

# EVIDENCE INTO PRACTICE PROGRAMME

**Application guidance for local areas**

**Closes:** Noon (12:00) on Friday 25 July 2025





# CONTENTS

Summary .....	3
About Foundations.....	3
The Evidence into Practice offer .....	4
About our Evidence into Practice offer .....	6
Background .....	6
The local tier: Evidence into Practice work with nine Partner Places.....	7
Applying to be a Foundations Partner Place .....	9
Appendix .....	13
Reference copy of the Expression of Interest form.....	13



# SUMMARY

Foundations, the national What Works Centre for Children & Families, is excited to launch an Expressions of Interest (EOI) call, to receive applications from Local Authority Children's Services in England to become one of nine Partner Places as part of our new Evidence into Practice programme. The programme will support the effective use of evidence to strengthen children's and family services and improve outcomes for children and families. This programme is relevant to support for families across Family Hubs, Family Help and Children's Social Care.

Each of the awarded local authorities in the Evidence into Practice programme – one per region in England - will receive £100,000 to support participation. This funding will be for the appointment of a 'Local Evidence Lead' and delivery of the programme (although spend may vary depending on the local context). Set-up of the programme will take place following award, between **October 2025 and March 2027**.

## Why is Evidence into Practice right for you?

- It is an opportunity to access and implement the best available evidence to improve local services and the outcomes of the children and families you work with
- It provides funding between October 2025 and March 2027 to support implementation of evidence led interventions, and for a Local Evidence Lead role to drive evidence use
- It is designed to flex around your local priorities, and gives you access to support, tools and resources to help you to implement the Children's Social Care reforms and early intervention.

This guidance sets out details of the Evidence into Practice programme, and how to apply to become an Evidence into Practice Partner Place.

If you are interested in submitting a proposal, please complete the [Expression of Interest application form](#) and submit this and any supporting document [via the online portal](#) **by noon (12:00) on Friday 25 July 2025**. Full details on [how to apply](#) are available later in this document.

## About Foundations

Foundations is the national What Works Centre for Children and Families. Our mission is to generate and champion actionable evidence that improves services to support family relationships.

We make a difference through influencing policy and supporting local areas to use evidence-based approaches to improve outcomes for children and families.



At Foundations, we focus on robust evidence that has been shown to improve child outcomes. We have developed resources to support Local Authorities to put this type of evidence into practice. The Foundations Toolkit<sup>1</sup> provides accessible information on interventions and approaches that have been shown to improve outcomes for vulnerable children and families. The Toolkit includes:

- **Foundation's Guidebook**,<sup>2</sup> which contains over 130 interventions with at least preliminary evidence of improving children and families' outcomes. The Guidebook is a tool to support decision-making across the spectrum of need, from early intervention, including Family Hubs, and targeted services for children and families in Family Help and children's social care.
- **Practice Guides**,<sup>3</sup> commissioned by the Department for Education (DfE), and produced by Foundations: DfE have invested in a series of Practice Guides that provide evidence-based recommendations for leaders in children's social care. They summarise the strongest available evidence from the UK and internationally, about how to achieve the outcomes in the Children's Social Care National Framework.<sup>4</sup>

## The Evidence into Practice offer: working locally with Partner Places

Our Evidence into Practice offer is designed to support local authorities and their partners to implement robust, 'what works' evidence, based on impact evaluations, as they work to improve local services. Foundations will work with local authorities to put effective approaches into practice using Practice Guides and recommendations drawn from the Foundations Toolkit. This funding opportunity sits within the local tier of Foundations' wider Evidence into Practice offer. Details about [Foundations' wider approach](#) are detailed later in this document.

Designing and planning effective local services requires consideration of a range of evidence, including local data on population needs, professional insight and the views of children and families themselves. Eligibility

Only expressions of interest from local authority children's services departments in England will be accepted.

## Funding

Each of the awarded local authorities in the Evidence into Practice programme will receive £100,000 to fund programme delivery between October 2025 and March 2027.

---

<sup>1</sup> Foundations Toolkit: [www.foundations.org.uk/toolkit](http://www.foundations.org.uk/toolkit)

<sup>2</sup> Foundations Guidebook: <https://foundations.org.uk/about-the-guidebook/>

<sup>3</sup> Practice Guides: <https://foundations.org.uk/toolkit/practice-guides/>

<sup>4</sup> See: [Children's social care national framework](#).



The funding allocation consists of:

£60,000 for a **Local Evidence Lead (LEL)** post (see below for more about this role)

£40,000 delivery funding for activity to implement evidence-based support and interventions locally.

## Set-up

Set-up of the programme will take place following award, between **October 2025 and March 2026**. During this stage **local authorities** will recruit a Local Evidence Lead. Other typical set-up activities will include developing a delivery plan and agreeing data protection requirements.

## Delivery

From April 2026 to March 2027, Foundations will support Local Authorities with tools, workshops, and coaching to help them use Practice Guides and evidence-based interventions to inform service design and strategic decision-making, and implementation of these evidence-based approaches.

The Local Evidence Lead (LEL) will be an agent for change in the local system, addressing common barriers to evidence-based decision-making and supporting implementation of evidence-led approaches. Partner Places will share learning with neighbouring local authorities in the region, supported by Foundations, the DfE, Local Government Association and Principal Social Worker regional leads, to strengthen regional capacity, use evidence to drive implementation of the reforms .



# ABOUT OUR EVIDENCE INTO PRACTICE OFFER

## Background

Children's Services are undergoing significant transformation, with ambitious reforms aimed at improving outcomes for children and families. The government has set out how they expect local authorities (and safeguarding partners) to respond to these reforms in:

- **The Children's Social Care National Framework:**<sup>5</sup> the statutory guidance that sets the direction for practice in children's social care
- **The Children's Wellbeing and School's Bill:**<sup>6</sup> proposes measures to support system change; it also proposes measures to mandate the offer of Family Group Decision Making at pre-proceedings, require local authorities to publish their kinship local offer and for safeguarding partners to establish multi-agency child protection teams (MACPTs).
- **The Families First Partnership (FFP) Programme Guide:**<sup>7</sup> sets out a whole-system approach to rebalancing children's social care toward earlier intervention and has three strands; a new Family Help service bringing together Targeted Early Help and Child in Need, improved Multi-Agency Child Protection, and greater engagement with family networks through Family Group Decision Making. Funding for 2025-26 was announced in the last Local Government Funding Settlement and was ringfenced for preventative services. The Spending Review confirmed further funding for 2026-27 to 2028-2029 to support the implementation of these reforms, and resources to deliver the measures proposed in the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill.

For the reforms to the children's social care system to be successful, they must be based on high quality evidence about what has been shown to improve outcomes. However, it can be difficult to identify effective interventions that fit with the skills and capacity of the local workforce. Even where there is good evidence that a programme can work, how it is delivered can determine whether it delivers intended results. It is important therefore that local leaders can access support to embed evidence-based approaches in service design and delivery.

Putting evidence into practice can be complex. It requires capacity to consider how interventions match the needs of diverse local populations and to ensure high quality implementation. Despite the appetite among local authorities to use evidence to strengthen services, there is often a gap between what evidence has been shown to improve outcomes and what is available for children and families locally. For example, despite research evidence demonstrating the effectiveness of

---

<sup>5</sup> See: [Children's social care national framework](#).

<sup>6</sup> See: <https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3909>

<sup>7</sup> See: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/families-first-partnership-programme>.



parenting support in improving children's behavioral and emotional needs, mental health and educational attainment, the best evidenced models are not widely available. Our Evidence into Practice programme is designed to help local authorities address these challenges; to fill evidence gaps; and to promote a culture of evidence-led practice in local areas.

## The three tiers of the Evidence into Practice offer

Evidence into Practice has three tiers: national, regional and local:

- **National:** Foundations will deliver events, networking opportunities, and work with sector-led improvement bodies to provide resources and support for all local authorities to use evidence effectively
- **Regional:** Foundations will engage with existing networks such as Regional Improvement & Innovation Alliances (RIIAs) to increase their awareness and use of robust evidence locally through communities of practice
- **Local:** Foundations will work with nine local authority Partner Places, one in each region of England, over an initial period of 18 months, to support them to implement and embed evidence.

### The local tier: Evidence into Practice work with nine Partner Places

#### Each Partner Place will receive:

1. £100k funding over 2025/6 and 2026/7 to fund a Local Evidence Leader to lead the work, in partnership with Foundations, and to support delivery
2. Support from Foundations to implement evidence-based recommendations from Practice Guides and interventions from the Foundations Guidebook
3. Opportunities to showcase work to put evidence into practice to neighboring local authorities and local networks, and to promote it on regional and national platforms.

#### Each Partner Place will be expected to:

1. Provide a senior sponsor who is a member of the local authority Senior Strategic Management Team (SSMT)
2. Ensure a senior, strategic mandate for the aims of Evidence into Practice, and active commitments and engagement from relevant teams
3. Appoint a dedicated Local Evidence Lead
4. Identify and work with us to implement locally relevant, evidence-based recommendations and interventions from the Practice Guides and Foundations Guidebook
5. Act as an evidence ambassador and champion, working with Foundations to identify and share learning with neighbouring local authorities, and regional local authority and national partners using a range of communications channels, including communities of practice, events and webinars.



## Local Evidence Leadership

All partner places will be funded to develop the role of a Local Evidence Lead (LEL) who will build relationships and provide the system leadership needed to embed evidence use across children's services. Each LEL should be supported by the Senior Sponsor and report to the Children's Services Senior Management Team (CSSMT). They will work closely with senior strategic leads and multi-agency partners advising on increasing evidence use and driving evidence-based practice while responding to the diverse needs of the local population. This model has been used on [Foundations' Changemakers programme](#). Foundations can provide an example job description and person specification. The LEL will be responsible for building evidence-informed leadership across children's services and local partnerships, accessing support from Foundations to apply evidence to plan and design effective services, implement evidence-based interventions, and share learning and expertise at both regional and national levels. Foundations' Evidence into Practice offer for 2025/26 and 2026/7 will provide a structured approach to using evidence to strengthen local services and improve the outcomes of vulnerable children and families. It aims to:

- Support local authorities to implement recommendations and evidence-based interventions from Practice Guides and the Foundations Guidebook
- Empower leaders to critically engage with evidence and embed a culture of evidence based decision-making
- Generate shareable insights on how to put evidence into practice effectively to improve outcomes for children and families.

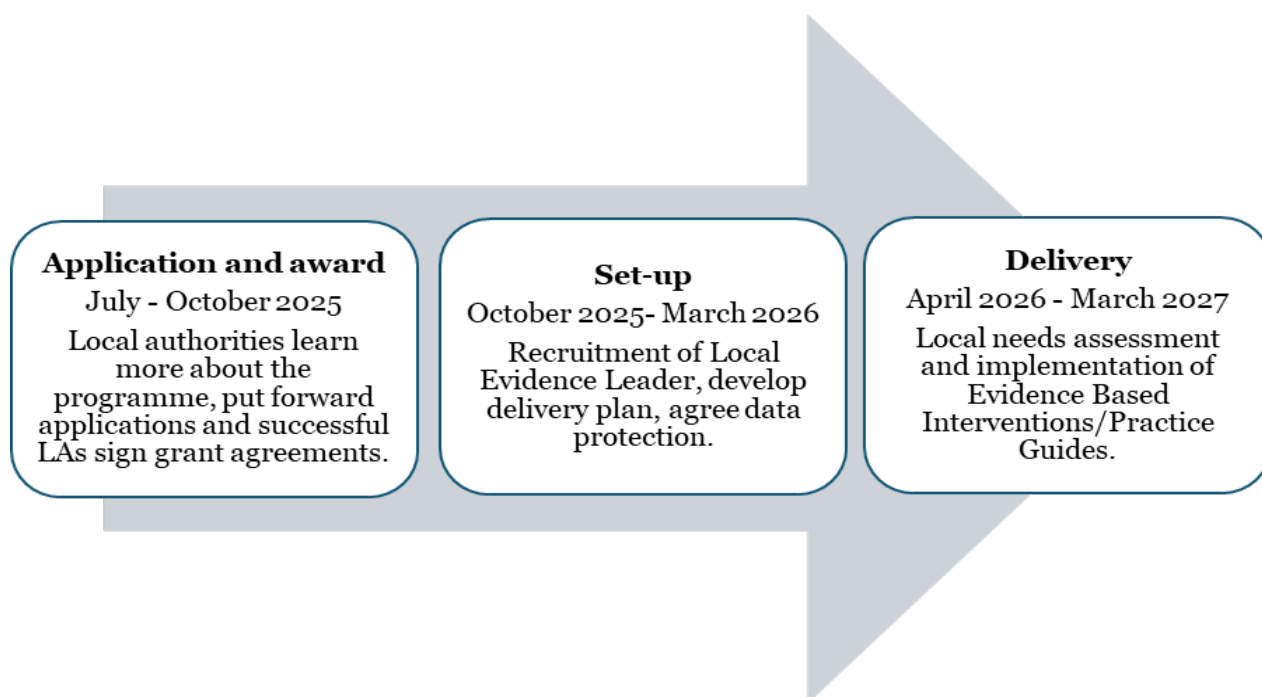
## Stages of the Evidence into Practice programme

This is an initial 18-month programme as set out below, although it has the potential to be extended. The full 18 months of set-up and delivery should be considered in the expression of interest.





## Timeline



## Applying to be a Foundations Partner Place

Foundations would like to appoint nine local authorities, one per region in England, to become Evidence into Practice partners. The expected application process and timetable are described below.

### Stage 1 Expression of Interest (EOI) process

1. [Download the Expression of Interest \(EOI\) application form](#). This is a Word document that should be completed and then submitted online. Detailed guidance to complete the EOI application form is available [in the appendix](#) of this document.

To support you to complete the EOI, we are offering three dates to join a webinar about Evidence into Practice and becoming a Partner Place. These webinars will provide a chance to learn more about the programme and ask questions and. Sessions will take place on:

- Wednesday 9 July (12:00–13:00) – [Sign up](#)
- Thursday 10 July (14:30–15:30pm) – [Sign up](#)
- Thursday 17 July (12:00–13:00) 2025 – [Sign up](#).

2. If you are considering submitting an EOI, please advise us by completing [this short online form](#).
3. Submit your completed EOI application form [via the online portal](#).



Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) will be regularly updated and available [on our website](#).

For anything else you would like to contact about please email:  
[PracticeDevelopment@foundations.org.uk](mailto:PracticeDevelopment@foundations.org.uk).

## Overview of the full application process

### Stage 1: Expression of Interest

This stage is an opportunity to tell us about how the Evidence into Practice programme would work for you, the difference that you are hoping that it would help you to make, who you could involve in your local approach, and your initial risk assessment.

One key factor for becoming a Partner Place is that you can identify a senior sponsor with a mandate to lead the programme locally, and recruit and select a Local Evidence Leader to drive the programme forward. You will also need to explain how your application has been or will be discussed with partners in your region.

The deadline for submitting your Expression of Interest form is **noon (12:00) on Friday 25 July 2025**. The form should be completed in this Word document, which is then uploaded and submitted via [the online portal](#).

If you are considering submitting an EOI, please advise us by completing this short online form.

Foundations will review all applications (see [stage 1 assessment criteria](#) below) and may seek additional clarifications in writing.

### Stage 2: Discussion with Foundations

Once stage 1 shortlisting has been done by Foundations, if your EOI is taken through to Stage 2, we will invite you to a 60–90-minute call to discuss your EOI with your named senior sponsor and key members of the leadership and delivery team.

These meetings will take place between 5–8 August 2025 and we will send details to book a slot as soon as possible after Stage 1 shortlisting.

This meeting with the Foundations team will explore your EOI and how you would approach taking part in the Evidence into Practice programme. The discussion is to enable both Foundations and your Senior Sponsor to understand your readiness to become a Partner Place. Foundations' Practice Development Team will then shortlist areas based on selection criteria and invite a smaller number of local authorities into Stage 3 to complete a full application.

### Stage 3: Application (by invitation only)

Shortlisted areas will be invited on Thursday 14 August 2025 to complete an application to be received by Foundations before midnight on Friday 12 September. This will require further information about local goals, governance and an outline plan for how you would use the available funding. You will also be required to submit due diligence information.



Each local authority is expected to use the programme funding to appoint a Local Evidence Leader who can build relationships and provide the system leadership needed to embed evidence use across children's services.

We are interested to hear how local resources, including funding or in-kind contributions will be used to contribute to or extend this work. Shared resourcing is likely to secure a sustainable and longer-term commitment.

Foundations Practice Development and Programmes teams will review applications against the selection criteria and confirm the successful Evidence into Practice local authority partners by Friday 10 October 2025. Local authorities will need to ensure that their grant agreement is signed and in place by Friday 31 October 2025.

## Stage 1 assessment criteria

We will assess your responses in this form and at interview based on the following criteria

**1. Local area fit** including:

- Identifiable local authority in a region in England
- Most recent children's service ILACS inspection outcome (Foundations are interested in selecting local authorities with a range of Ofsted outcomes onto the programme.
- Identification of a senior sponsor who is an identified member of the local authority Senior Strategic Leadership Team with sufficient authority and capacity to steward the programme.
- Potential to directly benefit and improve the outcomes of babies, children, young people and families
- Alignment with implementation of the transformation of children's services reforms including Family Hubs
- Fit with local demographic population needs and the needs of minoritised ethnic children and families
- Active engagement with relevant local stakeholders throughout the programme.

**2. Relationships with other local authorities** including:

- Past shared learning either regionally or nationally
- Makes a case for sharing learning at a regional level.

**3. Proposed evidence use** including:

- Early analysis of how evidence could be used in transformation activity
- Commitment to using evidence to drive system change as part of children's services reforms through implementation of Practice Guides or Evidence Based Interventions, driven by local evidence leadership.

**4. Risks and issues** including:

- Early estimation of risks and mitigations.



5. **Budget** including:

- Delivery assurance within the timeframe and budget envelope.



# APPENDIX

## Guidance to complete the Expression of Interest application form

The section below outlines the questions as they appear on the [Expression of Interest application form](#).

### Section 1: Local area suitability

The aim of this section is to describe your local authority, local area partnerships, and local context. We are interested in your approach to implementing the children's services reforms and how you think Evidence into Practice could support local decision making for the population you serve.

#### **Q1. Please tell us the region in which your Local Authority is situated.**

- The region in which your local authority is situated.
- If there will be any changes to your region related to Local Government reorganisation

#### **Q2. Please tell us your most recent Ofsted judgement (Max 200 words).**

- Your most recent ILACS judgement. Please add a link to your report. Foundations are interested in selecting local authorities with a range of Ofsted outcomes onto the programme.

#### **Q3. Who is the Senior Sponsor responsible for supporting this EOI? Please provide email contact details.**

- Name of your Senior Sponsor and email contact address.

The individual identified should be the most senior member of your Senior Strategic Leadership Team (SSLT), such as the Director of Children's Services. The individual named should have the mandate to support the programme and the responsibility to ensure delivery by the Local Evidence Leader.

#### **Q4. Please tell us about your anticipated governance arrangements for this work (Max 300 words).**

Tell us about which existing or newly formed strategic boards will oversee the work of Evidence into Practice and any operational level steering group or workstreams.



### **Q5. Tell us which partners you would involve in the programme (Max 300 words).**

Please outline how your local safeguarding partnership will support you in being a Partner Place. We would like to understand the partnership's role in this work and how they will be involved in shaping and delivering the work

Describe the governance arrangements supporting your multi-agency collaboration, where this work will sit within your existing arrangement and how responsibilities could be shared or coordinated across partners.

### **Q6. What difference are you hoping that being a Partner Place will make for children's outcomes? (Max. 500 words)**

We are looking for demonstrable evidence of genuine support for the use of evidence in local decision-making from the senior sponsor, strategic leadership and a relevant elected member.

We would like to understand your commitment to using evidence to drive system change as part of children's services reforms through implementation of Practice Guides and Evidence-based interventions

#### ***Things to consider***

- Why this programme is needed in your area
- What issue/need is it aiming to address?
- How you see being a Partner Place could lead to better outcomes for children and young people, including how minoritised communities will be reflected within these outcomes.

#### ***Top tips***

- Try to describe the observable change that the programme seeks to achieve, even if it's not directly or easily measurable
- Make sure that the outcome(s) of the programme matches the priorities of the call for proposals.

### **Q7. How do you think the Partner Places' work in this programme will help strengthen and support your plan for transformation of children's services? (Max. 500 words)**

Tell us where you are within the Families First Partnership (FFP) reforms and how you see being a Partner Place supporting you on this journey.

Tell us if there is a particular part of the system that you wish to prioritise and why for example; Family Support offered in Family Hubs, Family Help, Child protection or Children in care. This could be from your local data and needs assessments, Ofsted recommendations / preparations.

We need to understand what support needs the children and families in your area have, how you know this, and how you see that this offer will help you develop services in line with your local



needs. Please detail how you currently meet the needs of minority ethnic families and how you wish to improve your work with these families.

### **Top tips**

- Outline any pertinent needs assessment data
- Outline family experience data for example from minoritised groups, local consultations or focus groups
- Share findings from past evaluations of existing services and interventions.

## **Section 2: Use of evidence in relation to the national reforms of children's social care.**

### **Q8. Tell us about how you see research evidence supporting systems change and improving outcomes. (Max. 500 words).**

Please describe any recent steps you have taken to prepare for using research evidence in decision-making or service improvement. This might include internal assessments, planning activities, or early actions to build capacity for evidence use.

Outline your commitment to recruiting and deploying Local Evidence Leadership and to exploring the implementation of What Works evidence.

## **Section 3: Risks and issues**

### **Q9. What initial risks and mitigation of those risks would you identify in your participation in the Evidence into Practice programme and in making change happen locally? – Please identify at least three risks.**

To reduce burden, Foundations are not expecting a detailed breakdown of risks and mitigations, however we would like to understand the high-level risks you consider would relate to the programme.

## **Section 4: Budget and timeline**

### **Q10. Confirm that you can deliver this programme between October 2025 and March 2027 within the available budget.**

If you are invited to submit a stage 2 application, you will need to send us a detailed budget and timeline. At this stage however, please just confirm that you will be able to deliver the full programme in principle in line with the specified budget and timescale.

## **Section 5: Declaration**

Please confirm:



- Details of the lead applicant
- That the lead applicant has read and understood the assessment criteria
- That the lead applicant has answered questions as accurately to the best of their knowledge and belief
- That the lead applicant can provide initial costing and financial information
- That the lead applicant understands how Foundations will store and use the information provided in the application form and have read our [Privacy Policy](#)
- That the lead applicant has signed the application form, providing details including their name, job title, and contact email.