventions; and then using those as the basis for both setting planning milestones and capturing data.
- Developing clear insights into barriers, enablers and the way in which support delivery and local system uptake varies between regions and the estimated impact of this.

For a full summary of requirements please refer to the BCF External Support Programme – Independent External Evaluation Specification.

## **2.2 Examples of Potential Project Limitations and Risks**

- External evaluation delivered in parallel with the core programme of support
- However, there is a risk that the external evaluation may be unable to mobilise until potentially up to 3 months after the BCF support programme contract is awarded, caused by potential delays in procurement, which in the early stages of core support programme delivery, could reduce the ability to provide 'real time' evaluation and bring about continuous improvement of the support programme.

## **3.0 Requested Information**

Please provide responses to the following questions:

1. One of the ambitions for the independent external evaluation is to demonstrate value and overall return on investment for the BCF external support programme. However, one of the challenges that is anticipated is measuring 'Value for Money' in the 'real time' within a short to medium term timescale of the external evaluation. The evaluation will be delivered in parallel with the core programme of support and ideally commencing within 3 months from when the core programme is mobilised.

- In your, and your organisation's, experience of carrying out independent evaluations, have you been able to measure and or demonstrate value for money in programmes of this nature? Please provide further detail where appropriate.
  - If not, do you consider it feasible to use proxy measures (where necessary e.g. where more formal, robust measures are not feasible) to show where value for money has been delivered through the support programme or where there is at least initial evidence that value for money is being delivered, even if benefits delivery is relatively early stage?
  - If so, can you explain which proxy measures might be used, how they might be used, and what the estimated timelines would be for mobilisation?
2. We are seeking to commission a flexible mixed method evaluation which identifies which parts of the support programme work well and which aspects need improving. We have provided details of what the evaluation should consist of in the draft specification (pages 9 & 10):
- Do you have any feedback on this section of the specification?
  - Do you have any overall feedback on the draft specification including whether you think there are any significant gaps or anything that needs strengthening in order to more effectively meet the objectives we've set out?
3. Does the scope outlined in the draft specification appear to be realistic to deliver within the estimated budget, given the indicative contract value for the external evaluation is estimated £360,000.00 and can you outline any key delivery risks in regards to this budget?
4. The primary aim of this requirement is evaluate delivery of the BCF external support programme. In the draft specification we express a broader aim for the evaluator to also assess other parts of the BCF (beyond support). This aspect will require further discussion with the evaluation provider but will relate to a number of wider BCF programme areas and related activities / interventions that would also benefit from continuous improvement recommendations.
- Is this broader ambition feasible within the funding envelope of £360,000.00?
5. It is a project ambition to commission a targeted, proportionate evaluation which determines the effectiveness of the support programme using a blend of process and impact evaluation tools and techniques.

- Based on your experience of carrying out independent evaluations, do you anticipate any challenges in assessing the impact of the BCF support programme on local systems, considering the timescales for this requirement?
  - What are other key risks and challenges you foresee as part of this project?
6. Please see the annex to the draft specification containing draft key performance indicators (KPIs) for the evaluation.
- Do you believe these KPIs are realistic and achievable?
  - Do you have any other feedback on this annex?

**THANK YOU FOR TAKING THE TIME TO COMPLETE THIS QUESTIONNAIRE**

Name of authorised representative in block letters:

Position:

For and on behalf of:

Date:

**(This should be completed by the Supplier or a partner or an authorised representative in his / her own name and on behalf of the company / organisation completing this questionnaire)**