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Planning

Delivery partner for national support to local authorities with forecasting, commissioning and market shaping in children's social care.

Department for Education

F01: Prior information notice

Prior information only

Notice identifier: 2023/S 000-024845

Procurement identifier (OCID): ocds-h6vhtk-03f66d

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Section I: Contracting authority

I.1) Name and addresses

Department for Education

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SW1P 3BT

Email

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Country

United Kingdom

Region code

UK - United Kingdom

Internet address(es)

Main address

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-education>

I.3) Communication

Additional information can be obtained from the above-mentioned address

I.4) Type of the contracting authority

Body governed by public law

I.5) Main activity

Education

Section II: Object

II.1) Scope of the procurement

II.1.1) Title

Delivery partner for national support to local authorities with forecasting, commissioning and market shaping in children's social care.

II.1.2) Main CPV code

- 85000000 - Health and social work services

II.1.3) Type of contract

Services

II.1.4) Short description

We will be holding one to one sessions, if you would like more information/to arrange a session, please email caroline.traynor@education.gov.uk.

This PIN is for market engagement only. It does not signify the commencement of any procurement process and does not constitute any commitment by the Department for

Education. If the Department for Education decides to commence any procurement process as contemplated by this notice, a separate notice will be published at the relevant time. The requirements and values set out may be subject to change.

The Department for Education intend to launch a procurement to appoint a supplier to undertake evidence gathering and delivery support in relation to local authority forecasting of their future needs for children's social care placements and market shaping activity and commissioning of such placements.

There will be two phases of this work:

The first will identify fill evidence gaps by directly working with local authorities and some large providers of care to identify what data they are collecting, understand what their challenges are and what we can do to support them. This is likely to consist of desk-based research, conversations with local areas and deep dive visits.

The second, will, based on the findings from phase one, deliver initial national support to local authorities and use the findings to input into the co-design process with the two Regional Care Cooperative (RCC) pathfinder regions.

Upon completion of the review, the supplier will be required to submit the findings, including a set of recommendations for change, to the Department for Education.

The value of this contract is to be confirmed. The initial term will run January 2024 – March 2025 with potential for 3, 12-month extensions.

II.1.6) Information about lots

This contract is divided into lots: No

II.2) Description

II.2.2) Additional CPV code(s)

- 73000000 - Research and development services and related consultancy services
- 79310000 - Market research services

II.2.3) Place of performance

NUTS codes

- UK - United Kingdom

II.2.4) Description of the procurement

The Department for Education committed, in *Stable Homes, Built on Love*, to commission an external organisation to deliver national support with forecasting, procurement and market shaping to local authorities, in advance of subsuming this function into a regional model over time. This commitment was made in response to recommendations in a review by the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) into the children's social care placements market.

To ensure that the national support is effective, we think that an element of evidence gathering is required up front to fill evidence gaps and to identify what data local authorities are collecting, how they currently go about forecasting, commissioning and market shaping, what works well, what their challenges are and what we can do to support them. We expect that this would take 3-4 months and consist of:

Carrying out local authority deep dives/engagement to analyse and understand current practices and determine tools currently used in respect of forecasting demand and market shaping across a selection of local authorities nationally.

Assessing and understanding the current local market and the sector appetite for change. Setting out and highlighting the benefits of adopting a standardised approach and the specific need for national support going forward.

Producing a report highlighting the practice identified around forecasting, procurement and market shaping and proposing how this can be built on to enable local authorities to better and more accurately forecast their future demand.

Identify what skills are needed to do this work effectively and identify any potential skills gaps.

Assessing and making recommendations for how the RCC pathfinders could test new approaches to data collection, analysis, forecasting and market shaping on a regional level and what systems/support they need to do this.

Considering information gathered through local authority engagement and plan how best to deliver support as part of the second phase of the contract.

Based on the findings of the research/evidence gathering phase, we expect the next phase to take approximately 12 months until March 2025 with a possibility of extension for 2-3 years to deliver national support that may include:

Help to spread identified best practice in forecasting, procurement and market shaping,

and support the implementation of these approaches in local authority areas.

Supporting local authorities and RCCs to identify their individual skills gaps and plan how to address them.

Help local authorities to develop new and improved ways to forecast future demand, utilising the recommendations from the research/evidence gathering phase.

Deliver market shaping support to local authorities to enable them to clearly communicate their forecast needs to providers and incentivise them to create and maintain sufficient appropriate provision to meet these needs.

Provide a clear focus on achieving best value for money for the public

Work with the RCC pathfinder regions to input into the co-design process with local authorities and other partners and support their approach to regional data collection, analysis, forecasting and market shaping.

Provide clear recommendations to help build a robust evidence base in the longer term – identifying how forecasting, market shaping, and procurement could best be undertaken by a national network of RCCs once we have rolled these out to achieve better outcomes for children and savings to the public purse.

II.3) Estimated date of publication of contract notice

16 October 2023

Section IV. Procedure

IV.1) Description

IV.1.8) Information about the Government Procurement Agreement (GPA)

The procurement is covered by the Government Procurement Agreement: Yes

Section VI. Complementary information

VI.3) Additional information

Policy background

The Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) launched a market study in 2021 into the children's social care placements market in England (Scotland and Wales). Their findings, published in March 2022, concluded there were serious failings with how the placements market is functioning and attributed some of these failings to poor procurement and commissioning, and an inability within local authorities to accurately forecast demand.

The CMA made a series of recommendations around improving commissioning, providing additional national support to local authorities with forecasting, procurement and market shaping.

In our implementation strategy response; Stable Homes, Built on Love, we agreed to commission a national organisation to take forward this work. This would seek to improve local authority commissioning and forecasting.

Also in Stable Homes, Built on Love, we set out our support for the approach of a regional model for providing homes for children as set out in the Independent Review of Children's Social Care, published in May 2022. We will work with local authorities to co-design RCCs and co-create pathfinders in two areas with a view to rolling out after testing and evaluating the best approach in conjunction with the sector. We recently started the application process for the RCC pathfinders. The application process will conclude on 20 October, and we expect to notify successful areas by the end of 2023. Funding for these pathfinders will run until the end of March 2025.