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Planning

Best Start Family Hubs Match Fund partner - Preliminary Market Engagement (PME) Notice

Department for Education

UK2: Preliminary market engagement notice - Procurement Act 2023 - [view information about notice types](#)

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Scope

Description

To note: This PME does not signify the commencement of any procurement process and does not constitute any commitment by the Department for Education (DfE). If DfE decides to commence any procurement process subject to the Procurement Act 2023 as contemplated by this notice, a separate notice(s) will be published at the relevant time.

The Purpose

In partnership with Charities Aid Foundation, New Philanthropy Capital, Ethos Foundation, and the Impact Economy Collective, a Preliminary Market Engagement event is being undertaken to refine DfE's requirements and better understand the capacity and capability of a potential partners to manage and deliver a Match Fund.

The aim is to accelerate progress towards the vision set out in Plan for Change and Giving Every Child the Best Start in Life, by scaling models that can leverage public and community resources around the Government's Opportunity Mission, aligning with four

core principles:

- Impact – drive greater progress toward the Best Start in Life (BSiL) pillar of the Opportunity Mission by working collectively, accelerating, scaling and amplifying efforts to achieve (i) the 2028 national and local targets; and (ii) establishing sustainable delivery models for the long term
- Capacity – building on the BSiL investment to create new additional partnerships and provision that would not be possible through local authority delivery alone
- Integration - a joined-up system that feels seamless for children and parents
- Innovation – harnessing the best of businesses, social investors, philanthropists, local leaders and charities through new partnerships and ways of working; sharing of mutual expertise; testing new ideas, learning what works, and scaling successful approaches together.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/local-communities-set-to-benefit-as-new-office-for-the-impact-economy-to-partner-with-philanthropists-social-investors-and-businesses>

The BSiL strategy and the expansion of Best Start Family Hubs (BSFHs) present a generational opportunity to embed early years collaboration at scale. It is important to build local capacity that is embedded and can deliver lasting impact.

The Match Fund would create a funding mechanism that provides support for new and scaled collaborative partnerships, led by independent ‘backbone’ organisations. These are dedicated entities – often charitable – that provide additional capacity, coordination, and expertise to support and scale local delivery working in partnership with local leaders.

The Match Fund would combine funding from Local Authorities (LAs) and philanthropy to support local partnerships between LAs and backbone organisations implementing collective impact models that improve early childhood development, aligned with the BSFHs policy aims. We would also like to talk to potential Funders to test our understanding of the potential philanthropic appetite.

Through this Match Fund we are seeking to multiply the impact of public spending by drawing in additional resources and harnessing the expertise of multiple sectors beyond the state, whilst strengthening local delivery infrastructure for the long-term.

We will hold two separate webinars in December inviting potential Fund Managers and Funders where we will talk through the requirements in more detail and our journey thus far in developing our Match Fund option. There will be a further Round Table event during January 2026 where interested Funders have the opportunity to share further thoughts on the build of this.

Background

BSFHs build on the Family Hubs and Start for Life programme to deliver a strengthened, national service offer, underpinned by the 'Giving Every Child the Best Start in Life' strategy. This includes a commitment to establish up to 1,000 BSFH sites.

DfE is considering a new Match Fund which would enable LAs to support whole-place mobilisation of public and civil society assets. The Fund would match philanthropy to a proportion of BSFHs funding, enabling partnership between LAs and independent backbone infrastructure that:

- Builds a shared local agenda around BSIL impact goals to support more children to reach a Good Level of Development
- Supports diverse assets - public, civil society and private - to be mutually reinforcing in pursuit of this impact
- Builds shared measurement across sectors
- Drives continuous communication across place, including with families
- Builds on the BSIL investment to create new additional partnerships, provision and offers to parents and children that would not be possible through local authority delivery alone

Funding model options and eligibility

Our initial thinking is that there would be one organisation to act as both a Fund Manager and a Delivery Partner, however we are still developing our thinking and requirements and cannot discount the need for two partners. Their envisaged responsibilities are set out together here.

The Fund Manager would operate as or in a similar way to a Donor Advised Fund and be responsible for managing financial flows. It would be a charity responsible for holding the funds from LAs and philanthropy. The decision making for how to distribute the funds would sit within the local community for each LA that opts into the Match Fund (according to a governance model to be developed). The Fund Manager would also be responsible for the due diligence on the incoming non-governmental funds and on the chosen organisation(s), and would then ensure the timely distribution of funds. We would require them to ensure that governance is applied to the Match Fund.

The Delivery Partner would work alongside local organisations and LAs to help facilitate introductions if needed, inform decisions about the distribution of the money whilst supporting collaboration and embracing plurality throughout the journey. They would

share learning and insights with all stakeholders and could have a role to play in supporting the match-making process in areas where existing local organisations do not exist.

Under this model, LAs would transfer an agreed sum of their DfE allocation, and any other contributions they wish to make locally, into a managed account, collectively managed by the Fund Manager. DfE, the LA, potentially the Delivery Partner and others would then engage with philanthropic funders to unlock a minimum of 1:1 in match funding, which would then be awarded to a collaborative partnership in that area, according to guiding principles established for the fund. Eligible bodies may include charities and community-based organisations. The locality would then benefit from the increased funds and access to expertise and support, enabling delivery of national and local policy objectives for the benefit of local children and families.

The main tasks across both Fund Manager and/or Delivery Partner roles include:

- Manage a Public/Philanthropic Match Fund that enables LAs to partner with independent backbones specialising in driving collective impact. This will include:
 - Managing funds day-to-day in accordance with DfE requirements and holding them in a way that reflects the place-based design of the fund
 - Conducting due diligence on incoming funds from donors
 - Conducting due diligence on grant funding recipients
 - Managing transfer of funds to grant funding recipients in line with advice from local authorities working in partnership with other local organisations
 - Act as a single front door for philanthropy, portfolio management and reporting
- Create an impact multiplier to deliver the policy aims for BSiL
- Scale a tested governance innovation that mobilises diverse place-based assets around a common, collective and impactful agenda
- Share learning nationally across local delivery sites
- Manage programme evaluation post-pilot
- Support DfE and other stakeholders to continue the programme, if deemed worthy, past the initial three-year pilot period
- Support LAs to be matched with potential backbone organisations

Contract dates (estimated)

- 30 October 2026 to 31 May 2029
- 2 years, 7 months, 2 days

Main procurement category

Services

CPV classifications

- 66100000 - Banking and investment services
- 66120000 - Investment banking services and related services
- 79412000 - Financial management consultancy services
- 85322000 - Community action programme
- 98000000 - Other community, social and personal services

Contract locations

- UKC - North East (England)
- UKD - North West (England)
- UKF - East Midlands (England)
- UKG - West Midlands (England)
- UKH - East of England
- UKJ - South East (England)

- UKK - South West (England)
- UKE - Yorkshire and the Humber
- UKI - London

Engagement

Engagement deadline

12 December 2025

Engagement process description

How to engage

The Department for Education will hold two webinars via Microsoft Teams on Monday 15th and Thursday 18th December 2025.

These will run for approximately 1 hour. A questionnaire will be issued following the Fund Managers webinar, via Microsoft Forms and will be sent out via Jaggaer (the Department's e-sourcing system).

Please note: The webinar on the 15th December at 11am will be for Funders only and the webinar on the 18th December at 2pm will be for potential Fund Managers/Delivery Partners.

There are several ways to participate in this opportunity and register your organisation's interest in attending the webinar: -

1. If you are already registered on Jaggaer, please link through to project_10075 or ssq_xx
2. Please use Jaggaer's messaging portal to confirm which webinar you would like to attend (either the Fund Manager/Delivery Partner or Funders only webinar) along with full names, job titles and email addresses via Jaggaer for those who wish to attend

3. We aim to ensure all relevant organisations have the opportunity to participate and have contacted organisations we are currently aware of who are not registered on Jaggaer. If your organisation has not received an invitation, please email COMMERCIAL.ALTERNATIVEFINANCING@education.gov.uk, stating:

- Your interest in the PME Notice for Best Start Family Hubs Match Fund partner
- Your organisation name
- Names of attendee(s)
- Role(s) in your organisation
- Which webinar representatives in your organisation would prefer to attend . We will send a Teams calendar invite directly to you with the joining instructions.

4. If you are not registered on Jaggaer and would like to set up an account for this engagement session, please view the “current opportunities” page at Jaggaer <https://education.app.jaggaer.com> and search for: project_10075 or ssq_xx.”. This is not necessary for this engagement but please note that all future communications with DfE in respect of additional market engagement will be held via Jaggaer.

Once you have located project_10075 / ssq_xx, please confirm your interest by selecting “Intend to Respond” and “Submit” to receive full access to the opportunity. All relevant documentation will be made available in the Data Room.

All organisations who have expressed an interest in this opportunity, including those who are unable to attend the webinar, will have access to relevant information and any supporting notes which will be made available via the Data Room within project_10075 /ssq_XXX. at <https://education.app.jaggaer.com/>. This will include any questions or clarifications sent via the mailbox referenced above, that would benefit all interested in the event.

The deadline to sign up for either webinar is Friday 12 December 2025.

Finally, a Funders Round Table event will be held on Tuesday 13th January 2026 at 9.30am -11.30am. Further details of this event and how to attend will be shared during the webinar.

Participation

Particular suitability

- Small and medium-sized enterprises (SME)
- Voluntary, community and social enterprises (VCSE)

Contracting authority

Department for Education

- Public Procurement Organisation Number: PDZG-3487-DPVD

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