

# Expression of interest

# Title: Family Hubs Evaluation Innovation Fund

**Project reference: 20-21/013**

**Deadline for expressions of interest: 5pm, Wednesday 13th January 2021.**

## Summary

Expressions of Interest are sought from research organisations or consortiums working in partnership with family hub(s) on evaluation of the service effectiveness, outcomes and impacts, and value for money of family hubs. All expressions of interest must be a partnership between:

* **A research supplier/consortium** (can be a research agency or consultancy, Higher Education institute, think tank, or other research bodies); **and**
* **Family Hub(s)** (or consortium/group of these, and could be a local-authority run family hub, a group of local authorities with family hubs, voluntary and community sector organisations that deliver family hubs, health commissioners that fund or deliver family hubs, school-based family hubs, or other types of organisations that deliver or fund family hubs). The family hub service model to be evaluated must deliver services for families with children across a broader age range (e.g. 0-19) than just solely 0-5 year-olds.

For contractual purposes, the lead bidder and contractor should be research supplier(s) but they must work with named family hubs for their Expression of Interest proposal, to deliver the evaluation, and have a service-level agreement in place covering relative roles, responsibilities and contract costs within the evaluation.

Contracted suppliers and partner hubs are expected to work with the separately contracted National Centre for Family Hubs and Integrated Family Services on dissemination activities and to generate guidance and toolkits on evaluation for wider benefit. The national centre is being procured by the Department for Education in parallel timescales to the evaluation innovation fund and will champion family hubs and spread best practice/evidence on integrated family service models.

The supplier(s) for the National Centre and the supplier(s) for the Evaluation Innovation Fund will be procured and contract managed separately. Contract clauses will specify how the individually contracted organisations will work with each other at specific times during the project (e.g. on publication and dissemination of the research and evaluation outputs).

There is an upper cap of **£400,000 per evaluation contract** within the Family Hubs Evaluation Innovation Fund. Project design and set up will commence in April 2021. We expect the projects and contracts to end by March 2023 at the latest.

## Background

The Government made a [manifesto commitment](https://assets-global.website-files.com/5da42e2cae7ebd3f8bde353c/5dda924905da587992a064ba_Conservative%202019%20Manifesto.pdf) in 2019 to “improve the Troubled Families programme and champion Family Hubs to serve vulnerable families with the intensive, integrated support they need to care for children – from the early years and throughout their lives”.

In Budget 2020, the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced £2.5 million for research and the development of best practice around the integration of services for families, including family hubs, and how best to support vulnerable children. This funding is being administered by the Department for Education to procure a National Centre for Family Hubs and Integrated Family Services and a Family Hubs Evaluation Innovation Fund.

Family hubs generally offer a range of early intervention services for families – similar to children’s centres but for a broader child age range (0-19 rather than 0-5) and some family hubs have been established in settings such as schools. This can include services under the umbrella of the Healthy Child Programme but also family support and early intervention and prevention services. While the rationale for effective early intervention for children and families is strong and compelling, there is no strong evidence as yet that the family hub model is superior to other service delivery models.

Family hub services will have a range of objectives, and will vary from area to area, but will broadly speaking provide early help and intervention for families with the aim of improving education, health and public service outcomes for children and adult members of the family. The idea behind the family hub model is to improve access for parents to support, and to improve the effectiveness and coherence of local services. Local authorities have wide discretion as to what and how services are provided locally, including whether to organise local services along the lines of a family hub model or in other ways.

Case studies of family hubs have been published by organisations such as the Family Hubs Network[[1]](#footnote-2) and the Local Government Association[[2]](#footnote-3). Policy papers on family hubs include a 2014 report by the Centre for Social Justice report[[3]](#footnote-4), the All Party Parliamentary Group on Children’s Centres 2016 report[[4]](#footnote-5), and a 2016 discussion paper by the Children’s Commissioner[[5]](#footnote-6).

In 2019, DfE commissioned the Early Intervention Foundation (EIF) to review the different models of early years integrated service provision, including family hubs. The published report[[6]](#footnote-7) provided insight into the different models that exist and some of the service improvement priorities for local and national stakeholders, which will inform the focus of the Department for Education’s Family Hubs research and development programme. The EIF made a number of recommendations on improving standards of evaluation and buiding evaluation capacity, including making evidence-based interventions the foundation of local approaches, alongside a consistent and robust approach to generating local evidence of intervention effectiveness. The EIF stated that articulating the local approach through a theory of change would allow local stakeholders to make explicit and considered choices about key service design issues. The EIF concluded that there is a logical case for more holistic and joined-up approaches to delivering area-based family services responding to concerns about a lack of service integration and artificial service boundaries. The EIF also concluded that there is variable use of valid and reliable measurement tools to understand effectiveness, and a lack of funding and confidence in evaluation generally

## Aims and objectives of the Family Hubs Evaluation Innovation Fund

The Family Hubs Evaluation Innovation Fund has five core aims and objectives:

* To support family hubs with evaluation capacity and resource via Government funding
* To improve the quality and rigour of the evidence-base on the efficacy of existing family hub delivery models
* To generate knowledge and learning for local authorities and other commissioners on the factors driving the effectiveness, outcomes and value for money of family hubs
* To create a step-change in the standards of evaluation of family hubs, by generating learning and toolkits for future evaluations and service planning
* To aid national policy-making on family hubs by building an evidence-base for any future Government policy.

## Evaluation methodology and requirements

The overall requirement of contractors will be to work in partnership with named family hubs to evaluate the service effectiveness, outcomes, impacts, and value for money of family hubs.

For contractual purposes, the lead bidder and contractor with the DfE should be research supplier(s) but they must work with their named family hubs on their Expression of Interest, Inivation to Tender (if successful at Expression of Interest Stage) and the contracted evaluation.

As a minimum, evaluations will need to involve mixed-methods evaluation of a logic model/theory-of-change for a family hub model or group of hubs, but with scope for other methodologies to be used to meet the aims and objectives of the fund. At the ITT stage, proposals will be scored on the appropriateness of evaluation methods for the scale and reach of hubs being evaluated, and on value for money.

Contracted suppliers and partner hubs are expected to work with the separately contracted National Centre for Family Hubs and Integrated Family Services on some of their dissemination activities and to generate guidance and toolkits on evaluation for wider benefit.

We envisage the minimum key work strands for the evaluation contractor to be:

* Development of a service level agreement between the contractor and the participating family hubs, setting out roles and responsibilities and budgets for different activity
* Logic model/theory-of-change development with participating hubs and development and publication of an evaluation protocol by end of September 2021
* Project governance and management for the evaluation, via ongoing liaison with DfE analysts, and bespoke arrangements for the evaluation such as a steering group with expert representation, an operational project steering group, and task and finish groups for specific evaluation tasks
* Participation in a national peer learning programme for the set of evaluations funded via the innovation fund, to share knowledge, learning, and discuss opportunities for joint approaches to dissemination and replication of measurement tools. We expect this to meet for half a day, three times per year (so up to six times during the contract period).
* Design and piloting of all research instruments to be used as part of the evaluation
* All communications with, and recruitment of, target research participants, informed by best practice in research ethics and in compliance with relevant legislation such as the GDPR
* Conducting all evaluation primary research fieldwork and any secondary research via collated data or evidence
* With DfE support, all applications to link evaluation data to Government administrative data and statistics
* Production of high quality datasets, corresponding technical reports, and supporting documentation for datasets
* Full analysis and reporting of evaluation data, leading to a minimum of an interim and full research report on evaluation findings (both of which would be published)
* Production of toolkits and guidance to aid future evaluations of family hubs, such as on approaches to evaluation and value for money assessment
* Active dissemination of evaluation findings to local, regional, and national networks of policy-makers, academics, commissioners and practioners, including working with the National Centre for Family Hubs and Integrated Family Services.

### Evaluating the service effectiveness, outcomes and impacts, and value for money of family hubs

**Service effectiveness**

Evaluations of service effectiveness should aim to assess:

* The breadth and depth of the service offer and extent of service integration within a hub model
* Reach, take-up and service pathways among target cohorts of families
* Approaches to assessing family and children’s needs and prioritising and providing commensurate services
* Use of evidence-based interventions
* Coherence and ease of access of the service offer to families, and whether hubs are effective at engaging with vulnerable and disadvantaged families
* Families experience and satisfaction with services
* Hubs’ effectiveness in terms of leadership, governance, outcome frameworks and evaluation, data maturity, staffing and workforce development, family and community engagement and co-production, and partnership working with other agencies.

Potential evaluation methods that could be used to assess service effectiveness:

* Logic model development with participating hubs and development and publication of an evaluation protocol
* Service effectiveness/quality benchmarking exercises, benchmarking against best practice frameworks such as the HMT Public Value Framework[[7]](#footnote-8) or EIF Maturity Matrix[[8]](#footnote-9)
* Indicator development and tracking of reach and take-up
* Assessment of approaches to needs assessments and service pathways
* Synthesis of existing service satisfaction data or collection of new data
* Qualitative and/or quantitative data collected from hub staff, service users and partner organisations.

**Outcomes and impacts**

Evaluations of outcomes and impacts should aim to assess:

* As different family hubs may be aiming to focus on different user cohorts and outcomes, outcome measures will need to be tailored to each individual evaluation via logic model development
* Output measures could include: number of service contacts, referrals or interventions delivered to families
* Outcomes measures could include: for families and children such as improved health and development, social and emotional well-being, parent-child interaction, parenting, family functioning, family employment and income, debt, etc.
* Outcomes measures for public services, such as reduced demand on more acute downstream services or improved cost effectiveness of services.

Potential evaluation methods that could be used to assess outcomes and impacts:

* Individual family journey data (e.g. survey data collected pre, during and post receipt of services or interventions, case studies, longitudinal qualitative research)
* Use of matched administrative data (e.g. EYFSP scores, CiN indicators) for family hub user cohorts
* Contribution analysis to build an evidence-based ‘performance story’
* Qualitative evaluation (e.g. engaging with families, hub staff and partner organisations)
* It may be feasible to conduct propensity score matching analysis on outcome measures using a matched ‘control’ sample from administrative data that compares outcomes for the treatment group (user cohorts of family hubs) with a matched control sample, or construct other quasi-experimental designs.
* Synthetic counterfactual comparisons of child and family outcomes (from survey data and/or administrative data) that takes advantage of differential service provision/service availability between or within LA areas that are statistical neighbour comparators.

**Value for money**

Evaluations of value for money should aim to assess:

* Delivery efficiency – e.g. developing a suit of value for money indicators on unit delivery costs, service volumes and staffing productivity, which could potentially be benchmarked between equivalent family hub services in different local authorities
* Cost comparisons of hub delivery models compared to previous service delivery models prior to service transformation
* Economic estimates of any outcomes attributable to family hubs, combining change attributable on primary outcome measures and relationships to later attainment, earnings or employment, quality-adjusted life years (QALY) or savings for the public purse (e.g. reduced pressure on downstream/more acute services).
* Cost-benefit or cost-effectiveness analysis of family hubs combining data on costs and outcomes.

**Evaluation outputs**

We expect the following evaluation outputs:

* Full evaluation protocols developed and published at outset of evaluations
* As a minimum, interim and final evaluation reports for each contracted evaluation
* Toolkits and guidance to aid future evaluations of family hubs, such as on theory-of-change development, evaluation methods, value for money assessment, social return on investment, service performance and VfM indicators.
* Wider dissemination via linking with the National Centre and using a range of channels and methods for dissemination
* Dissemination via academic, policy, commissioner and practice-based networks.

## Indicative commissioning timings (subject to change)

* Deadline for EOIs – 5pm, Wednesday 13th January 2021
* Invitations to tender issued – w/c 18th January 2021
* Deadline for ITT submission – w/c 15th February 2021
* Placeholder for bidder interviews (if required) – w/c 1st March and w/c 8th March 2021
* Inception meeting placeholder – Start of April 2021.

## Assessment criteria

1. **Pass/Fail Criteria**

There are a number of programme-specific mandatory requirements, all of which must be met, as set out below. Consortia bids from a group of research suppliers are welcomed. All Expressions of Interest must clearly demonstrate that they meet all mandatory requirements.

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| **Mandatory Requirements** | | |
| 1.1 | Does the EOI name the research supplier(s) and the family hub(s) that will work in partnership on a contracted evaluation? | **Yes / No** |
| 1.2 | Does your research supplier(s) and partnership family hub(s) have the capacity to deliver a complex mixed-methods evaluation lasting up to two years from April 2021 to March 2023? | **Yes / No** |
| 1.3 | Does the family hub service model to be evaluated deliver services for families with children across a broader age range (e.g. 0-19) than just solely 0-5 year-olds? | **Yes / No** |
| 1.4 | Will the research supplier(s) and the family hub(s) deliver as a minimum a mixed-methods theory-of-change based evaluation? | **Yes / No** |
| 1.5 | Does the research supplier(s) commit to working with the National Centre for Family Hubs and Integrated Family Services on dissemination of evaluation findings? | **Yes / No** |
| 1.6 | Does the research supplier(s) commit to participating in a peer learning programme for the Family Hubs Evaluation Innovation Fund, sharing learning and knowledge with other evaluators and for wider benefit? | **Yes / No** |

1. **Quality criteria**

If bidders pass all mandatory criteria, responses at Expression of Interest stage will also be evaluated using the following criteria, with each criterion having an equal weight with regard to scoring.

* 1. Approaches and stated aims of working in partnership with the family hub(s) to be evaluated, including a description of ongoing liaison, project governance and the aims of each partner;
  2. Technical and professional ability to design and manage a complex mixed-methods evaluation. This will include expertise in developing logic models/theories-of-change, quantitative and qualitative evaluation methods, securing participation in research from harder-to-reach respondents, and analysis and reporting skills including communicating research findings to both technical and non-specialist audiences;
  3. Expertise and subject knowledge regarding early intervention and prevention and family support services to inform the design, implementation and reporting of the project. This will include knowledge and experience of developing research instruments to measure outcomes for families and children;
  4. Organisational capacity and effective project management skills to deliver the work to time, contininuity of staff, and past evidence of delivering evaluation projects to budget.

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| --- | --- |
| Mark | Description |
| 0 | Fails to meet the criteria |
| 1 | Meets some of the criteria |
| 2 | Meets most of the criteria |
| 3 | Fully meets the criteria |
| 4 | Exceeds the criteria |

CVs and referees are not required at this stage.

Expressions of interests submitted must be no more than 1500 words overall. Please do not include website links or a bibliography at Expression of Interest stage. Any text exceeding 1500 words will be disregarded.

Collaborative/ consortia expressions of interest are welcome.

We will produce a short Q&A during the EOI, with responses to any questions asked. Questions will be anonymised and any commercially sensitive information removed. Should you wish to ask a question and/or receive a copy of this note, please email [jonathon.blackburn@education.gov.uk](mailto:jonathon.blackburn@education.gov.uk)

| **Closing date for EOIs: 5pm on Wednesday 13th January 2021.**  **Send your EOI form to:** [**jonathon.blackburn@education.gov.uk**](mailto:jonathon.blackburn@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://familyhubsnetwork.org.uk/hubs/types-of-family-hubs/> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. <https://www.local.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/LGA_Delivering%20children%E2%80%99s%20centre%20services_15%2024_January%202018.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. [Fully Committed? How a Government could reverse family breakdown](https://www.centreforsocialjustice.org.uk/core/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/CSJJ2072_Family_Breakdown.pdf) [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. [Family Hubs: The Future of Children’s Centres: Strengthening family relationships to improve Life Chances for everyone](https://irp-cdn.multiscreensite.com/5541fb3d/files/uploaded/APPG%20on%20Children%27s%20Centres%20-%20Family%20Hubs%20Report%20FINAL.pdf) [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. [Family-Hubs-A-Discussion-Paper-2016](https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/Family-Hubs-A-Discussion-Paper-2016.pdf) [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
6. <https://www.eif.org.uk/report/planning-early-childhood-services-in-2020-learning-from-practice-and-research-on-childrens-centres-and-family-hubs> [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
7. [Public Value Framework and supplementary guidance - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/public-value-framework-and-supplementary-guidance) [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
8. [EIF maturity matrix: Maternity and early years | Early Intervention Foundation](https://www.eif.org.uk/resource/eif-maturity-matrix-maternity-and-early-years) [↑](#footnote-ref-9)