

INVITATION TO TENDER LETTER

Dear supplier,

INVITATION TO TENDER (ITT) for qualitative research understanding the experiences of NEETs in Blackpool

Your organisation along with others is invited to offer a tender for provision of the above, to the specification outlined in the attached documents. The Social Mobility Commission (SMC) is happy to accept tenders from individuals or organisations.

Enclosed are:

[Document 1 Specification of the requirement.](#)

[Document 2 Instructions on the tendering procedures.](#)

[Document 3 Evaluation Criteria](#)

Please read the instructions on the tendering procedures carefully. Failure to comply with them may invalidate your tender which must be returned by the date and time given below.

An electronic copy of your tender must be submitted to contact@socialmobilitycommission.gov.uk no later than 4pm on 26 January 2026. Late tenders will not be considered.

If having read the enclosed specification you decide not to submit a tender, I would be grateful if you could send your reasons (though you are under no obligation to do so) to contact@socialmobilitycommission.gov.uk, at the above address marked 'No Tender'. Please contact me if you have any questions about the tendering procedure.

Yours sincerely,

Summer Nisar

Director of the SMC Secretariat, Social Mobility Commission

SPECIFICATION

1. Introduction

The Social Mobility Commission is interested in conducting research to understand the lived experiences of young people who are NEET (Not in Education, Employment, or Training), the factors that lead to them becoming and remaining NEET, and the barriers to effective support. Our motivation stems from wanting to understand how and why risk factors interact, and understanding the interaction between structural and individual factors areas of concern. This also aligns with the Social Mobility Commission's place-based and local-insight led approach because a one-size-fits-all national policy towards social mobility does not consider specific regional barriers or issues.

Existing quantitative research offers a robust understanding of the scale, trends, and key risk factors for NEETs, but it highlights a growing and evolving challenge. The scale is significant. As of September 2025, an estimated 946,000 16–24 year-olds in the UK are NEET, representing 12.7% of this age group and a notable rise since 2021.¹ The growth is being primarily driven by a shift towards economic inactivity, often due to sickness or disability, which now accounts for roughly three in five NEETs.² Crucially, national trends mask considerable local variation, with high-risk areas such as the North East England (15%) and Blackpool,³ underscoring the need for a place-based approach to research.

Blackpool, in particular stands out as an acute example of this place-based challenge due to the high intensity and confluence of social mobility barriers that amplify the risk of young people becoming NEET. Its weak local labour market, reliant on a seasonal service sector, is evidenced by high economic inactivity (28.4% for 16–64 year olds) and high unemployment-related benefit claims.⁴ This is compounded by significant underlying risk factors: the NEET rate for 16–17 year-olds is estimated at 8.9% (compared to the English rate of 5.6%)⁵, educational attainment is low (GCSE Attainment 8 score of 34.8% vs. national 46.1%)⁶, a high proportion of disabled residents and unpaid carers,⁸ and it has nearly three times the national average of looked after children.⁹ These intersecting, compounding factors make it an area which the Commission wants to initially focus on for in-depth, place-based research.

¹ [ONS \(2025\)](#)

² [Resolution Foundation \(2025\)](#)

³ [Youth Futures Foundation Data Dashboard](#)

⁴ [ONS - How life has changed in Blackpool](#)

⁵ [Department for Education Comparative LA scorecard](#)

⁶ [Blackpool JSNA](#); [Lancashire County Council](#); [Department for Education Comparative LA scorecard](#)

⁷ Attainment 8 refers to the results of pupils in state-funded mainstream schools in England across 8 GCSE-level qualifications. This metric is a way of assessing how well pupils do in key stage 4, which they usually finish when they are 16 years old.

⁸ [ONS - How life has changed in Blackpool](#)

⁹ [LG inform](#)

Beyond geography, the NEET population is diverse, but disproportionately represented by certain characteristics, including older NEETs (18–24 year olds), young people with disabilities (29% NEET rate), and those with low educational qualifications.¹⁰ Indeed, research has underlined that risk factors are often interrelated and compounding, meaning factors like low qualifications, disability, and socioeconomic background significantly increase the likelihood of a young person becoming NEET.¹¹

However, there are key gaps in the research:

- There is a need for qualitative research to explore the subjective lived experiences of being NEET, particularly how complex, co-occurring, and compounding factors (e.g. education, local labour market, family background, mental and physical health) contribute at the individual and local level.
- Existing qualitative work is often limited by a conceptual or individualistic focus (e.g., self-perception or self-determination) and has not adequately applied a social mobility lens. This leaves a critical gap in understanding the interaction between individual circumstances and broader structural factors.
- Some significant sub-groups, such as older NEETs (18–24), young men, and disabled individuals, remain understudied.
- Research needs to provide rich contextual insights between different high-risk areas and offer a more in-depth consideration of the impact of regional/local labour markets (e.g. in Blackpool or North East England).
- There is limited understanding of effective protective factors, social support, and structural systems.
- There is a lack of co-produced, participatory research with NEET young people.

Combined with this, the policy context surrounding NEETs offers an opportunity for the research to contribute meaningfully to wider discussions on the topic. These include, the [Get Britain Working White Paper](#), the launch of [national Trailblazer schemes](#), the [Millburn Review into youth inactivity](#) all makes this a pertinent time to build understanding of lived experiences of NEET young people, and inform interventions.

2. Objectives

The objectives of this research are to:

- I. Generate deep, qualitative insights into the lived experience of NEETs. Move beyond existing quantitative trends to capture the subjective lived experiences of NEET young people, specifically investigating how co-occurring factors, such as disability, health, and family background compound to create barriers and influence their pathways into becoming NEET and understanding their daily lives. This will provide a rich understanding of how young people become NEET, why they get stuck, what life actually looks like for them and what they think may help support them back into education, employment and training.

¹⁰ [Department for Education](#) (2024); [Powell and Murray](#) (2025)

¹¹ [Crowley et al.](#) (2023); [Baloch](#) (2025); Russell and Thompson (2022); [Prince's Trust](#) (2022); [Joseph Rowntree Foundation](#) (2025); [Boschoff et al.](#) (2021); MacMillan (2011); [Holmes, Murphy and Mayhew](#) (2021); [Holtom et al.](#) (2024); [Gariépy et al.](#) (2022); [Goldman-Mellor et al.](#) (2016); [Britton et al.](#) (2011); [Anders et al.](#) (2023).

- II. We would like to apply a social mobility lens to help understand the interaction between individual circumstances and structural constraints in the context of risks and outcomes.
- III. Develop place-based insights for policy intervention. Inform national and local systems by piloting research insights and the lived experiences of NEET young people from Blackpool: a high-risk area with distinct local challenges.

This approach will not only identify specific barriers to effective support but also establish a robust framework for comparing high-NEET areas, ultimately delivering targeted, scalable insights to develop solutions and strategies, and ensuring insights are informed by lived experiences.

We would like our supplier to carry out qualitative research in Blackpool - further explained below.

Once the robust methodology is established via this pilot, and beyond the scope of this invitation to tender, we intend to roll-out the approach to two other high-NEET areas, such as the North East England and the West Midlands. This will facilitate understanding of the contextual and local factors which may impact on people's experiences of being NEET and local barriers to support. Research at this stage will help inform SMC's place-based strategy and drive national and local recommendations.

3. Deliverables and deadlines

This research involves a focused qualitative study in Blackpool, strategically chosen due to its high risk of young people becoming NEET¹² and the presence of the Connected Futures/Blackpool council/college partnership. This environment offers rich insights into support mechanisms and they are keen to work to develop an additional Trailblazer. The primary goals of this pilot are twofold: firstly to rigorously test and validate the proposed methodology, ensuring its feasibility within the allocated timelines and budget so it can be rolled out to other areas facing similar challenges in future. Secondly to provide a qualitative research report of the specific issues facing NEETs in Blackpool.

Key deliverables are as follows:

Deliverable 1: Research plan for Blackpool pilot

The supplier will provide a research plan for the proposed research. This will include a robust and rigorous qualitative methodology including semi-structured interviews with NEET young people. The research will concentrate on asking open-ended questions designed to uncover participants' genuine lived experiences of becoming NEET, explore their daily lives, and understand their individual perspectives on how existing support could be improved to facilitate a successful return to education, employment or training (EET).

Specifically the research questions we would like the supplier to explore are:

¹² [Youth Futures Foundation Data Dashboard](#)

1. What factors do young people perceive as influencing their pathways into becoming NEET? This includes family, education, health and other personal or social circumstances.
2. What are the experiences of NEET young people in their daily lives and how does this impact their overall wellbeing and progress towards education, employment or training?
3. What forms of support do NEET young people perceive as being most helpful for enabling them to re-engage with education, employment or training, and preventing other young people from becoming NEET?

In addition to interviews, we ask suppliers to include 2 or 3 in-person focus groups and/or a co-participatory design. For instance, following interviews, focus groups could serve to assess less sensitive issues, such as broader support needs, potential pathways back into education, employment or training, and ultimately refine priorities for support, drawing on group dynamics to do this. A co-participatory approach proportional to the timescales available, could include utilising a local youth panel in Blackpool to help shape the questions and validate any emerging findings. Given the time constraints, we encourage a supplier to submit a suggestion for a participatory element and/or focus groups but recognise that pragmatic decisions will be needed to meet the timescale available.

The supplier will submit a full research plan for the Blackpool pilot by March 2026. This will include plans for qualitative research including interviews, analysis and reporting as well as plans for focus groups and/or participatory design as agreed. It will include a full project management plan, risk register, safeguarding and ethical practices, and staffing plan.

Safeguarding and ethical practices

Given the involvement of NEET young people, including those who are under 18, care-experienced, disabled, or experiencing mental health difficulties, the supplier's tender and research plan must demonstrate robust safeguarding and ethical research practices. This includes a current safeguarding policy, named safeguarding leads, enhanced DBS checks for all interviewers/fieldwork staff, ethical approval, clear consent procedures, distress and disclosure protocols and secure data protection arrangements. Evidence of trauma-informed qualitative research practice and experience conducting interviews and/or focus groups with NEET young people/vulnerable youth populations is essential.

Deliverable 2: Blackpool pilot data collection

The structure and format of this qualitative research will be designed by the supplier, but the supplier is expected to work with the SMC who will have input into the development of semi-structured interview questions and analytical decisions such as the number of interviews with NEETs with different characteristics. Interviews are intended to be conducted face to face, lasting approximately 1 hour.

The supplier will start interviews by May 2026, completed with a high-level summary of themes provided to SMC by June 2026, this could be presented in a slide deck or other

appropriate method as decided with the SMC.

Sampling and recruitment

A critical component of this pilot is the sampling strategy, which the SMC expects to reflect the heterogeneity of the NEET population and the complexity and sensitive nature of the topics under consideration. The supplier is expected to deliver 30 high-quality interviews with NEET young people utilising a purposive sampling approach for the semi-structured interviews to ensure analytical coverage, allowing for meaningful sub-group comparison and achieving illustrative depth across key experiences. This sample size is intended to achieve thematic insight without requiring full data saturation within every single subgroup, allowing identification of patterns and mechanisms, and ensuring participants are “information-rich” cases, and that key risk factors have been considered. This will allow us to understand the underlying risk factors, how they interact at a personal level, and the interaction between individual and structural factors.

This sampling approach aims to reflect the population’s heterogeneity by ensuring the inclusion of diverse experiences across several, often overlapping characteristics. A key focus is the intersection of risk factors identified by Crowley et al and it is likely the participants will have some overlapping characteristics. The supplier will work with SMC to ensure the definition of “NEET” used captures the varying risk factors and characteristics.

We would like to 30 interviews with NEET young people, covering the following demographics and risk factors:

- Age group (16-18, 18-24),
- Sex,
- Disability status, (disabled/non disabled)
- Care responsibilities, (carer/non carer)
- Ethnicity (minority group, white British),
- Service user (accessing services/hard to reach),
- Qualifications (low attainment/other)
- Family composition (single parent family/dual parent family/care)
- NEET duration (<12 months/>12 months)

The supplier will work with the SMC and their pre-existing contacts in Blackpool Pride of Place and Blackpool and Fylde College to recruit participants. Nonetheless, we encourage the supplier to consider alternative/blended recruitment pathways/the use of specialist recruitment partners and submit a plan, particularly in recruiting “hard-to-reach” participants - i.e. those who are not accessing services or support. The supplier should submit a plan for a sample size and recruitment, which is achievable within the timeframes and budget available.

Aside from the interviews, the supplier may wish to include 2/3 follow-up focus groups to address research question 3, providing understanding of what forms of support NEET young people perceive as being most helpful for enabling them to re-engage with education, employment or training, and preventing other young people from becoming NEET. We suggest that each focus group should include 6-8 participants (potentially drawn from the interviewees) of mixed age, gender, and background as set out above. These groups aim not

for full data saturation, but rather to refine priorities for support by generating core themes and identifying shared versus conflicting needs regarding support back into education, employment, or training. These groups should be carefully selected and composed of a mixed group of participants of young people of mixed age, gender, and background to encourage comparison of experiences and reveal shared vs conflicting needs, aiming to answer the question of what support works, and for whom?

Deliverable 3: Analysis and a full report summarising methodology, findings, including all writing and drafting, and support with dissemination

Analysis

The supplier will be expected to undertake a rigorous, transparent qualitative analysis to capture the lived experiences of NEET young people and which explicitly accounts for the overlapping and intersecting nature of risk factors and characteristics. The supplier will utilise a thematic and reflexive analytical approach, using an inductive approach - that is, allowing themes and patterns to be identified directly from the data itself. The supplier is expected to submit their own plan for ensuring the analysis is methodologically robust, and has proportionate quality assurance processes. The supplier will work collaboratively with the SMC to ensure analysis meets the needs of the organisation and will be expected to share plans for analysis and present emerging findings.

Technical annex

The report will include a technical annex outlining the full methodology used in the research to support future replication. This will include details of sampling, interview questions and analytical methodology.

Reporting

The final deliverable for the Blackpool project is a full, publication ready report. The audience of this report is expected to be a mix of policy-makers, social mobility researchers/academics/NEET practitioners, and the public. Therefore, the outputs should reflect the diverse audience i.e. there should be an executive summary for policy-makers, findings should be written in non-technical language/plain English for the public.

Quantitative insights from local and national data, alongside a supporting literature review will be used to help contextualise and situate the findings. We do not expect this literature review to form a substantive part of the report or budget, but rather to provide brief contextual information to the findings.

We require the supplier to conduct all of the drafting of the report. However, SMC will have editorial input into the final SMC branded product to ensure the output meets internal standards and conveys the messaging of the research accurately. As such, suppliers should produce an initial draft and receive comments from SMC. The final report should be complete by August 2026.

The SMC would also need access to anonymised transcripts and recordings of the interviews and focus groups (if used).

4. Audience

All of the deliverables you produce which are new analyses (*i.e.* not already in the public domain) are to be kept in confidence until the publication of the report. Until this point the work you produce will be for an internal SMC audience only.

The relationship you have with us will be collaborative, with us taking your advice and you taking our steers. We expect the supplier to be able to distinguish their own organisation's positions and priorities from those of SMC and its remit. All communications will be confidential, allowing a spirit of free discussion.

The successful supplier is responsible for the final deliverables. It is expected they will respond constructively to feedback on all deliverables from the SMC Secretariat and Commissioners; and build time into their work plan for this engagement accordingly.

We will call on you to present emerging findings and analytical outputs at different stages. For example, there may be opportunities for knowledge exchange and early feedback from the SMC's Technical Advisory Panel as the report is developed.

5. Management Information

At a minimum, the successful supplier will be asked to:

- Provide regular (monthly at a minimum) progress updates by email.
- Have regular meetings with the SMC team to discuss the research - sampling updates, emerging findings and key messages/ and interpretation of findings.
- Be available over email to address queries about the findings and their interpretation in advance of the report publication date.
- Be available to present emerging findings at different stages. For example, there may be opportunities for knowledge exchange and early feedback from the independent expert advisers who we are contracted with as the report is developed. We will draw on your expertise to present early findings to Commissioners to review progress, emerging trends and policy recommendations.

The supplier will work with SMC to prioritise activities and mitigate any risks to delivery.

6. Dependencies and Liaison

Tenderers should indicate if they are reliant on any third party with any information, data or undertaking any of the work specified.

7. Costs and Budget

We expect proposals to be no more than £80,000, exclusive of VAT for the Blackpool pilot.

Bids should only exceed the limit where suppliers are clear that the work is either not

deliverable within this budget, or there is specific added value to the work which is achieved by increasing the budget. All costs should be quoted exclusive of VAT but please indicate if the project will attract VAT.

A detailed breakdown of costs is expected within the proposal. The proposal should breakdown costs between specific outputs and deliverables - for example:

- Cost of individual in-person interviews
- Cost of in-person focus groups and/or co-participatory design as appropriate
- Cost of final output

8. Payment

Payments will be made by BACS transfer following receipt of a valid invoice. The successful tenderer should provide details of discounts for prompt payment.

9. VAT

Please state clearly when submitting prices whether or not VAT will be charged.

Where the contract price agreed between SMC and contractor is inclusive of any VAT, further amounts will not be paid by SMC should a VATable supply claim be made at any later stage.

Where the overall contract price is exclusive of VAT, SMC will pay any VAT incurred at the prevailing rate (currently 20%). If the VAT rate changes SMC will pay any VAT incurred at the new rate.

It is the responsibility of the tenderer to check the VAT position with HMRC before submitting a bid.

10. Data Collection

All interviews and focus groups should be recorded and transcribed. The SMC will agree with the Supplier on the consent form and Data Privacy Notice for any interviews and focus groups. The agreement will also be outlined in the contract between the supplier and the SMC.

The SMC may request to be sent these recordings/transcriptions for Quality Assurance purposes (ie, checking that the write up accurately reflects the conversations). The data provided by the supplier to the SMC will be anonymised.

11. Consent Arrangements

It will be the responsibility of the successful Contractor to ensure written and active consent of all participants through consent forms. All participants should be informed of the purpose of the research, that the Contractor is acting on behalf of the Commission and that they have the option to refuse to participate (opt out). Contact

details should be provided including a contact person at the Commission. Young people who are 16 or over will usually be able to give their own consent but even where this is so, the Contractor, in consultation with the Commission, should consider whether it is also appropriate for parents, guardians or other appropriate gatekeepers (e.g. schools, Local Authorities) to be informed if a child has been invited to participate in research.

INSTRUCTIONS ON TENDERING PROCEDURES

1. These instructions are designed to ensure that all tenders are given equal and fair consideration. It is important therefore that you provide all the information asked for in the format and order specified.
2. Bidders must submit their Bids before 4pm on 26 January 2026. All Bids must be submitted to contact@socialmobilitycommission.gov.uk. Failure to return Bids by the time and due date or in the required format may disqualify Bidders from consideration.
3. A clarification process will operate during the ITT stage as explained below (Box 1). The objective of this process is to give Bidders the opportunity to submit questions to the Contracting Authority where they require clarification on the information provided. This is not an opportunity for Bidders to seek additional information to that already provided.

Box 1: Clarification process for ITT stage explainer

Bidders should submit clarification questions via email to contact@socialmobilitycommission.gov.uk. Questions received by any other method will not receive a response.

The Contracting Authority will seek to answer questions within 5 working days following the day of receipt. Bidders are urged to review the ITT documentation immediately upon receipt and identify and submit any clarification questions as soon as possible and in any event no later than 4 pm on 19 January 2026. Any questions received after this time may not be answered.

If the Contracting Authority considers any question or request for clarification to be of general significance, both the question and the response will be communicated, in a suitably anonymous form, to all Bidders who have expressed an interest before the closing date for the submission of the ITT.

All responses received and any communication from Bidders will be treated in confidence and provision will be made for Bidders to request clarification in confidence (this request must be clearly marked at the outset of each question stating the reasons why such a question is commercial and in confidence), but in responding to such requests the Contracting Authority will reserve the right to act in what it considers a fair manner and in the best interests of the Procurement, which may include circulating the response to all Bidders.

Bidders should note that no further information in addition to that provided in the ITT documentation will be provided about the Procurement at this time. Under no circumstances should Bidders approach the Contracting Authority, their staff or advisors seeking further information in relation to the requirements of the Procurement. Any such approaches (direct or indirect) may result in the Bidder's exclusion from further consideration in the Procurement process.

4. Please note that references to the 'Department' or "Social Mobility Commission" or "the Commission" throughout these documents mean Minister for the Cabinet Office.
5. SMC is happy to accept bids from single organisations or consortia of organisations. Where a consortium/Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) is formed to submit a tender, this must only be submitted by and in the name of the supplier chosen as the "Lead" supplier for that consortium/SPV.

Contract Period

6. The contract is to be completed by August 2026.

Incomplete Tender

7. These instructions are designed to ensure that all tenders are given equal and fair consideration. Tenders may be rejected if the information asked for in the ITT and Specification is not given at the time of tendering.

Indicative procurement timetable

8. The proposed timetable for this procurement process is as follows. This is intended as a guide and, while the Social Mobility Commission does not intend to depart from the timetable, it reserves the right to do so at any time, including by shortening or lengthening any stage.

Tender documents issued - 5 January 2026
Last day for submission of clarifications - 4pm on 19 January 2026
Last day for SMC to respond to clarifications - 21 January 2026
Deadline for tender responses to be received - 4pm on 26 January 2026
Tender Evaluations - 27 January 2026 - 6 February 2026
SMC announcement of preferred bidder - 6 February 2026
Commencement - 9 February 2026
Project initiation meeting - w/c 16 February 2026
Deliverable 1: Supplier submits detailed research plan, including recruitment plan and ethics and safeguarding consideration with SMC approval - mid-March 2026

Deliverable 2: In-person qualitative research with NEET young people completed and high-level summary of themes in slide deck - June 2026.

Deliverable 3: Analysis and full, publication ready report completed August 2026.

Receipt of Tenders

9. Tenders will be received up to the time and date stated (4pm on 26 January 2026). Those received before the due date will be retained unopened until then. Any Tender received after the Closing Time, and/or submitted by any means other than through contact@socialmobilitycommission.gov.uk may be rejected by the Department. It is the responsibility of the tenderer to ensure that their tender is delivered not later than the appointed time.

Acceptance of Tenders

10. By issuing this invitation SMC is not bound in any way and does not have to accept the lowest or any tender, and reserves the right to accept a portion of any tender, unless the tenderer expressly stipulates otherwise in their tender.

Inducements

11. Offering an inducement of any kind in relation to obtaining this or any other contract with SMC will disqualify your tender from being considered and may constitute a criminal offense.

Confidentiality of Tenders

12. Please note the following requirements, you must not:
 - Tell anyone else what your tender price is or will be, before the time limit for delivery of tenders.
 - Try to obtain any information about anyone else's tender or proposed tender before the time limit for delivery of tenders.
 - Make any arrangements with another organisation about whether or not they should tender, or about their or your tender price.
 - Failure to comply with these conditions may disqualify your tender.

Costs and Expenses

13. You will not be entitled to claim from SMC any costs or expenses which you may incur in preparing your tender whether or not your tender is successful.

Debriefing

14. Following the award of contract, debriefing will be available to unsuccessful tenderers on request.

Evaluation Criteria

15. The tender process will be conducted in a manner that ensures tenders are evaluated fairly to ascertain the most economically advantageous tender.
16. Your response to the tender specification will be evaluated using the criteria set out in Document 4 Section 2 - Evaluation Criteria.

Tender Period

17. Due to the intensive evaluation process SMC requires tenders to remain valid for a period specified in Document 5.

Basis of the Contract

18. The specification in Document 1, and the terms and conditions in Document 4 Attachment 1, together with any special requirements, will form the basis of the contract between the successful tenderer and Minister for the Cabinet Office’.

Format of Bids

19. Tenderers should present their proposals in the following format:

Section 1 Summary of Proposal

Section 2 Meeting the Specification:

- Details of proposed approach;
- Methodology including constraints and possible solutions;
- Project management - Tenderers should indicate how they will monitor the project to ensure it is delivered in terms of quality, timeliness and cost. Tenders must include a work plan/Gantt chart that clearly shows the key activities and milestones leading up to the final report. It should mirror the detail on the budget template.
- Staffing, including short staff profiles covering examples of key relevant experience, including demonstrating experience of the team doing relevant work, specifically in conducting successful interviews with potentially vulnerable young people and individual/staff expertise and qualifications. Proposed distribution of duties should be clearly stated if the bid involves sub-contracting or collaboration between different providers; and
- Outputs, including how the findings will be presented.

Section 3 Cost and Charging Arrangements

- Costs should be shown separately by methodology and/or deliverable. For example:
 - Semi-structured interviews : £ Insert amount
 - In-person focus groups: £ Insert amount (if included)
 - Project management: £ Insert amount
 - Final report ready publication: £ Insert amount
 - Total: £ Insert amount

All costs should be quoted exclusive of VAT but please indicate if the project will attract VAT. If your proposal includes costs for sub-contractors these costs must be shown inclusive of any VAT element (e.g. sub-contractor’s costs to you are £10K plus VAT, your proposal should show subcontractors costs as £12K inclusive of VAT @ 20%).

The department will also conduct its own due diligence checks in relation to the bidder’s financial viability and may request additional financial information to be provided as part of this process. Whilst the

department will attempt to mitigate any financial risks it may, at its own discretion, reject a bid where it assesses the financial risk to be too great to proceed with the award of the contract.

Section 4 Risk Management

- Outline, in no more than one-page, the key risks to delivering the project and what contingencies will be put in place to deal with them.
- A risk is any factor that may delay, disrupt or prevent the full achievement of a project objective. All risks should be identified.
- For each risk, the one-page summary should assess its likelihood (high, medium or low) and specify its possible impact on the project objectives (again rated high, medium or low). The assessment should also identify appropriate actions that would reduce or eliminate each risk or its impact.
- Typical areas of risk for a research project might include staffing, resource constraints, technical constraints, recruitment constraints, data access, timing, management and operational issues, but this is not an exhaustive list.

Section 5 Data Security and safeguarding

- Provide a plan that explains how departmental and/or personal data will be protected.
- Provide a plan on how safeguarding and ethics will be carried out.

Section 7 References

Sections 1 - 4 should not exceed 10 sides of A4 and sections 5 - 6 should not exceed 3 sides of A4, for a combined total of 13 sides. Any bids above that will not be considered. The font size should not be smaller than 10. Embedded links will not be considered, nor will Annexes that exceed the 13-page count.

Conclusions

20. Whilst every endeavour has been made to give tenderers an accurate description of the Commission's requirement, tenderers should make their own assessment about the methods and resources needed to meet those requirements.

EVALUATION CRITERIA

Tenders will be assessed on both quality and cost. A 80-20 split will be applied with 80% of the total score for quality and 20% for cost.

Quality

Bids will be assessed against 5 questions. The maximum score is 100.

Question	Criteria	Max possible score
1. Does the proposal describe a robust method / suitable approach?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates a clear understanding of the objectives and approaches outlined • Creative and constructive thinking demonstrated by the proposed approach to this project in meeting the objectives • The suitability of the proposed approach to deliver against requirements, and identification of any opportunities to add value to this 	25
2. Team and organisational experience in conducting similar work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrate experience of the team doing relevant work, specifically in conducting successful interviews with potentially vulnerable young people • Evidence of experience in the challenges and considerations involved in this work • How the skills and experience of the team will be used and managed to best effect (where there is a partnership please include specific about how this will be managed, add value and any experience of successful collaboration) • Specifics about the methodology and quality assurance process • Specifics about ethical and safeguarding processes 	25
3. Risks and mitigations and data protection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That the risks and challenges are considered and mitigation integrated into the proposed methodology • Consideration of security, confidentiality and data protection 	10
4. Presentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear articulation of plans for presenting work in clear and eye-catching ways • Evidence of ability to deliver high quality research, fieldwork and outputs • Ability to present findings clearly in both writing and visual formats (e.g. PowerPoints tailored to a range of audiences - analysts, commissioners, wider secretariat) 	20

5. Project management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear plan for communication and demonstration of a collaborative approach to taking the work forward, working closely with SMC as appropriate. • Evidence of organisational capacity, project management and quality assurance procedures, to deliver the project in the specified timescales and quality • The quality, timing and suitability of proposed outputs 	20
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Scoring scale

0	Nil or inadequate response. Fails to demonstrate an ability to meet the requirement.
1	Response meets less than half the stated requirement. It is partially relevant but generally poor and lacks relevant detail.
2	Response meets some but not all of the stated requirements. Lacks detail on how the requirement will be fulfilled in several areas.
3	The response meets the stated requirement. Answers are relevant and acceptable but may lack some detail.
4	The response fully meets the stated requirement in all areas. Answers are clear, relevant and elements of the response exceed the requirement by offering some added value.
5	The response exceeds the requirement in all areas. Answers are comprehensive, unambiguous and offer significant added value to the requirement which benefits SMC.

Quality scoring will represent 80% of the overall evaluation. A bidder who receives a score of less than 60 will not be considered. Below is an illustration of how the scoring will apply for the quality aspect.

Supplier	Quality score (for example purposes only)	Calculation	Final Quality Mark
A	60	60×0.8	48
B	55	N/A	N/A
C	80	80×0.8	64
D	75	75×0.8	60

Financial scoring

Financial scoring represents 20% of the overall evaluation. The bidder with the cheapest overall price will receive 20 marks and all other bids will be marked as a proportional variance from the top scoring bid. The formula being used for Relative Assessment for this procurement is:

$$\text{Bid Score} = (\text{Lowest Price}/\text{bid price}) \times 20$$

E.g. a bid that is 10% more expensive will receive 18 marks; one that is twice the price will receive 10 marks. An illustrative example is provided below:

Supplier	Price (for example purposes only)	Calculation	Final Finance Mark
A	50k	n/a	20
B	55k	$(50/55) \times 20$	18
C	70k	$(50/70) \times 20$	14
D	100k	$(50/100) \times 20$	10