

Invitation to tender

This ITT is to fund a study that will co-produce the refinement of a framework and survey tools to measure children's outcomes following private law proceedings, and pilot them with children and their carers, ideally who have been through private law proceedings.



1. Background to the Nuffield Family Justice Observatory

The Nuffield Family Justice Observatory was set up by the Nuffield Foundation to find and fill the gaps in understanding about the family justice system in England and Wales, highlight the areas where change will have the biggest impact and foster collaboration to make that change happen. A bridge between the academic community and frontline practitioners, the Nuffield FJO is an independent and resolutely focused on improving outcomes for children and families by improving the use of data and research evidence in decision-making.

2. This Research Study

Currently, there are no measures for the outcomes of children in private law. Children and young people have told Nuffield FJO that they want others to know and care about their outcomes and subjective wellbeing. Recent publications including the National Audit Office's report have highlighted that private law is often assessed by the efficiency of cases, rather than by outcomes. This ITT is for a study to build off existing frameworks to refine a survey tool, or set of tools, for measuring children's outcomes following private law proceedings, that could be practically used in any future data collection exercises for private law cases.

3. Focus and scope of the feasibility study

There are lots of existing frameworks to measure children's outcomes when they have experienced family adversity or separation. In designing an outcomes framework for this project, we do not want the team to start from scratch. We expect the research team to learn from existing frameworks and from reliable, validated, tools to measure outcomes for children and young people. In their development of the outcomes framework, it may be appropriate to lift a framework/set of frameworks as a starting point for testing what outcomes matter with young people. We have done a scoping exercise, looking at existing frameworks and survey tools and engaging with thought leaders in relevant applied children's outcomes research. We expect the team to build off the existing work, particularly Bright Spots Survey from Coram Voice.

We are looking for a research team to work with children and young people, to test existing outcomes frameworks and co-produce an outcomes measurement framework and survey tools to collect data on these children's outcomes, from both parents/carers and children. We are interested in outcomes in a broad sense – including multiple aspects of wellbeing and life satisfaction including self-esteem, positive relationships and happiness.

The aims are to:

- Explore existing frameworks and co-produce the refinement of an existing outcomes survey tools or tools with children and young people that can be used to gain an understanding of a child's view of their life post-proceedings to include:
 - The child's wellbeing
 - Their satisfaction with the relationship with the parents, siblings, and individuals who matter to them
 - Other relevant outcomes children feel are important to describe their lives e.g., education, health, activities that interest them
- Refine or develop survey tool(s) that can be administered to parents/carers to understand their view of their child/children's life/lives post-proceedings
- Pilot the survey tools with a group of children and young people and parents/carers, ideally those who have been through private proceedings.

Measuring Children's Outcomes and "Wellbeing"

A number of common outcomes frameworks have been developed within children's services and policy, and they tend to focus on broadly similar domains: health and wellbeing, education, development, relationships, and safety or stability. However, there is considerable variation in how outcomes are conceptualised, measured, and interpreted. Two of the relevant frameworks for children in private law include the [**Bright Spots Wellbeing framework**](#) and the [**Common outcomes framework for children**](#).

Wellbeing is a multidimensional concept as outlined in Ruggeri et al. 2020 which define wellbeing as "the combination of feeling good and functioning well; the experience of positive emotions such as happiness and contentment as well as the development of one's potential, having some control over one's life, having a sense of purpose, and experiencing positive relationships". There are numerous wellbeing measures capturing varied dimensions including life satisfaction/happiness, positive relationships, self-esteem, optimism, resilience etc. (see Huppert et al. 2009). We would like the outcomes framework to capture how safe children feel.

In the context of measuring wellbeing of children, there are many tools that have been co-produced for various cohorts of children and young people including Coram Voice's Bright Spots programme that has a number of surveys to measure children and young people's wellbeing in care and after care. The Beewell programme developed by the University of Manchester, The Gregson Family Foundation and Anna Freud, includes a survey to measure wellbeing of children in the Greater Manchester area to encourage action to improve wellbeing. There are also a number of more generalised existing tools that focus on children's wellbeing, and cover similar ground to outcomes frameworks; ONS wellbeing measures (4 questions that are used in the Annual Population Survey and the Millennium Cohort Study), the Children's Society Good Childhood reports (2016) and the Children's Worlds survey (www.isciweb.org/) each have 10 domains through which they measure wellbeing. The domains are: Family, Home, Friends, Choice, Health, Appearance, Time Use/Leisure, Money and Things, Future, and School. For a more specific focus on wellbeing and mental health, there are resources available from the Child Outcomes Research Consortium directory.

Involve ment of young people

We expect this feasibility study to include direct engagement with children and young people involved in private law proceedings to explore the relevance of existing frameworks and measurement tools and understand what aspects of wellbeing matter to them. This work will help improve the family justice system's overall understanding of the views and experiences of children and families after private law proceedings are complete and will be an important step to improving children's voices being heard.

Longer-term goal

This feasibility study will assess the options for collecting data about children's outcomes from parents/carers and children who have been involved in private law proceedings. The longer-term goal is to test a tool or set of survey tools that could ultimately be administered on a larger scale – ideally at the system level.

This feasibility study is focused on the content of what outcomes should be measured and design and testing surveys of relevant indicators with children and young people and the acceptability of these measures and of answering these questions.

We commissioned separate work on how the family justice system could operationalise data collection at large-scale, and researchers should build in some time to engage with the research findings from this.

Future project

We envisage a future project which would test the outcomes measurement tools being embedded in the family justice system – i.e., professionals in the family justice system potentially being part of the process of identifying suitable participants, or testing an opt-out option for recruitment. The embedding of the measures and feasibility of data collection is beyond this project.

Support from the NFJO

Staff at the NFJO will be available to provide support throughout the project, e.g. connecting the research team with the Family Justice Young People's Board. We will expect to meet at least monthly in short meetings to check in, but support is available on an ongoing basis.

4. Tender Requirements

Tenders should set out a proposed methodology and key research questions.

i. Areas of interest

Areas of particular interest that need to be addressed include:

- What outcomes should be captured to get a broad, holistic view about children's and young people's lives following private law proceedings? This should be informed by children and young people's views and existing outcomes frameworks.
- As part of measuring outcomes, what was the wellbeing of children post-proceedings and what components of wellbeing should be measured? Again, this should be informed by children and young people's views and existing frameworks.
- What data collections tools would be appropriate to collect information on these outcomes? Ensuring these are age-appropriate and language and length is appropriate.

Ideally there would be some questions included in survey tools that are comparable to existing wellbeing surveys of the general population, that could then be used as a comparison group in analysis.

ii. Methodology

This research is expected to build off existing research and involve a level of participatory research. Applicants should propose a suitable methodology for refining an outcomes framework and creating survey tools – that involves collaborating with children and young people with lived experience in both design and testing. This should build on the existing evidence base about measuring children's outcomes. The tools should be age appropriate.

The tender response should include information about how children and young people will be engaged in the study. We expect the study to include a range of experiences of young people and families. It is important to us that this study captures the experience of families with a diversity of family structures, from ethnic minority backgrounds, parents with learning needs, and children with special educational needs and disabilities, and we will look for a clear exposition of how the research team intends to look for respondents with diverse backgrounds.

iii. Research Infrastructure and support

Applicants must consider the safeguarding and ethical elements of their methodology closely. Potential risks and issues and how they will be addressed should be set out clearly in tenders, including thoughts about how appropriate consent for the young people will be sought, as well as any support that may be required. We also expect reference to ensuring data protection and storage protocols.

Ethics

We expect proposals to address ethical requirements in their application. This could include engagement with a recognised university-based ethics process. If such a process is not available to the applicants, we would be open to exploring how the NFJO might facilitate an ethical review. In any event, we expect all proposals to clearly set out how they will ensure their approach is ethically sound. Full funding of the project will be contingent on successful completion of an agreed ethics process.

iv. Outputs

Expected outputs include:

- An outcomes framework co-designed with children and young people with lived experience of private law proceedings. The framework should give context about what matters to children and young people in shaping how they are feeling, and showing what parts of their lives are going well or not.
- Pilot survey tools for children and young people to capture their outcomes.
- A pilot survey or other appropriate data collection tool for parents/carers to capture their *children's* outcomes.
- Final versions of all surveys or data collection tool(s)
- A final report outlining the results from the survey tools piloted with a group of children and young people, and parents/carers, including a discussion about what could be improved if the exercise is repeated in the future. This must be concise and written in accessible language.

v. Project management and publication

We will setup regular update meetings, e.g., monthly catch ups, on project progress including any emerging findings.

The final report will be published on the Nuffield FJO [website](#). In addition, Nuffield FJO may produce a short summary, drawing on the findings, intended for decision-makers in the family justice system.

In the interest of accessibility and as part of our commitment to equity, diversity and inclusion, we encourage authors to follow the below guidelines:

- Write in short, clear sentences and paragraphs.
- Avoid using unnecessarily complex words and phrases.
- Make content unambiguous.
- Expand acronyms on first use. For example, the Ministry of Justice (MoJ).
- Consider providing a glossary for terms readers may not know.
- Use list formatting as appropriate.
- Use short blocks of text.

- Consider using images, illustrations, video, audio, and symbols to help clarify meaning.
- Complex diagrams will require a text description that can be used as an alt text tag on images for screen readers.
- Use inclusive language. We will provide a NFJO style guide for further information.

vi. Budget, timescales, and milestones

We envisage this project to cost circa £40-60,000 inclusive of both VAT and all expenses. We are open to some discussions on the budget.

Payments will be released in stages alongside agreed milestones, providing these have been met. We suggest the following structure for payments:

- 50% following contract signing;
- 50% following NFJO sign-off on final report.

The contractual milestones shall be clearly documented in any contract entered into as a result of this ITT. The successful tender applicant will be expected to sign a services agreement with Nuffield Family Justice Observatory.

5. Indicative timetable

Set out below is the procurement and approximate delivery timetable. We appreciate the procurement timescales set out may be shorter than for many tenders, but we are keen the project gets under way swiftly.

DATE	TIMETABLE
29th January 2026	Publication of ITT
12 th February 2026	Deadline for clarification questions
5th March 2026	Deadline for proposals
19th March 2026	Hold for interviews
26th March 2026	Communication on outcome for applicants
2 nd October 2026	Proposed deadline for delivery of report – subject to agreement based on proposals.
20 th November 2026	Proposed schedule for publication of final report – subject to agreement

6. Legal and contracting

We will send our contracting template to the successful applicant.

Confidential information

You agree to keep confidential at all times, whether during or after the selection procedure, any confidential information, whether it's marked "Confidential" or deemed to be Confidential, and to take all necessary steps to preserve the confidentiality of such Confidential Information including, without limitation, by disclosing relevant material to your employees or agents only on a strictly 'need to know' basis, and only for the purpose of this selection procedure and on the basis that they maintain the confidentiality of the Confidential Information.

Warranty

You warrant, represent and undertake to the Nuffield Foundation that all information provided, and representations made to us during the selection procedure (including, without limitation, all information and representations contained in your proposal) are true, accurate and not misleading. If, after submitting your proposal, there is any change in your circumstances which may substantively affect such information or representations made in your proposal to us, you shall promptly notify us in writing setting out the relevant details in full. The Nuffield Foundation shall be entitled to withdraw from any further co-operation with you without any requirement to give notice, and without any liability to you.

Intellectual property

You acknowledge that all intellectual property rights of the Nuffield Foundation remain our sole and exclusive property. Furthermore, any materials provided by the Nuffield Foundation to you shall belong and/or accrue exclusively to the Nuffield Foundation. You acknowledge that final outputs or foreground intellectual property generated during the performance of the project shall belong to the Nuffield Foundation.

If needed, the Nuffield Foundation is willing to grant a non-exclusive license to use the outputs for research and non-commercial purposes.

Publications

The Nuffield Foundation must be acknowledged in all outputs resulting from the project and any communications announcements must be agreed with the Foundation in advance. The acknowledgement of the Foundation must use our standardised acknowledgement / disclaimer text which will be provided by the Nuffield Foundation along with our logo and guidance on its formatting and presentation.

The Nuffield Foundation is committed to publishing, promoting and sharing outputs from this research, but reserve the right to request changes, edit and / or delay publication if an output is considered not to be of publishable standard. Outputs may also be subject to external peer review prior to publication being agreed.

Contracting

Nothing contained in this ITT, nor any other communication made by or on behalf of the Nuffield Foundation or its representatives, shall constitute an offer capable of becoming a contract between you and the Nuffield Foundation. If your proposal is selected, you will enter into a Services Agreement with the Nuffield Foundation which will include the above stated.

7. Submitting a proposal

Your proposal should be in English and consist of no more than six pages (excluding CVs) setting out:

- a proposed approach and methodology including safeguarding and ethical considerations for engagement with young people
- up to three specific examples of research you have completed, ideally that includes co-production with young people and the names and contact details of 2 referees who will be able to comment on your work.
- a project plan with clear timescales showing key activities, milestones and deliverables. We understand that exact details of the project will be dependent on local plans and therefore would expect the research proposal to be illustrative rather than definitive in this regard.
- brief details and CVs of the project lead (and/or team) to demonstrate that they possess the necessary qualifications and experience. We welcome applications from multi-disciplinary teams to reflect the breadth of issues covered by the evidence review.
- A budget breakdown.

All proposals should be submitted in PDF format and emailed to contactfjo@nuffieldfoundation.org no later than **17:00 on Thursday, 5th March 2026** clearly marked TENDER FOR RESEARCH: APPLICANT NAME

8. Submitting clarification questions

We welcome clarification questions. Clarification questions may be submitted by email sent to contactfjo@nuffieldfoundation.org no later than **17:00 on Thursday, 12th February 2026** clearly marked TENDER FOR RESEARCH: CLARIFICATION QUESTION. Responses to clarification questions will be published on the NFJO website on or by 17th February 2026. All questions and responses will be anonymised. An email notice announcing the publication of clarification question responses will be sent to anyone who has submitted a clarification question.

9. Evaluation of proposals

Proposals will be evaluated according to the selection criteria listed below:

1. Expertise in relation to the subject matter
2. Quality and robustness of the proposed approach and methodology
3. Proven experience of working with young people and professionals from diverse backgrounds in the family justice system/Local Authorities in engaging and ethical ways.
4. Potential and ability to deliver high quality work on time and to budget
5. Value for money

The following scoring methodology will be applied to responses:

SCORE	COMMENTARY
1-3	Response provides Nuffield FJO with a poor-weak level of confidence in the supplier's ability to meet its requirements
4-6	Response provides Nuffield FJO with a moderate-good level of confidence in the supplier's ability to meet its requirements
7-8	Response provides Nuffield FJO with a very good level of confidence in the supplier's ability to meet its requirements
9-10	Response provides Nuffield FJO with a high level of confidence in the supplier's ability to meet its requirements

For further information, or if you have any queries relating to the submission process, please contact Martin Burns, mburns@nuffieldfoundation.org / 0207 323 6242