

PROVISION OF AUTISM STRATEGY EVALUATION

REFERENCE: ASE – 01

A proposal for Scottish Government

July 2020



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SCHEDULE 4: QUALITY QUESTIONS

Section 1: Mandatory Questions

Relating to Criminal Convictions

1. The common law offence of conspiracy; where that conspiracy relates to participation in a criminal organisation as defined in Article 2 of Council Framework Decision 2008/841 /JHA on the fight against organised crime or an offence under sections 28 or 30 of the Criminal Justice and Licensing (Scotland) Act 2010;
2. a) Corruption; within the meaning of section 1(2) of the Public Bodies Corrupt Practices Act 1889 or section 1 of the Prevention of Corruption Act 1906, where the offence relates to active corruption as defined in Article 3 of the Council Act of 26th May 1997 and Article 3(1) of Council Joint Action 98/742 /JHA;
b) Bribery or Corruption within the meaning of sections 68 and 69 of the Criminal Justice (Scotland) Act 2003, where the offence relates to active bribery or corruption
c) Bribery within the meaning of sections 1 or 6 of the Bribery Act 2010;
3. Fraud where the offence relates to fraud affecting the European Communities' financial interests as defined by Article 1 of the Convention on the protection of the financial interests of the European Communities
 - a) the offence of cheating the Revenue
 - b) the common law offence of fraud
 - c) the common law offence of theft or fraud
 - d) fraudulent trading within the meaning of section 458 of the Companies Act 1985, or section 993 of the Companies Act 2006;
 - e) fraudulent evasion within the meaning of section 170 of the Customs and Excise Management Act 1979 or section 72 of the Value Added Tax Act 1994;
 - f) an offence in connection with taxation in the European Union within the meaning of section 71 of the Criminal Justice Act 1993;
 - g) the common law offence of uttering; or
 - h) the common law offence of attempting to pervert the course of justice;
4. Terrorist offences or offences linked to terrorist activities; listed in section 41 of the Counter-Terrorism Act 2008; or Schedule 2 to that Act where the court has determined that there is a terrorist connection.
- 5a) Money laundering within the meaning of sections 340(11) and 415 of the Proceeds of Crime Act 2002;
- 5b) Money Laundering or Terrorist financing; an offence in connection with the proceeds of criminal conduct within the meaning of section 93A, 93B or 93C of the Criminal Justice Act 1988

6. Child labour and other forms of trafficking in human beings; any offence under Part 1 of the Human Trafficking and Exploitation (Scotland) Act 2015 or under any provision referred to in the Schedule to that Act;
7. Drugs trafficking, an offence in connection with the proceeds of drug trafficking within the meaning of section 49, 50 or 51 of the Drug Trafficking Act 1994;
8. Any other offence within the meaning of Article 57(1) of the Directive as defined by the law of any EEA state or any part thereof.

Question		Answer
1	Has the bidder itself or any person who is a member of its administrative, management or supervisory body or has powers of representation, decision or control therein been the subject of a conviction by final judgment within the last five years for one of the reasons (1–8) listed above?	No
2	If the answer is yes to any, please provide details including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Date of conviction • Which of the points 1–8 it relates to and the reason • Name of the person convicted • A description of any measures taken by the bidder to demonstrate its reliability despite the existence of this relevant ground for exclusion 	

Relating to the Levels of Insurance Cover

Question		Answer
1	The Bidder confirms they already have or can commit to obtain, prior to the commencement of the contract, the levels of insurance cover indicated at Schedule 8 (Terms and Conditions), section 14.3 (as a minimum)	Yes, I already have this
2	Provide details of the coverage you refer to in Q1 (above) here:	

Type	Limits	Insurer	Policy No.	Start Date	End Date
████████████████████	██	████████████████	████████████████	████████	████████
████████████████████	██	████████████████	████████████████	████████	████████
████████████████████	██	████████████████	████████████████	████████	████████

Section 2: Quality Questions

Section 1. Understanding the requirement

Q1. Introduction to proposal, demonstrating a full and clear understanding of requirements

Autism, also referred to as autism spectrum disorder (ASD), is the term applied to a range of neurodevelopmental conditions which all affect how an individual communicates and relates to other people. It is a dynamic field, there are many views on what autism is and it exists on a wide spanning spectrum presenting differently for every individual. This is one of the key challenges for any national strategy for autism – the competing demands of planning and responding to the needs of many different individuals against that of establishing meaningful and consistent targeted services and specialist provision.

The Scottish Government and COSLA launched the Scottish Strategy for Autism in 2011. With an initial commitment of £13.4 million, the strategy set out 26 recommendations and the vision that by 2021 'individuals on the autism spectrum are respected, accepted and valued by their communities and have confidence in services to treat them fairly so that they are able to have meaningful and satisfying lives'.

The 26 recommendations lead to six aims and linked actions:

- strategic leadership;
- best value for services;
- collaboration and involvement in decision making;
- cross-agency working through stronger networks;
- high quality diagnosis,
- interventions and support; and
- wider opportunities.

Actions were linked to a three-stage approach with the intention of covering foundation issues within two years, planning for whole-life journeys in five years, and formulating holistic personal approaches by the end of the ten-year strategy period.

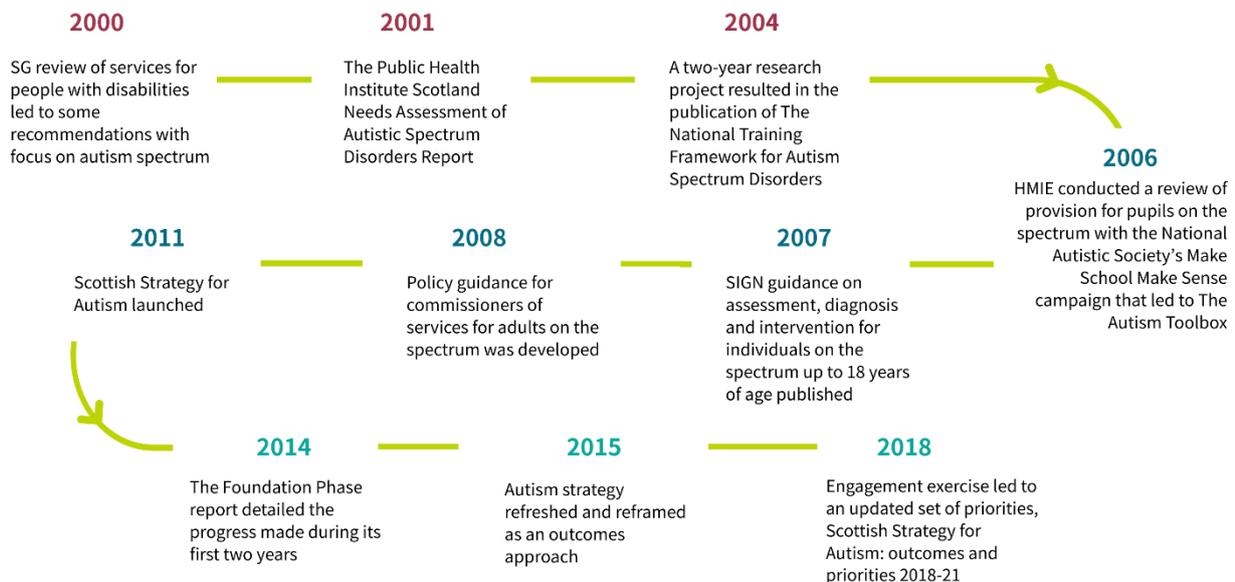
The recent Microsegmentation Research carried out in Scotland established a robust national Scottish autism prevalence rate of 1.035% (103.5 per 10,000), which means that there are approximately 44,133 autistic people in Scotland.

As the ten-year landmark approaches, the Scottish Government's Autism and Learning Disability policy team require a contractor to undertake research to evaluate the impact of the Scottish Strategy for Autism, which will identify what recommendations and priorities have been delivered and the findings

will also inform how best to develop future autistic policy in Scotland. This evidence will also be used to report to Ministers and the Scottish Parliament.

Before the strategy was developed and since its launch there has been a wide range of activities, developments and reviews to inform and improve the services for autistic people.

Figure 1: Timeline of autism-related government developments/reviews



Therefore, the successful bidder needs to be cognisant of the perception and communication of autism from the autistic community themselves and the wide range of work that has been developed and delivered. This must inform the design of the evaluation approach (described in detail in the next section), who contributes to the research, the tools used to carry out this work and production of the final evaluation outputs in early 2021. These analytical, policy and practice focussed outputs as a minimum will include:

- Social research report of no more than 60 pages clearly articulating the projects findings,
- Executive summary of no more than 10 pages and accessible to people with autism,
- Presentation for organisations involved in the evaluation and the wider organisations involved in providing services for autistic people.

The evaluation team that we are proposing for this work will bring their knowledge of working with organisations that support individuals with autism and their families and experience of evaluating strategies and programmes of work to evidence the impact and inform future development. Our work over the last few years for the Scottish Government to research and inform the Self Directed Support Strategy, Realigning Children's Services Programme and for NES/NHS Scotland the evaluation of the Cost of the School Day Programme and Public Health Leadership programme which have all reviewed existing evidence and engaged local and national stakeholders to understand the outcome of the work and to explore future recommendations that have informed various strategies.

We will bring the learning from this experience and apply it to the key stages of this evaluation which we agree should be focused on:

- a desk-based review of strategy documents and evidence;
- online interviews with policy professionals, autism organisations and autism experts; and
- virtual workshops in a sample of local authority areas with autism service providers.

We are confident that carrying out the research in this way and with a range of contributors will enable us to establish what recommendations and priorities were delivered through the strategy and explore its impact on the quality of services for autistic people.

Section 2. Method and added value approach

We have presented the questions in this section in a different order to how they appear in the brief, in order to ensure a logical flow in our response and to avoid repetition.

Q2. How tenderers propose to develop the brief further to add value.

We have designed the evaluation to take full cognisance of the work that has been undertaken since the strategy was developed and the desk based review will provide the team with the information to ensure that the identification of the achievements and gaps and those that have contributed, inform Phase 2 of the work. Furthermore we:

- have a team with extensive experience of evaluating national programmes and strategies and we will bring this expertise to this evaluation;
- are proposing to undertake 15 stakeholder interviews and facilitate 6 workshops to maximise the evidence gathering and understand impact and future focus of the strategy;
- are taking a flexible approach with the virtual workshops so that we can determine which platforms are most easily accessed/have permission to use in each area/sector. We have used our business accounts for Zoom, Skype, Microsoft Teams and Google Meet for other projects during the current pandemic and we will maximise engagement in the virtual workshops by using the functionality of the packages, e.g. screen sharing and breakout rooms;
- have included [REDACTED], an artist and illustrator, to visually minute each workshop discussion and as well as sharing her progress at the end of the workshop we will use those materials in the report but also to provide a visual record for all those that participated;
- have included a deliberative workshop with the Autism and Learning Disability policy team so that we can discuss the initial analysis and shape the report structure so that the final outputs fully address the needs of the SG; and
- will submit the draft report by 10 March rather than the 19 March to allow for ample time for you to comment on iterations of the report before it is due for final submission on 26 March.

Q4. How we intend to recruit participants, conduct the assessments and analyse resulting data

In the following section we provide a detailed description of our methodology and provide information on our approach to identifying the participants (see Phase 1 sections – inception meeting (page 8) and desk-based review (page 9), engagement of stakeholders (page 9), conducting the interviews and virtual workshops (see Phase 2 sections – stakeholder interviews (page 11) and virtual workshops (page 12) and analysing the data and evidence (see Phase 3 – analysis page 13).

Q1. Understanding of the policy environment and how the proposal addresses the policy problem

As we have discussed in the previous section, autism can present differently for every individual and the autistic community hold many views on how their autism should be supported. High-functioning vocal and articulate individuals may reject any definition of autism as disability or disorder, preferring to stress that they have a different way of being in, perceiving and engaging with the world. Whereas those families profoundly affected by what they identify as serious disabilities with a life-long impact on opportunity, engagement in society and ability to learn, work and live independently, seek an entirely different perception.

As a result, autism does not fall neatly into any one discipline. It is not exclusively a health or a social services issue and so it spans several areas and it impacts across many aspects an individual's life which means that autistic people and their families often fall between services or their needs being adequately met relies on the close co-operation of multiple agencies.

The outcomes within the Scottish Strategy for Autism – healthier life, choice and control, independence and active citizenship – recognise these complexities and their associated priorities were designed to drive forward the 2021 vision of the strategy and this work will provide an independent evaluation and impartial evidence on the impact of the strategy and the direction of future policy.

There are three research questions that the Autism and Learning Disability policy team seek to answer:

- How many of the strategies recommendations and priorities have been delivered and are additional deliverables evident?
- What impact has the strategy had on the services offered to autistic people in local authorities and the local services and charities that support them?
- What lessons might be gleaned from the delivery of the strategy's recommendations and what might these mean for the future policy direction

Methodological considerations

In designing this methodology we are cognisant of the need to ensure that multiple agencies are engaged in this evaluation so that the perspective and experience of the wide range of organisations that support autistic people and their families contribute to this work.

We are also mindful of the extensive work that has taken place over the last nine years that has drawn on individuals and organisations, most recently the refreshed Outcomes and Priorities framework was published in March 2018 for which more than 1200 contributed to that refresh. So, this work will need to be delivered in a way that does not feel like it is duplicating the efforts and contributions already made as part of that refresh and that those engaged are not fatigued by the work they have previously done to support developments.

The suggested approach in the invitation to tender does not involve those with the lived experience of autism, and we think this is appropriate at this time but it will be important to include those who have regular involvement with autistic people from across the spectrum, for example operational staff from special schools, so that they can bring their understanding and perspectives to the discussion.

In considering our approach to this work, we have taken account of the unprecedented situation that has resulted from the COVID-19 pandemic and the potential for a second wave in the winter months, therefore our evidence gathering is based on the need to uphold physical distancing. We appreciate that by the end of the year, when the fieldwork period begins, the situation could be very different. However, our methods are based on remote engagement with all participants which can be reviewed if the working environment changes significantly.

Methodology

We are proposing a three-phased approach to this work and we have summarised each phase and then describe it in more detail.

Phase 1: Planning and desk-based review (September–October 2020)



Inception meeting

The inception meeting at the beginning of September will allow us to introduce the team, discuss our proposed methodology and refine aspects of the approach. In the meeting we will also explore logistical considerations like stakeholder engagement and access to contact details, the proposed sample LA areas for the virtual workshops, SG awareness raising of the evaluation amongst relevant stakeholders, and the scope of the documentation review. The process for the sign-off of research tools, confirmation of the timing of the fortnightly telephone and email updates, quarterly progress reports and the timescales for key performance indicators can also be covered as part of the discussion.

Following the meeting, we will produce an inception report by the 9 September which will detail the agreed evaluation methodology, timescales and management arrangements.

Desk-based review

The first opportunity to explore whether the strategy's recommendations and priorities have been delivered will be through this desk-based activity. We will review a range of documents that relate to the strategy implementation and delivery at a local and national level. The scope of this documentation and evidence will be discussed at the inception meeting and we anticipate that it will include in the first instance working group/workstream activities like developed resources as well as documented activity, local strategies and action plans, data from funded activities or uptake and usage evidence from services and resources.

As part of the desk-based review, we will map activity against the strategy's 26 recommendations as well as the more recently defined outcomes and consider what other aspects we need to explore as part of the interviews and workshops. We will also use this desk-based activity to identify the contributors to the work to form a list of potential areas for the workshops and enhancements to the proposed list of stakeholder interviewees.

We will produce a summary document of the key findings and considerations from the desk-based review. This work will provide a more detailed understanding of the extensive work that has been carried out since 2011, how that has helped to address the strategy and priorities, the involvement of stakeholders and individuals and areas for exploration for the interviews and workshops.

Research tool design

Using the information gained from the desk-based review and the inception meeting, and the key evaluation questions, we will produce a set of draft research tools which will include:

- general information sheets for participants
- stakeholder interview questions, privacy notice and consent sheet
- stakeholder proforma for collection of information in advance of their interview
- workshop facilitation guide, accompanying materials, privacy notice and consent sheet

The draft tools will be sent to you for review and comment. All relevant tools will include statements for the participants and researchers to emphasise the confidential nature of the discussion so that the interviewees give honest and non-attributable accounts of their views and experiences.

Engagement of stakeholders and selection of LA sample areas

The desk based review and inception meeting will identify potential stakeholders that can be interviewed and they are likely to include individuals from the list of organisations detailed in the invitation to tender (e.g. The National Autistic Society Scotland, Scottish Autism, Scottish Parliament Cross Party Group on Autism, SWAN, Inspiring Scotland, Triple As, CAMHS, ARGH, AMASE, PAS, Tailor Ed, PASDA, NAIT). We have budgeted to undertake 15 interviews and we will draw up the list for discussion and agreement with you and discuss access to contact details, most of which we anticipate will be publicly available.

For the virtual workshops we propose undertaking six to ensure we can get the breadth of contribution from different health and social care partnerships and autism representatives across Scotland. Based on our initial research, taking account of urban/rural and demographics, we think that six of the seven local authority areas listed below would provide a balanced representation, they include areas with investment from the Autism Development Funds and One Stop Shop pilots. However, the desk-based review and inception meeting will be key in shaping this sample and once agreed with you we will confirm the best approach to engaging the key stakeholders in these areas. We anticipate that this be through an introductory email with the lead contact in the health and social care partnership and the key autistic organisations, and then we will liaise with them and ask for their support to identify others who could be approached to participate in the workshop.

Table 1: Proposed virtual workshop areas

Local Authority	Rural/urban	No. of special schools	Funded autism projects/activity
Aberdeen City	Urban	10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Autism Innovation & Development (AI&D)¹ funding awarded to 7 charities operating in Aberdeen, including Aberdeen Play Forum and Grampian Employment Opportunities
Clackmannanshire/Stirling ²	Urban	8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> AI&D funding awarded to 8 charities operating in Clackmannanshire/Stirling, including Autism Network Scotland and Central Advocacy Partners
Dumfries & Galloway	Rural	8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> AI&D funding awarded to 4 charities operating in Dumfries & Galloway, including Richmond Fellowship Scotland and Scottish Autism
East Ayrshire	Urban	11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> AI&D funding awarded to 6 charities operating in East Ayrshire, including Independence and Values into Action
Edinburgh City	Urban	17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> One of six 'One Stop Shop' pilot areas AI&D funding awarded to 15 charities operating in Edinburgh, including Tailor Ed and Sleep Scotland
Glasgow City	Urban	46	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> AI&D funding awarded to 12 charities operating in Glasgow, including Glasgow Carers Partnership and Project Ability
Highland	Rural	6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> One of 6 'One Stop Shop' pilot areas AI&D funding awarded to 7 charities operating in Highland, including Shirlie Project and A.H.A Futures

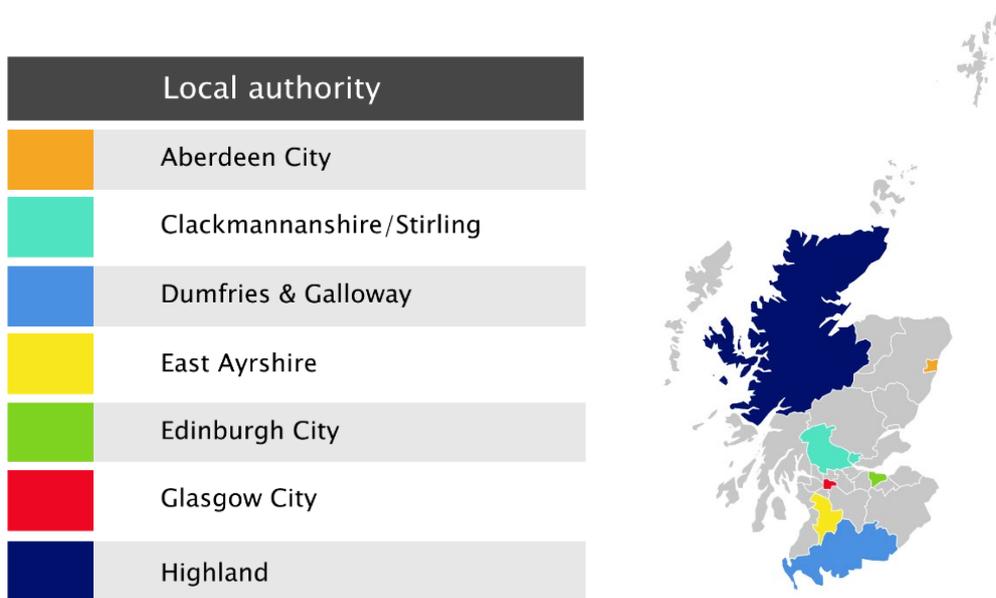
¹ Information about charities awarded AI&D funding is taken from Inspiring Scotland's 2016/17 report:

<https://www.inspiringscotland.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/Autism-Report-2017-Final-August-approved.pdf>

² We are proposing Clackmannanshire and Stirling as a joint area as they published a joint Autism strategy in 2015:

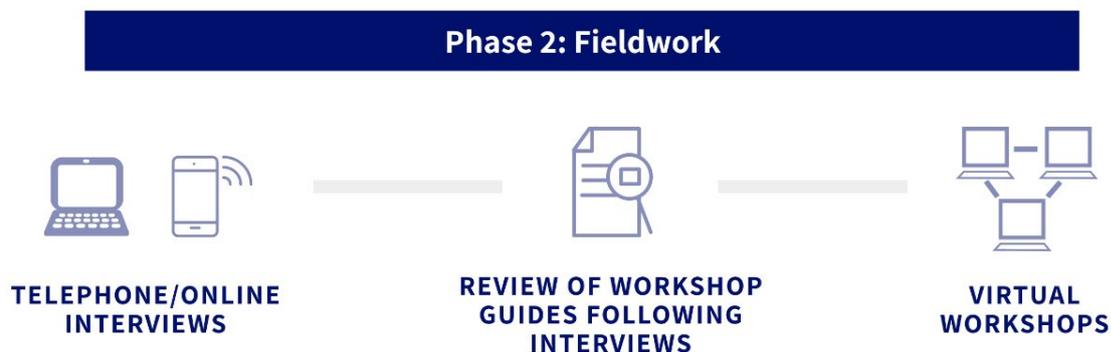
<https://www.clacks.gov.uk/document/5013.pdf>

Figure 2: Geographic spread of proposed virtual workshop areas



Phase 2: Fieldwork (November 2020–January 2021)

The fieldwork phase will involve the interviews with the stakeholders and the virtual workshops.



Stakeholder interviews

These will be undertaken by telephone or web-based conferencing with 15 policy professionals, autism organisations and autism experts. The interview questions will be developed in the earlier phase, but they will ensure that the three key evaluation questions about delivery impact and future policy are addressed from the perspectives of these contributors. We will record these discussions, with permission from the interviewees, and the recordings will be used to aid analysis and collation of the responses.

Following the stakeholder interviews we will review the draft workshop guides to reflect any learning and context from those discussions so that the workshops can further explore and expand on areas that have been covered during the interviews.

Virtual workshops

As already described, we will undertake six workshops in a sample of local authority areas with health and social care partnerships and autism service providers.

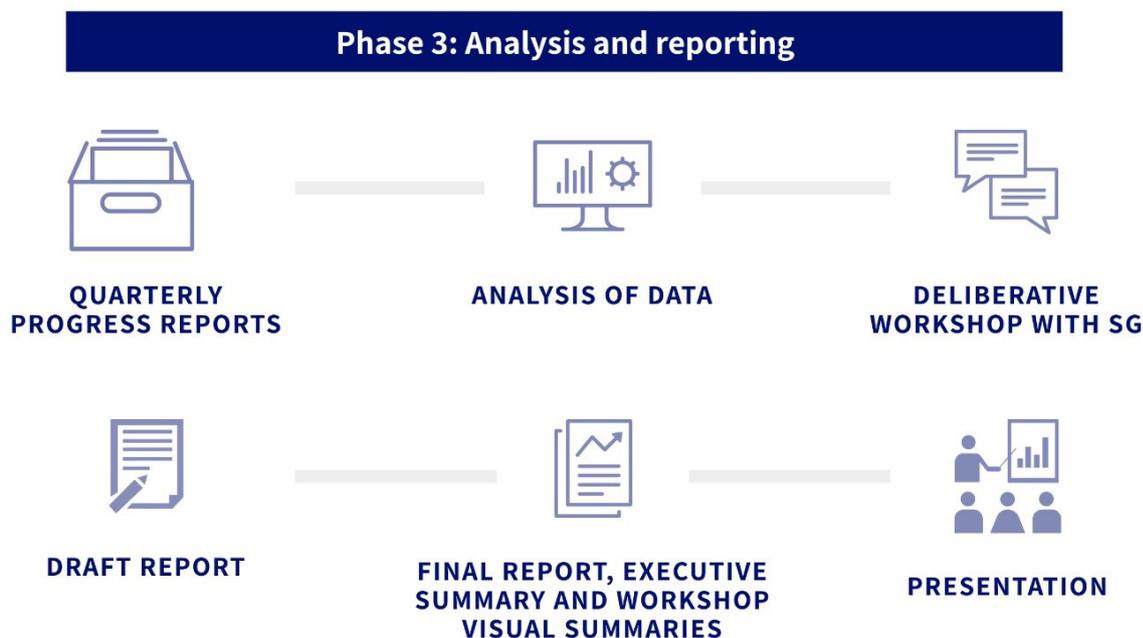
We anticipate that up to 12 participants will be involved in the virtual workshops. Ahead of each one we will review the local autism strategy and action plans, understand what funding has been invested in the area, e.g. recipients of Autism Development Fund, and send the materials that we will use to shape the discussion to participants. We anticipate that the workshop participants will:

- reflect on use of materials/guidance produced at a national level, e.g. menu of interventions
- explore how local service delivery has been influenced and changed and what that means for the individuals and families and any reported experiences
- gaps in achievements/delivery of the strategy's recommendations shaped around the six priorities
- where the focus should be in the future, e.g. embedding some changes, refocusing on issues.

We will conduct the workshops virtually and we have business accounts for Zoom, Skype, Microsoft Teams and Google Meet (and Google Hangout if less than 10 people). The security protocols for some organisations, particularly in the public sector, may restrict access to some of these packages and the requirement for an account with Microsoft/Skype/Google can also limit access for others. So, we will take a flexible approach and use whichever platform is most accessible for the participants in the local areas but preferring the packages with functionality of gallery views, screen sharing and breakout rooms to maximise engagement in the virtual workshop and allow smaller group discussions.

The workshops will be facilitated by [REDACTED] online to support participants and respond to any issues. Those sessions will also include [REDACTED], an artist and illustrator, who will visually minute the discussion and we will share her artistic progress at the end of the workshop. We will also use these materials to visualise the workshop write ups which will feature in the final report but also provide a visual record for all those who participated.

Phase 3: Analysis and reporting (February–April 2021)



Data management

We take a robust approach to data management to ensure that data is processed securely. [REDACTED] is our Data Protection Officer and, for this research, [REDACTED] will have data management responsibilities to ensure we meet the requirements of the Data Protection Act 2018 and GDPR in the materials that we produce, the way the information is stored and then destroyed. We provide full details of our approach to information security and data protection in section D and Section 3.

Analysis

The notes from the stakeholder interviews and the workshops will be analysed in line with the question themes using an initial manual thematic coding and then using Nvivo software package to do a more comprehensive analysis of text. This qualitative analysis software contains powerful tools that can help uncover subtle trends as well as having an automated analysis feature and we can run queries by question, outcome, recommendation, respondent type, etc, to form a clear understanding of the evidence.

Deliberative workshop

At the beginning of March, following the initial analysis we would like to hold a deliberative workshop with our team and Autism and Learning Disability policy team to discuss the themes that have emerged and to help shape the structure of the first draft report. We anticipate that this will be conducted virtually but we can change to an in-person session, if physical distance requirements are no longer in place.

Reporting

Throughout the lifetime of the evaluation we will provide quarterly update reports on the general progress of the work, any emerging risks and the completion of milestones.

Following the deliberative workshop we will produce a report outline, for you to agree, and then begin to draft the final report. The social research report will be no more than 60 pages with clearly articulated findings and actionable recommendations. The team has extensive experience of delivering clear, concise and accessible reports with infographics for several bodies, including the Scottish Government.

The research and evaluation carried out by the team has resulted in numerous reports produced to a publishable standard. These include:

- [Research into User and Provider Journeys in Scotland's Employability Services](#)
- [Research on Self-Directed Support](#)

For each workshop area, we will also produce a two-page infographic, using the visual minutes and key findings which can be shared with the participants of those sessions so that they can see the results of their contributions.

The draft report will be submitted by 19 March 2021. It will be quality assured by Jennifer before submission to ensure that the document is well laid out, technically and grammatically correct and that appropriate language is used. We would welcome a virtual meeting with the Autistic and Disability policy team to discuss the draft final report and receive initial comments and then we can use this information along with written feedback to revise the draft. We know, from our experience of writing social research reports for the Scottish Government that there is likely to be more than one iteration of the report and we have taken account of this in our timetable and costs.

The agreed final version will be submitted by 26 April 2021 along with an Executive Summary of no more than ten pages.

We are also very happy to do a presentation on key findings for organisations involved in the evaluation and wider organisations involved in providing services for autistic people and we will produce a stack of slides and infographic summaries to accompany the presentation.

Q3. Examples of previous use of a national survey and focus groups to answer a research question

We have undertaken several pieces of work for the Scottish Government to understand the implementation and impact of national programmes and strategies within local policy and practice and on the outcomes and experiences for users.

These include the following:

- An evaluability assessment and additional research that contributed to improved understanding of the impact and effectiveness of self-directed support at a national level, with a focus throughout on understanding the current situation to inform future plans for policy. Through

interviews and workshops with key stakeholders and then local case studies with users of social care, their families/carers, and the people responsible for frontline delivery we highlighted the differences in the extent to which self-directed support has been fully embedded in practice across the country and suggested approaches for future monitoring and evaluation.

- An on-going evaluation of the Scottish Government's Fair Start Scotland programme, where our role involves interviews with participants and service providers about their views and experiences of this employment support programme in nine case study localities. The findings of the evaluation are being used to enhance understanding of what works well in employment support for individuals and to inform the development of employment support policy and service delivery.
- An evaluation of the Third Sector Interface (TSI) model and Voluntary Action Scotland (VAS). Our methodology included depth studies in 11 local authority areas involving interviews with local stakeholders and an online survey of Third Sector organisations to explore how the TSI model was working in practice, as well as interviews with national stakeholders and an online survey of all TSIs. The findings were complex, with variations in different areas, but we made several recommendations based on our findings to inform future approaches to support for Third Sector organisations.

For the SSSC we undertook research to gain a deeper understanding of the workforce's experience of integrating health and social care, consider the conditions required for effective integrated working and identify what skills, competencies, qualities, values, behaviours and qualifications the workforce have or need in an integrated working environment. The first phase of the research involved a desk-based review to build up a picture of what integrated working looked like and what was required to make it effective; the second involved evidence gathering amongst health and social care professionals at three test sites within two Integrated Joint Board (IJB) areas how integrated working was taking place in practice. The findings echoed other publications, highlighting the need for appropriate conditions and environment to support the health and social care workforce to work collaboratively and develop the skills and confidence to deliver person centred and outcome focused care. The SSSC have used the report to inform the timing of the workforce planning at a national and local level and the identification of learning and development needs.

Section 3. Quality management and delivery

Q1. Proposed delivery model and how it will deliver all the requirements of the ITT

The table below illustrates the allocation of staff and staff time against each task, covering the duration of the contract.

Detailed project plan

					
	Director & Project Lead	Director & Quality Assurer	Senior Consultant	Consultant	Consultant
Tasks					
Virtual inception meeting	0.75	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5
Project management, inception report, client liaison, updates and quarterly progress reports	3				
Phase 1 – Planning & desk based review					
Review of strategy documentation, evidence and activity from working groups	1	1	1.5		1.5
Design of stakeholder interview questions and information proforma and initial draft of workshop guides	1	0.5	0.5		
Design of information sheets and privacy notices			1	1	
Confirm stakeholder interviewees and the sample of LAs for the virtual workshops	0.5		1		
Liaison with interviewees and workshop areas				4	
Phase 2 – Fieldwork					
Interviews with autism organisations and autism experts (15)	1.5	1.5	1.5		
Review of workshop guides following interviews	0.5				
Virtual workshops in LA areas with autism service providers (6)	2	2		0.75	0.75
Phase 3 – Analysis and reporting					
Analysis of interview and workshop notes/recordings	2	2	1		
Deliberative workshop with SG to discuss key themes	0.5	0.5			
Draft report	3	2	1	0.5	1
Final report, visual minute summaries for each workshop area and accessible Executive Summary	2		1	0.5	0.5
Presentation	0.5	0.5			
Total number of days	18.25	10.5	9	7.25	4.25

Timetable

We have proposed a timetable with suggested dates for milestones. This will be refined, and additional detail provided, following the inception meeting. Based on our experience of managing this type and volume of work, we have proposed a team of five.

The timetable allows ample time between submitting the draft and final reports and we are aware that you may require more than one revised draft before the report is finalised. We will agree on the exact timescales with you in terms of when we can expect to receive comments and when we will provide a revised report. The risk table in Q4 of this section details how we will mitigate against, and deal with, any unexpected situations.

Tasks	Sept 20	Oct 20	Nov 20	Dec 20	Jan 21	Feb 21	Mar 21
Project management; client liaison; fortnightly e-mail updates; team meetings							
Virtual inception meeting – 1 st September							
Quarterly progress reports							
Phase 1: Planning and desk-based review							
Review of documentation and evidence							
Design of research tools							
Confirm stakeholder interviewees and the sample of LAs for the virtual workshops							
Liaison with interviewees and workshop areas							
Phase 2: Fieldwork							
Interviews with autism organisations and autism experts (15)							
Review of workshop guides following interviews							
Virtual workshops in LA areas (6)							
Phase 3: Analysis and reporting							
Analysis of interview and workshop notes/recordings							
Deliberative workshop with SG to discuss key themes							
Draft report – submitted by 10 th March 2021 to allow sufficient time for feedback and amendments							
Final report, visual minute summaries for each workshop area an accessible Executive Summary (sign-off 26 th March 2021)							
Presentation (30.03.2021)							

We have well-established internal processes for monitoring and managing costs. We are confident that we can deliver this evaluation within the available budget, but if we exceed our intended costs in relation to staff time required to deliver this evaluation, this cost will be borne by Blake Stevenson.

Ethical issues are discussed in Q2 below.

Quality assurance – ensuring deliverables are delivered to standard

██████████, as Project Lead, is responsible for quality assurance internally within the project and for ensuring that all deliverables meet our high quality standards. ██████████ (Director) will take responsibility for overall quality assurance of reporting. ██████████ will act as deputy project manager for this work.

Our approach to delivering high quality products is to start with the skills and experience of our team members and ensure that each task is the responsibility of people who have in-depth skills and experience in the task, supported by familiarity with appropriate tools and techniques. We ensure that each task is clearly specified and progress against each task is regularly reviewed as part of a team effort.

The project manager role conducts risk and resource management through developing a detailed project plan, individual performance management and team meetings. We have an internal, web-based project and performance management system which provide us with real-time information on the delivery of all our consultancy contracts, and the capacity to provide our clients with an update on the progress of any contract at any time. At the inception meeting, we will confirm the frequency of our contact with you and the requirements in terms of progress monitoring and reporting. We prefer to maintain regular contact so that you are aware of any issues arising and how to put in place appropriate responses to these issues. This is supplemented by regular progress updates.

Each output will be signed off by ██████████ against a quality checklist. Each report for the client will be signed off against a more demanding quality checklist, and quality assured by ██████████, and all outputs will be proof read. This approach means our final quality checks can be carried out in the confidence that the quality foundations have been put in place in terms of the analytical techniques, clear writing and the presentation of information and insight.

Further details about our approach to quality assurance and control are provided in Q3 in this section.

Q2. Clear assessment of ethical and data protection considerations and how the approach will take these into account

Ethics

Upholding the highest ethical standards is central to our approach and we abide by the Social Research Association's (SRA) published code of ethics in all our work. We identify the key ethical sensitivities we have considered in the design of our methodology below.

Reducing barriers to participation – We will take the following steps to enable a diverse range of people to take part in the evaluation:

- We will carry out desk-based research and work with the client to identify appropriate interviewees and workshop participants.
- We will provide information sheets for participants with details about the evaluation written using clear and accessible language.
- The interviews will be as brief as possible and will take place at a time and in a format (telephone or online) convenient for the participants.
- Our team is well trained in equality and diversity matters and bring this awareness to all our work. We always ensure that all participants have an equal opportunity to contribute during interviews and workshops, and to make their views known.

Informed consent – We will provide prospective participants with clear information about the research and what their participation will involve, both at the recruitment and fieldwork stages, so that they can give their informed consent to take part, or otherwise. We will provide easy to understand information sheets and privacy notices for all participants. These will explain the evaluation objectives, what is expected of them, their rights under the Data Protection Act 2018 and how the data they provide will be used, as well as providing assurances that their participation is voluntary and anonymous. The information sheets will include the evaluation team's contact details so participants can ask questions and they will be given another opportunity to clarify any queries at the start of the interview. We will ask interviewees to confirm they agree to take part at the beginning of the interview by verbally confirming they are willing to take part.

Avoidance of harm – While we will not be engaging directly with autistic people or their families through this evaluation, we are aware that autism support providers are often highly dedicated and passionate about the service they provide and about achieving positive outcomes for the people they work with. It is also possible that support providers have personal experience of autism, or have autistic family members or friends. As such, we are aware that the discussions required as part of this evaluation could be emotive for the people involved. We are also aware that autistic people and support organisations have had very mixed experiences during lockdown and this might affect their views and ability to take part. We know a range of techniques to ensure participants are comfortable and at ease throughout the interview process. These include the following steps that we will apply before the interview/workshop takes place:

- Providing easily understandable information for participants about the study and their role in advance of the interview/workshop. This will include assurances that our research focuses on their experience and views of the strategy, and will not include any unnecessarily intrusive questions about their lifestyle or personal background, or that of the people they support.
- During the interviews and workshops, our researchers will consider the potential impact of their questions and will respond sensitively to participants who become distressed, by asking if they would like to take a break or withdraw from the interview, or move on to another topic. At the end of the interview, we will leave details of sources of further support (e.g. the National Autistic Society) if the person would like us to.
- Interviewees are welcome to have a colleague or other supporter present during the interview if that would help them to feel more comfortable.

Throughout the process, we will take a sensitive and friendly approach. We are used to working in this way and are currently working on other contracts with the Scottish Government that explore sensitive issues including social security, diabetes and dementia.

Disclosure of identity and personal information – We will assure participants that we will not name them in the report, nor attribute any comments or views to them as an individual. Our team is used to working in this way and we are very careful not to name any participants in our report nor include any information that could potentially be used to identify them. Further details about data protection are provided later in this section.

Safety of researchers involved in the fieldwork – All fieldwork will take place remotely by telephone or online platforms, so our researchers will have no in-person contact with participants. This reduces the risk involved. However, we will remind researchers to take precautions to protect themselves, such as ensuring they do not pass personal mobile numbers to participants. If a researcher is distressed by something that an interviewee says during an interview or workshop, they can raise this with [REDACTED] who will provide a debrief and discuss the incident fully with the staff member involved. She will provide support and signpost on to further sources of support if necessary.

Protection of the interpretation of research findings against distortion and bias – Researcher bias is a potential risk in this project, where a researcher, intentionally or unintentionally, applies his or her views, opinions or prejudices to the analysis. To mitigate this, we will have regular team meetings so that individual researchers' judgements are exposed to peer scrutiny, ensuring that there is consistency and objectivity in analysis, and that the team maintains focus on key objectives. [REDACTED] will quality-assure all aspects of the research to minimise bias and enable findings to be double-checked.

Sound application and conduct of social research methods and appropriate dissemination and utilisation of the findings – We have designed this research using robust and proven methodologies that will not place an undue burden on participants. Our team is skilled and experienced in the full range of quantitative and qualitative social research methods. We are committed to ensuring that the results of our research are useful and lead to positive change, so we will work with you to support any dissemination of the research findings to ensure that they inform future activity in this field.

Conflicts of interest – Our team has no conflicts of interest in relation to this contract.

Data protection

Blake Stevenson places great importance on information governance and data protection. We comply with the Data Protection Act 2018, and the Market Research Society's Guidelines for the handling of databases and confidential survey data. Our full Data Protection policy is embedded in Section 5 (Cyber Security) of this proposal as it forms an important part of our general standards.

[REDACTED], Director, is our Data Protection Officer and she, along with the other members of the team, have undertaken Medical Research Council training on data protection and information governance. For this evaluation, [REDACTED] will have data management responsibilities to ensure we meet the requirements of the Data Protection Act 2018 and GDPR in the materials that we produce, the way the information is stored and then reported to you.

The focus of this evaluation will be on consulting services that support autistic people, and discussions will cover participants' views of the Autism Strategy and support available for autistic people, rather than the experience or circumstances of any individuals. As such, we expect that the personal data we will collect will be limited to participants' contact details and their views of the issues relevant to the evaluation. We do not expect to process any special category data as part of this evaluation.

However, we are aware of the potential sensitivity of the data we will receive through this evaluation. This will include qualitative and quantitative data collected through our fieldwork activities as well as participants' contact details. We will follow robust data security and information governance protocols to prevent unauthorised access to, loss, disruption, theft, use or disclosure of the personal data we process. All staff follow our security measures and have clear guidelines on the use, confidentiality and storage of personal data.

We will work with you to agree the lawful basis (as defined by the GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018) under which we will process data under this contract. We anticipate that this is most likely to be Article 6(1)(e) (public task) for personal data.

We have recently completed the Scottish Government's Security Assessment Tool as part of another evaluation we are working on currently related to type 2 diabetes.

The measures we take to ensure non-disclosure of identity and personal information include the following:

- **Data storage:** All electronic data will be saved on Blake Stevenson's secure network in password-protected files with access restricted to the analysis team. All devices (mobile, desktop computers and laptops) that will have access to the data are password protected and laptops are encrypted to protect against unauthorised access to data in the event of loss or theft.

Interviews will be recorded and typed up. Recordings will be deleted once the write up is complete.

All documents are stored electronically on the server and backed up every evening at 5pm, with back up tapes stored safely overnight in a fireproof safe. The server is stored in a locked room separate to the main office. The Blake Stevenson office is locked and alarmed when not occupied behind three locked doors, two of which are further protected by keypads that require codes for entry. We will minimise the use of paper copies but hard copies of personal data will be kept in lockable cabinets.

- **Data cleaning:** We will check the data we collect through interviews and workshops and clean it as relevant, checking for any duplicate records or errors in the transcriptions.
- **Pseudonymisation and anonymisation:** Blake Stevenson Ltd safeguards the privacy of research participants. Blake Stevenson will pseudonymise the data collected through interviews and workshops immediately by assigning a unique number to each participant. The analysis will be carried out on pseudonymised data, and at reporting stage care will be taken to also remove any circumstantial information that may lead to identifying participants. Blake Stevenson will ensure

that the data included in written reports is anonymised and that research participants cannot be identified in written reports or other outputs. Participants' names will not be used and any other information that could potentially identify them will be excluded.

- **Data retention:** We will destroy all data collected during the project after it is completed and no later than one month after the report is finalised, or on another date agreed with you. Hard copies will be shredded and electronic files deleted. We will provide a Document Disposal Register if required.
- **Data transfer:** We will request that partners involved in the evaluation use secure encrypted email systems (such as Egress) when transferring any personal data to us. We will not transmit any personal data outwith our secure server.
- **Password security:** Our staff choose their own personal passwords. Passwords must have a minimum length of eight characters and use a mix of capital letters, numerals and at least one special character. There is no maximum length but staff are instructed to choose a sensible, memorable combination, while not:
 - choosing an obvious password (such as any part of their name, their children, or their pet's name for example);
 - using common passwords that might be easily guessed, such as Password123!; or
 - using the same password anywhere else, either at work or for personal accounts.

We provide further details about information security in Section 5 (Cyber Security).

Q3. Control quality of information gathering, evaluation, report writing and other outputs

As noted in Q1 in this section, [REDACTED], as Project Lead, will have overall responsibility for the delivery of the evaluation on time and for ensuring that that outputs are of high quality. She will be responsible for overall research governance, ensuring regular and appropriate client liaison, monitoring project delivery against timescales, quality assuring the project outputs and supporting the project team. [REDACTED] will support [REDACTED] with quality assurance throughout the evaluation.

We have not included any wider collaborators in our team. All members of our team are Blake Stevenson staff members and this will help to assure quality and ensure consistency across the team. All team members are appropriately experienced and skilled in undertaking the methods involved in this evaluation and in producing high quality analysis and reports. Every team member is trained and experienced in writing in Plain English and staff adhere to professional codes of conduct produced by the Social Research Association and Market Research Society.

[REDACTED] will support the team throughout the evaluation. There will be regular internal team meetings to ensure that the team maintains a focus on the key objectives and to discuss the emerging themes. These meetings will help to ensure that the information gathering is being undertaken consistently, objectively and to the required quality standards across the team. These meetings will also help to reduce any risk of researcher bias.

[REDACTED] will be available to the team throughout the evaluation to discuss any issues that emerge outside these meetings. [REDACTED], as deputy project manager, will also provide a point of contact for other team members to discuss any queries.

There are also regular one-to-one supervision meetings between staff members and the Directors. Alongside the team meetings noted above, these supervision meetings provide another forum to support staff and team members can use these meetings to discuss any aspects of this or any other contracts we are working on.

Our team is experienced and skilled in engaging with wider stakeholders as participants in evaluations. We will discuss the selection of stakeholders with you, and will approach them to secure their involvement. One member of our team, [REDACTED], will have responsibility for liaising with interviewees and workshop areas. [REDACTED] has extensive experience of co-ordinating engagement with various groups of stakeholders, and devoting one member of the team to liaison and arrangements will ensure this task is undertaken consistently and effectively.

The deliberative workshop that we propose holding with our team and the Autism and Learning Disability policy team will allow us to discuss the themes that have emerged, shape the structure of the first draft report, and help to ensure that the report meets your expectations and requirements.

We will provide quarterly progress reports to you and these will give you the opportunity to review and comment on progress to date. You will also have the opportunity to view and provide feedback on draft and final reports. This will allow you to share your expertise and ensure that the reports meet your expectations and standards. We know, from our experience of writing social research reports for the

Scottish Government that there is likely to be more than one iteration of the report and we have taken account of this in our project plan.

Before submission, [REDACTED] will check the final report and other outputs before submission to ensure that the document is well laid out, technically and grammatically correct, clearly communicates the findings of the evaluation, and uses appropriate and clear language. All reports will also be proofread before submission.

With the aim of promoting continuous improvement, we routinely invite clients to provide feedback on the quality of the work produced and service provided. This take place both informally at project milestones and formally through a client questionnaire and, where possible, by meeting after the project is complete.

Q4. Risk assessment

Mitigating actions	Recovery plan
Risk: Selected Health & Social Care Partnership/local authority areas unwilling or unable to take part (Likelihood: medium / Impact: high)	
<p>Discuss selection of areas with client.</p> <p>Send introductory email to HSCP lead providing clear information about the evaluation, its purpose and its importance.</p> <p>Explain potential benefits of taking part for the HSCP and service users, including provision of two–page infographic with key findings.</p>	<p>Explore ways to encourage participation.</p> <p>Discuss alternative areas with client.</p>
Risk: Potential interviewees/workshop participants unwilling or unable to take part (Likelihood: medium / Impact: high)	
<p>Identify key stakeholders carefully in discussion with client.</p> <p>Distribute clear information about the research to potential participants. This will explain the purpose and importance of the research and what their participation will involve.</p> <p>Explain the potential benefits of the research for them and their service users.</p> <p>Offer interviews/workshops at various times and days to ensure that participants can take part at a time that suits them.</p> <p>Offer a range of media/platforms for taking part in the research (telephone/Skype/Zoom/Teams/Google Meet/Google Hangouts etc) so we can choose an option that suits participants.</p>	<p>Adjust timings of engagement in response to changing circumstances or needs of participants.</p> <p>Explore ways to encourage responses in areas or groups where there is low activity.</p> <p>Discuss with client possibility of approaching alternative participants.</p>

Mitigating actions	Recovery plan
Risk: The research is not conducted in the required timeframe (Likelihood: medium / Impact: high)	
<p>Assigned a large team of five to this evaluation.</p> <p>Quarterly update reports will help to monitor progress and any threats to meeting the required timescale.</p> <p>Research team will work to strict internal deadlines and communicate regularly about progress/workload. This will be particularly important as the timeframe for the fieldwork includes the festive period. The COVID-19 situation is also a threat to the timeframe of the research, but using telephone/web-conferencing methods of engagement will enable the research to be completed on time.</p>	<p>Keep you up to date with progress. We will plan fieldwork carefully to ensure that the required volume of fieldwork can be completed on time. With your approval, we can draw on other members of our core team or our bank of associates for additional resource if required.</p>
Risk: Contractor staff ill / unavailable during critical periods (Likelihood: low / Impact: medium)	
<p>Blake Stevenson encourages all staff to maintain a healthy work-life balance to help ensure positive physical and mental wellbeing. We have a robust forward planning system to ensure that each staff member's workload can be planned carefully so that they are not over capacity. Our support and supervision system provides a forum for staff to raise any concerns about their workload directly with directors.</p> <p>Our team is working from home during the COVID-19 outbreak and all members are carefully observing social distancing, hand hygiene and cough etiquette guidelines.</p>	<p>Re-allocate tasks within the team as necessary.</p> <p>If the lead Director becomes ill or unavailable, our other Director will take on responsibility for this contract.</p> <p>With your approval, we can draw on other members of our core team or our bank of associates for additional resource if required.</p>
Risk: Primary data collection methods not robust (Likelihood: low / Impact: high)	
<p>We have carefully designed a robust methodology that will achieve the aims of the research within the timetable and budget available.</p>	<p>If there are any problems with our proposed methods, we will discuss alternative approaches with you.</p>
Risk: Outputs are of poor quality (Likelihood: low / Impact: medium)	
<p>We are skilled and experienced in producing reports and summaries of publishable standard for the Scottish Government. We are aware of the Government's requirements and of the need to produce multiple drafts, responding to your comments, before the outputs are finalised.</p> <p>Analysis will be supported by NVivo software.</p> <p>All our team members have high level analysis and writing skills and all are trained in Plain English.</p>	<p>Work with you to produce high quality outputs, responding to your feedback and producing various drafts as required.</p>

Mitigating actions	Recovery plan
Outputs will be quality assured by [REDACTED] and will be proofread.	
Risk: Scottish Government has insufficient time to comment on outputs (Likelihood: low / Impact: medium)	
Submit all draft research tools and reports promptly to allow the Scottish Government sufficient time to comment.	Discuss with you any factors affecting your ability to comment on our outputs timeously and work with you to address these.
Risk: Contractor's resilience and business continuity fails (Likelihood: low / Impact: medium)	
<p>During the 28-year history of the company, we have never failed to complete a contract, nor has any client ever withheld payment. All contracts are with the public/third sector, so there is little concern in clients defaulting on payments. We are in a healthy financial position, with all of our current contracts continuing during the COVID-19 outbreak. Some contracts continue until the end of 2021 and these will support our core team.</p> <p>All team members are working from home during the COVID-19 outbreak and all have remote secure access to our server. The team is continuing to work closely together with regular phone calls, video conferences and collaboration over online platforms such as Microsoft Teams ensuring that the pandemic is having no adverse impact on our productivity.</p>	<p>We check our forward cashflow monthly. If any issues arose that affect the viability of the company, we would respond appropriately, e.g. reduced working hours, reduction in non-essential spend, use of our guaranteed bank overdraft facility and so on.</p>
Risk: Business continuity – fire, flood or vandalism (Likelihood: low / Impact: low)	
All documents are stored electronically on the server and backed up every evening at 5pm. The back-up tapes are stored overnight in a fireproof safe.	In this event, electronic documents and data would be restored from the back-up tapes and staff would work from home.
Risk: Data protection principles under GDPR are not adhered to and/or data is not protected against unauthorised or unlawful processing or against accidental loss, destruction or damage (Likelihood: low / Impact: low)	
<p>For this research, [REDACTED] will have data management responsibilities to ensure we meet the requirements of the Data Protection Act 2018 and GDPR in the materials that we produce and the way the information is collected, stored and reported.</p> <p>We will produce privacy notices for research participants explaining their role in the research and rights under GDPR.</p> <p>Details about our approach to information security and data protection are provided earlier in this section.</p>	<p>In the unlikely event of any loss or breach of personal data, we would follow our relevant policies, including contacting the data controller and taking steps to address the breach. This includes a review of how any breach occurred and how systems would need improved as a result.</p>

Section 4. Technical experience and staffing

Q1. Roles and responsibilities proposed for the delivery of the service and names of individuals against these roles where relevant

Proposed team

The team will be led by [REDACTED] who will act as the client contact and project manager. She will be supported by a team of four. The team members are listed in the table below, with details of their length of service, tasks and days allocated and relevant experience.

<p>Onyema Ibe Director and Project Manager (12 years at Blake Stevenson)</p>	<p>Onyema will spend 18.25 days/136.88 hours on this project and she will be Project Manager for this work. She will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be responsible for the overall management of the project and maintain regular communication with the client • Review strategy documentation and design research tools • Deliver virtual workshops and undertake stakeholder interviews • Lead on the deliberative workshop with SG to discuss key themes • Lead on all reporting <p>Relevant experience</p> <p>Onyema is an expert researcher and evaluator and has a wealth of project management and expertise in a range of research and evaluation methodologies. Onyema has a high level of communication and written skills and has authored numerous high-quality published reports for the Scottish Government that inform policy and strategy development and implementation. She led the SG Self Directed Support study which looked at the delivery of SDS at a local level and the impact of the SDS options on their care and the providers that supported them. Onyema also led the SG pre-employment reform research which explored the user and provider experiences within the pre-employment support system in order to inform the review of the employability landscape in Scotland and managed the SSSC research which explored the practicalities of integrated working across health and social care in three pilot sites. Onyema has a robust understanding of the many different services and policies that are reliant on multi-disciplinary working and the opportunities and challenges that this presents. She is skilled at engaging with those who are accessing support and providing support and doing so in a sensitive and appropriate manner and interrogating and presenting that evidence to policymakers and practitioners.</p>
<p>Jennifer Lambert Director and Quality Assurer</p>	<p>Jennifer will spend 10.5 days/78.75 hours on this project. She will have responsibility for external quality assurance of all outputs produced through this contract. She will work closely with the team to ensure that all outputs produced during, and at the end of the research (including research tools, and all draft and final reports), are of a high standard. She performs this role regularly across many of our contracts and places great emphasis on a high quality end product. Jennifer will also:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review strategy documentation and design research tools • Deliver virtual workshops

<p>(16 years at Blake Stevenson)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertake stakeholder interviews • Contribute to analysis and report writing <p>Relevant experience</p> <p>Jennifer is a highly skilled researcher and has extensive experience of evaluating national strategies, policies and programmes for the Scottish Government and other bodies. She is currently leading our work on the evaluation of the Scottish Government’s Fair Start Scotland programme which involves interviews with participants and service providers, as well as managing another contract with the Scottish Government to consult with seldom heard groups to determine their experiences of the recent changes to Universal Credit. Jennifer’s experience also includes leading the evaluation of the Third Sector Interface model for the Scottish Government.</p> <p>Jennifer has managed a number of contracts with Tailor Ed in the past few years, including an evaluation of the organisation, research to inform the organisation’s service delivery model, and, in late 2019, a series of case studies and report to mark its ten-year anniversary.</p> <p>Through contracts like these Jennifer regularly consults with key stakeholder organisations to explore their experiences of implementing strategies and programmes, and the impact of these on the people they support.</p>
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<p>Ian Christie</p> <p>Senior Consultant and Deputy Project Manager</p> <p>(14 years at Blake Stevenson)</p>	<p>Ian will spend 9 days/67.5 hours on this project, working on the following main tasks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review strategy documentation and design research tools • Undertake stakeholder interviews • Contribute to analysis and report writing <p>Relevant experience</p> <p>Ian has a wealth of relevant experience in evaluating strategies and policies designed to support vulnerable and disadvantaged members of the community. He has excellent qualitative and quantitative research skills including desk-based analysis of secondary data, research tool design; and conducting and analysing interviews with various groups of stakeholders.</p> <p>Ian’s experience includes the research we recently completed on behalf of the Scottish Government about Self-directed Support (SDS). This study explored the implementation of the SDS strategy and aimed to inform future strategy in this area. Ian’s role included interviews with clients and providers. His experience also includes interviews with parents and school staff as part of our evaluation of the Cost of the School Day programme on behalf of NHS Health Scotland, and he worked on our evaluation of the Realigning Children’s Services programme for the Scottish Government. Ian has contributed to a number of projects we have worked on with Tailor Ed in the past few years, including an evaluation of the organisation and, most recently, a series of case studies and report to mark its ten-year anniversary.</p> <p>His other relevant experience includes interviewing service users and support providers about their experience of the Fair Start Scotland employability programme, interviewing</p>
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people about their experiences of the social security system, and interviewing people who have engaged with pre-employment support services (all for the Scottish Government).

Abigail Sharp
 Consultant
 (3 years at
 Blake
 Stevenson)

Abigail will spend 7.25 days/54.38 hours on this project, working on the following tasks:

- Design information sheets and privacy notices
- Liaise with interviewees and workshop areas
- Support virtual workshops
- Contribute to report writing

Relevant experience

Abigail Sharp, Consultant, has excellent organisational and analytical skills as well as experience in stakeholder engagement and communication. Her recent relevant experience includes our research on Social Security with seldom-heard groups including single parents and kinship carers, our ongoing evaluation of Fair Start Scotland and our research on Scottish Government-funded pre-employment services. She was also recently involved in our research on Self-directed Support for the Scottish Government, and in this role, she produced infographics to aid the visual dissemination of project findings.

Andrea
 Barlow
 Consultant
 (2 years at
 Blake
 Stevenson)

Andrea will spend 4.25 days/31.88 hours on this project, working on the following tasks:

- Review strategy documentation and design research tools
- Support virtual workshops
- Contribute to report writing

Relevant experience

Andrea's experience in writing and research spans over 20 years across business-to-business conference research and production, commercial writing and research in brand and design and latterly as a freelance writer for third and private sector organisations. Her interest in health and social care has seen her deliver work on topics from pregnancy and birth and mental health stigma to adoption and sexual health. One of her last pieces of work as a freelancer was to pull together research on Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) and distill this into accessible communication material for families, health practitioners and social work specialists.

Andrea has worked as an Associate with Blake Stevenson for two years and recently became part of the core team. She brings with her an expertise in analysis and ability to pull key themes and messages from complex data. Her previous work as part of our team includes the following:

- Undertaking interviews and developing case studies for the Evaluation of Fair Start Scotland for Scottish Government
- Analysis and synthesis of research data as part of our evaluation of the Life Changes Trust's Dementia Enablement project.
- Synthesis of research related to Self-directed Support (SDS) for the Scottish Government.

We will also employ the skills of [REDACTED], an artist and illustrator who can illustrate the workshops as they are happening and provide a visual record at the end of each one. [REDACTED] uses traditional ink and watercolour to create pictures for adults and children. She graduated from Edinburgh University with a degree in Fine Art in 2002 and completed an Illustration Masters at Camberwell College of Art in 2009, after which she became a freelance Illustrator.

Blake Stevenson can commit that the proposed team named above will be available to work on the contract if the bid is successful.

Section 5. Cyber security

We take a robust approach to information security and data protection, and we have provided responses to each of the questions in the brief below.

We understand that, as outlined in the brief, we will act as a data processor for this contract, and the Scottish Government will be the data controller. We have written these answers with this in mind.

Management approach to Information Security and Data Protection, including responsibilities, and risk assessment

Blake Stevenson places great importance on information governance and data protection. We are aware of our responsibility to process all personal data collected by or provided to us fairly and lawfully.

██████████, Director, is our Data Protection Officer and has overall responsibility for ensuring this policy is implemented. All Blake Stevenson staff members have the responsibility to ensure they adhere to our data protection processes.

We recognise that our business involves gathering, holding and developing a significant amount of personal and sensitive information on our clients and other organisations and individuals and so we have clear policies and guidelines for staff and associates on data protection and, in particular, on the use, confidentiality and storage of personal and special category data.

We rigorously limit access to any personal or special category data. Encrypted devices are used to record interviews, hard copy documents and recordings are stored in locked cabinets in their office, and electronic information is stored in password-protected research project files which only the research team can access.

Blake Stevenson is registered under the Data Protection Act 2018 (registration number Z5204224), and complies with the Market Research Society's Guidelines for the handling of databases and confidential survey data.

Blake Stevenson is an approved Cyber Essentials accredited company (registration number QGCE2278). We have attached our Data Protection, Business Recovery, and Personal Data Breach Policies, which contain information about our approach to information security, data protection and risk assessment. As well as these policies, we undertake a risk assessment related to each contract we carry out and put in place any specific additional measures to mitigate against risks as required.



Blake Stevenson
BCDR Policy.docx



Blake Stevenson
Data Protection Poli



Blake Stevenson
Personal Data Breac

Where data will be processed and how it will be secured, including any encryption controls and also including the measures put in place with sub-contractors

All electronic data will be saved on Blake Stevenson's secure network in password-protected files with access restricted to the evaluation team. All devices (mobile, desktop computers and laptops) that will

have access to the data are password-protected and laptops are fully encrypted to ensure no access is possible in the event of loss or theft.

We will minimise the use of paper copies but hard copies of personal data will be kept in lockable cabinets.

We have invested in Sophos Unified Threat Management (UTM) hardware and software which protects the network using multi-layered proven protection technologies including Advanced Threat Protection (ATP), IPS, VPN, email and web filtering.

We will use online meeting tools as part of this evaluation. We suggest using platforms such as Skype, Microsoft Teams, Zoom, Google Meet and/or Google Hangouts. We have selected these tools with the level of security they provide in mind, as well as their accessibility to participants. Security measures these platforms offer include encryption and secure log-in.

Given the current coronavirus situation, all our staff members are working from home. Consequently, data will be processed as part of this evaluation at staff members' homes. The same information security standards and procedures apply regardless of whether staff are working at home or the office, and we have attached our remote working computer policy and a working from home data protection checklist to demonstrate this. If the official guidance on social distancing changes over the next few weeks, then we will begin working in the office again, and data will be processed there.

We will not involve any sub-contractors in this evaluation.

All data will be destroyed one month after the final report is finalised, or on another date agreed with you. Electronic data will be deleted and paper copies shredded. If required, we will complete a Document Disposal Register and submit this to you as confirmation that all data has been destroyed.



Blake Stevenson
Remote Working Co



Blake Stevenson
Working from Home

How data will be secured during transmission between Scottish Government, Contractor and sub-contractors

We will request that the Scottish Government uses encrypted email (using software such as Egress) or encrypted USB memory sticks (delivered in person or by secure courier) to transfer personal data to us.

We think it is very unlikely that we will need to transmit personal data to the Scottish Government or research participants, but if this was necessary, we would use Egress encrypted email or an encrypted USB memory stick delivered in person or by secure courier.

Measures in place to protect computers, software, middleware and infrastructure used to process data against loss or compromise from cyber-attack and crime, including the use of firewalls, user accounts and passwords, secure storage

Blake Stevenson runs an active directory network internally. All data is stored on a central server and a user to be logged in/authenticated on a workstation before access to any data is granted. Access to data is then limited by logon and/or password protection as to which files/folders are accessible.

The boundary firewall has a unique password that is configured, in line with the password policy. Authentication on the firewall is blocked after three bad attempts for ten minutes. Access to the administrative interface on the firewall is restricted to only allow access from the internal network and the WAN IP address of Blake Stevenson's IT Support provider, CMYK. CMYK complies with the Data Protection Act 2018, implements high level security controls and our contract with CMYK includes a confidentiality clause.

Email is accessed via Office 365 which again requires a user to supply authentication information before being able to access their email and 2FA has been implemented where feasible. Access to the server and Office 365 email is in compliance with this policy outlined here: <https://docs.microsoft.com/en-us/azure/active-directory/authentication/concept-sspr-policy>

Microsoft also provides active monitoring tools and alerts in situations that require immediate action.

Furthermore, administrative account privileges and access is enforced via group policy that is applied to all domain computers. Only specified admin accounts are set to be members of the local administrator group on a computer therefore standard day to day user accounts only run with standard user privileges and have no administrative rights.

Blake Stevenson confirm that no changes are allowed to the IT system and processes without first being signed off by a Director. Any proposed changes are sent to the external IT company for a risk assessment prior to being agreed and implemented. The Business Manager at Blake Stevenson is responsible for identifying, managing and reporting any actual or suspected security breaches on our premises to the Directors.

Finally, other than Office 365, Blake Stevenson infrastructure is on premise where multi-tenancy is not applicable. 2FA implementation in Office 365 limits the potential impact of multi-tenancy.

Measures in place to ensure that only authorised individuals have access to only that data required for them to perform their role, and thus reduce the risk of information being lost or stolen

All data is stored on a central server and we ensure that only authorised individuals have access to the data by requiring that any user must be logged in/authenticated on a workstation before they can access any data stored on the server. Email is accessed via Office 365 which again requires a user to supply authentication information.

All staff have access only to the parts of the network and/or data that they require to perform their role. Access rights are pre-set as part of the new user profile and cannot be changed by the individual. Access to particular files and folders is further restricted by password protection.

Blake Stevenson is a small research company with fewer than ten employees. We currently recruit staff in accordance with current employment law for pre-employment checks on nationality, immigration status and right of residence in this country. All our staff are immediately put forward for an Enhanced Disclosure and/or PVG check on appointment. We also rigorously follow up all referees supplied by new staff prior to offering them a contract of employment and all new staff are appropriately trained and aware of client security issues and any specific contract requirements. Further details about staff training are provided later in this section.

Measures taken to ensure that data processed digitally is protected from malware, virus and untrusted software

The Blake Stevenson network comprises a single site which includes the whole of the office located in Boroughloch Square, Edinburgh. Items used to access data include desktop computers, laptops, server, firewall and smartphones. All desktops, laptops and server have a host-based firewall (built in Windows firewall). Some staff have smartphones configured with cloud email. Internet is provided by BT and a Sophos firewall device is used to secure the internal network and manage internet access. The server acts as the singular Privileged Access Workstation (PAW) which provides a dedicated operating system. This is used by the IT support company for carrying out sensitive tasks and is protected from internet attacks and threats.

The only cloud service in use is Office 365. According to 'Office 365 Security and Compliance Blueprint – UIK Official', Microsoft engineers have no standing administrative privileges and no standing access to customer content in Office 365. An engineer may have limited, audited and secured access to customer content but only when necessary for service operations and when approved by senior management. Microsoft has established access control mechanisms to ensure that no one has unapproved access to customer data.

Data can be accessed from the Internet via an SSL VPN connection which is controlled by Blake Stevenson's Sophos firewall. The Sophos firewall has one-time password protection enabled which works with smart phones apps such as Google Authenticator to provide a one-time passcode that needs to be used in conjunction with users' domain username and password in order to authenticate and gain access to the network from a remote location. Incorrect password for SSL VPN are blocked after three unsuccessful attempts for ten minutes.

Furthermore, Blake Stevenson's external IT supplier performs an annual full system health check in March/April each year. There were no issues reported in the most recent check.

Processes in place to ensure that computers, software, middleware and infrastructure, upon which the service relies, are patched with updates/hotfixes to ensure they are not vulnerable to known security issues

Blake Stevenson's external IT support provider manages and maintains our IT requirements. Blake Stevenson has invested in a Sophos Universal Threat Management system which has been set up to send alerts of any unusual activity, e.g. suspected cyber-attack. This device sits at the boundary of the Blake Stevenson internal network and controls all incoming and outgoing traffic. All desktops, laptops and server also have a host-based firewall (built in Windows firewall).

Automatic patch scanning, vulnerability assessment and patch installation runs daily. For example:

- Group policy is applied to the server and desktop/laptops that enforces the install of the latest Microsoft patches.
- The server is set to apply Windows updates once a week and client machines are set to update every day, with a reschedule of automatic updates enabled.
- Patch Manager Plus is used to manage third party application patches – machines are scanned every day for third party updates and patches applied automatically. It is also set up to send a weekly report on the patch status of the computers, this status report includes third party software and Microsoft Windows applications.
- Smartphone users are advised to check and apply software/OS updates regularly.

Sophos AV is set up to alert our admin in the event of security problems. Sophos AV also filters and blocks inappropriate web content and downloads.

Additional measures include the following:

- Sophos Central Antivirus checks for updates every 60 minutes. This is a default setting (<https://community.sophos.com/products/sophos-central/f/sophos-central/73731/sophos-cloud-endpoint-update-frequency>)
- Realtime scanning is enabled by default and enforced across all endpoints.
- Webpages are scanned by the Sophos UTM firewall and access blocked by category. The Sophos AV software blocks access to malicious websites and the Sophos UTM firewall provides an additional layer of protection by scanning and filtering website access.
- Directors' smartphones can access their respective app stores to install apps. These app stores effectively whitelist apps that can be installed on the smartphones. We use Office365 Mobile Device Management to secure and protect the phones. The MDM policy prevents jail broken or rooted devices from accessing email, which enforces the app stores as the source for installable apps on the mobile devices.

The external IT support provider will take steps to protect the network and minimise any untoward access or attempts to access, and will alert Blake Stevenson immediately if any such attempts occur.

Training is given to employees, contractors and sub-contractors in regard to information security and data protection, including lone and home workers

Blake Stevenson Ltd implements a rigorous induction training process for all new staff. As part of this, Blake Stevenson requires that any authorised persons entrusted with processing data have undertaken to comply with the principle of confidentiality, and have received training and guidance about the Data Protection Act 2018 and General Data Protection Regulation, and their role in data protection.

All new staff need to complete the following online module: 'Medical Research Council 'Research, GDPR and Confidentiality – what you really need to know', which enhances the in-house training on data protection regulations.

We have clear policies and guidelines for staff and associates on data protection and in particular on the use and storage of personal and special category data. All new staff are made aware of these and the induction process also covers in-depth training on the IT systems and processes in place to protect the company's network and infrastructure.

In-house refresher training is provided at regular ad-hoc intervals but more formal sessions are arranged on an annual basis (or as required) to update staff on data protection regulations and any new company IT or security processes that need to be implemented. Staff also attend external training relevant to their role, which is organised and run by the Market Research Society or Social Research Association. The Business Manager attends regular workshops with Disclosure Scotland.

Details of the security processes we have in relation to home working are provided earlier in this section.

[How back-ups of the data will be taken and protected. How data will be restored in the event of an incident, to ensure business continuity and continuity of the service offered. Please indicate if such Disaster Recovery procedures are tested, how often, and the date of the last test](#)

All data is stored electronically on the server and backed up every evening at 5pm, with back up tapes stored safely overnight in a fire-proof safe. The server is located in a locked room separate to the main office. The Blake Stevenson office is locked and alarmed when not occupied behind three locked doors, two of which are further protected by keypads that require codes for entry.

The full Business Continuity and Disaster Recovery policy is attached below. This policy and all systems and processes relating to it are tested at least annually, and the last review was held in September 2019.



Blake Stevenson
BCDR Policy.docx

[Details of any Information Assurance certification they possess, or standards they conform to](#)

Blake Stevenson is Cyber Essentials certified (QGCE2278) and is registered with the Information Commissioner's Office (registration Z5204224). Furthermore, we comply fully with the Data Protection Act 2018, including GDPR provisions, and the Market Research Society's Guidelines for the handling of databases and confidential survey data.



Blake Stevenson
Cyber Essentials cert

Section 3 Non–Scoring and Information only Questions:

Sustainability, Fair Work Practises and Climate Emergency

Q1. Consideration of how the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of the area in which we operate can be improved through effective and efficient procurement activity

Blake Stevenson is committed to providing a quality service while considering the environmental, economic and sustainable impact of our work. As an indicator of our commitment to sustainable practices, we have signed up to the Scottish Business Pledge, are committed to Fair Work principles and we are accredited as a Living Wage Employer. Below we set out some of the steps we take to manage our resources sustainably, reduce waste from our own operations, and make our processes more sustainable:

Ethically sourced products: Wherever possible, we use ethically sourced products.

Paper use reduction: We reduce paper use within our office by, for example, circulating one copy of common documents instead of printing multiple copies; setting defaults on all PCs, printers and copiers to double–sided printing; and making Word and Excel documents fit onto fewer pages.

Recycling: We recycle paper, cardboard, glass and tin. Printer and copier cartridge containers are also collected for recycling and reuse.

Energy use reduction: We minimise our energy use by switching off monitors when not in use; and switching off PCs, printers, copiers and other electrical equipment at night.

Reducing transport–related carbon: We use technological solutions or public transport to travel to meetings and fieldwork activities wherever feasible, and we always aim to arrange multiple meetings/fieldwork activities in a location in one day in order to minimise the number of journeys we need to make. We have flexible working arrangements to suit car sharing and public transport times, we encourage employees to make use of the Bike2Work scheme, and we support working from home.

These steps form key elements of our Sustainability Policy, which is reviewed periodically by the company's Environmental Champion.



Blake Stevenson
Environmental Sust:

Q2. How you will commit to fair work practices for workers (including any agency or sub–contractor workers) engaged in the delivery of this contract

Blake Stevenson supports fair working practices fully for employees and sub–contracted workers. We are a signatory of the Scottish Business Pledge and strive to remain a best practice employer at all times. This is demonstrated by the following actions.

No agency or sub–contractor workers will be involved in the delivery of this contract.

Investment in skills and training

Staff are offered opportunities to participate in professional, external training courses run by industry recognised organisations, such as Market Research Society (MRS) and Social Research Association (SRA). We also provide other CPD opportunities and career development training on ad hoc basis, either in-house, with our pool of subject specialist associates or with an external trainer.

We employ new graduates in the role of Research Consultant. This is a more junior role and allows the company to provide support and development opportunities for each employee who would like to progress to the next level in his or her career. Our Research Consultants roles are currently vacant due to the promotion of the previous postholder to the Consultant role. Others in that role have pursued their academic careers with one completing a funded PhD in Scotland and one employee in this post left to begin a funded PhD course in Cambridge University. We advertise the research consultant and consultant roles on university careers service, our website, S1jobs and on Twitter, a further step to attract younger applicants through social media.

This year (2020), in conjunction with the Innovation Internship programme supported by Scottish Graduate School of Social Science, we supported a part-funded, fully paid three-month internship to a PhD student and this is a programme which we will reconsider annually, depending on the opportunities that the company feels able to offer an intern.

We identify training and development opportunities during regular supervision sessions and at appraisal stage in order for them to learn new skills and develop on existing expertise. We invite associates into the business on a regular basis to provide training, to ensure that staff are constantly expanding their knowledge base. We also fund an e-learning course on survey software which is essential for new starts into the business. We have recently introduced:

- Xero software – to manage our accounts more dynamically and increase staff efficiency in relation to managing cashflow, processing invoices and annual leave.
- Visio and Piktochart– software packages which enables us to provide facilitation and consultancy support to our clients in a more dynamic, visual way. It also enables us to produce higher quality, more attractive visual infographics for the reports that we produce for clients.
- Microsoft Teams – a package which enables us to work collaboratively on projects, even when working remotely as we are just now during the coronavirus outbreak.
- Annual staff away day – we review our progress in relation to range of business and income generated. In addition, we provide expert input on a particular topic of interest and have a discussion session with staff to explore opportunities for developing the business.

No inappropriate use of zero hours contracts

We do not use zero hours contracts. All staff are employed on a permanent basis and receive a full contract for their services, including fixed salary, annual leave entitlement and other benefits. We are now a 4-day a week employer and also offer flexible working and further reduced hours to support family friendly working and wider work life balance.

Action to tackle the gender pay gap

There are two female owner-directors at Blake Stevenson and a further four female employees. Currently there is one permanent male employee, but the company also works regularly with two male Associates, which provides a fair gender balance. However, we recruit solely on the criteria of 'best fit for the job', and gender therefore is irrelevant. Our staff currently come from Scotland, England and Ireland and vary in age from mid-20s to 50. We also employ a number of Associates to work on various projects and these can be more senior colleagues including a number who bring a senior level of expertise in their respective fields. We have an Equal Opportunities Policy that we abide by in all areas of business operations.

Genuine workforce engagement such as trade union or employee association recognition

We are a small consultancy and our employees are not members of a union. However, the company complies with all employment legislation and provides fair terms and conditions for all employees, including family friendly policies.

We hold regular individual staff supervision meetings to discuss progress on contracts, capacity for work and other issues arising. We also engage in six monthly appraisals with all staff to evaluate performance and consider opportunities for training and development. All staff are involved in integral business functions, such as liaising with stakeholders, sourcing business for the team and undertaking fieldwork.

Staff are members of industry recognised organisations, such as Market Research Society (MRS) and Social Research Association (SRA).

Fair pay for Workers; a Living Wage Accredited Employer

The company is an accredited Living Wage employer. As such, all current staff are paid above the Living Wage and as a company we are committed to paying any future employees a salary at or above the Living Wage. All staff are paid a monthly salary, which increases incrementally each year by the cost of living percentage at least. We also ensure that any of our contract suppliers such as the office cleaning company pay our contractor the Living Wage.

Q3. Scottish Business Pledge

The Scottish Business Pledge is a Scottish Ministers initiative which aims for a fairer Scotland through more equality, opportunity and innovation in business. Information on this can be found at the following link: <https://scottishbusinesspledge.scot/> Tenderers are asked to confirm if they have signed up to the Scottish Business Pledge.

Yes. Blake Stevenson confirms that it has signed up to the Scottish Business Pledge.

Q4. Living Wage

The Scottish Living Wage Accreditation Initiative and the Living Wage Foundation recognise and celebrate the responsible leadership shown by Living Wage Employers and support employers to incorporate the Scottish Living Wage into organisational structures long term. More information can be found at the links below: <http://scottishlivingwage.org/> <http://www.livingwage.org.uk/> Tenderers are asked to confirm if they are accredited as a Scottish Living Wage Employer.

Yes. Blake Stevenson confirms that it has signed up; to the Scottish Living Wage Accreditation Initiative.

Q5. Business Continuity and Disaster Recovery (BCDR)

There has been no adverse impact on our productivity as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. We describe the Business Continuity and Disaster Recovery plans we have enacted to respond to the pandemic.

Human resources

All staff members have been working at home since lockdown began. This has not affected our productivity and we are maintaining regular contact among team members through telephone calls and video conferences using Zoom and Microsoft Teams. We have a video conference involving all staff members at least twice a week and the two company Directors are in regular contact with each team member to check on their wellbeing.

The company has provided the necessary equipment for people to work at home safely and effectively. This includes IT equipment such as laptops and printers, and office furniture including desks and chairs where necessary.

All members have been carefully observing all Scottish Government public health guidance including advice related to social distancing, hand hygiene and cough etiquette throughout the pandemic.

Staff are continuing to work at home currently, but we have developed a COVID-19 Safety at Work Policy to ensure that we can safely return to the office when the Scottish Government advises that it is safe to do so. These plans include measures around travel to work, enhanced hand hygiene and office cleaning protocols, considering a mix of staggered starting times, agreeing new etiquette with staff from neighbouring offices for using communal space and facilities safely, and continued working at home arrangements where appropriate.

Supply chain and deliveries

The only deliveries we receive at the office consist of stationary and other office supplies. If staff require any office supplies while working at home, they inform the Business Manager, who arranges for a delivery to be made to the staff member's home.

The outputs from our contracts for clients consist of electronic reports and other files, so the pandemic has had no effect on the production or delivery of these.

Use of IT

All staff have Blake Stevenson laptops to work on while working at home and all have remote secure access to our server, ensuring continued access to email and shared files.

All IT equipment has up to date firewall and anti-virus software, as outlined in the section about Cyber Security.

IT failure

Any issues around IT failure are dealt with in the same way as they would be in the office. Our IT support providers, CMYK, have been open throughout the pandemic and have continued to provide support as and when necessary, with no delay or interruption to service.

Backups

Backup drives are taken from an on-site server but our two Directors and Business Manager, who all live within close proximity of the office, have been visiting the office regularly (and independently so there are not issues around social distancing) to ensure backups are maintained.

BCDR risk assessment

We have provided a full assessment of the risks associated with this evaluation earlier in the proposal, and below we summarise the risks related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Threat	H/M/L Risk	H/M/L Impact	Mitigation Actions including timescales	Responsible Owner
Staff illness/availability	Low	Medium	<p>All staff are working at home.</p> <p>All staff following guidelines around social distancing, hand hygiene and cough etiquette.</p> <p>Blake Stevenson encourages all staff to maintain a healthy work-life balance to help ensure positive physical and mental wellbeing.</p> <p>If necessary, we will re-allocate tasks within the team as necessary if any members become ill.</p> <p>If the lead Director becomes ill or unavailable, our other Director will take on responsibility for this contract.</p> <p>With your approval, we can draw on other members of our core team or our bank of associates for additional resource if required.</p>	Blake Stevenson Directors

Threat	H/M/L Risk	H/M/L Impact	Mitigation Actions including timescales	Responsible Owner
Working at home negatively affects productivity	Low	Medium	<p>Regular team video conferences and telephone calls.</p> <p>Blake Stevenson has provided all IT and office equipment necessary for staff to work safely and effectively at home.</p>	Blake Stevenson Directors
Face-to-face fieldwork is not possible due to physical distancing guidelines	High	Low	<p>Our approach to evidence gathering has been designed based on the need to uphold physical distancing. We appreciate that by the end of the year, when the fieldwork period begins, the situation could be very different. However, our methods are based on remote engagement with all participants which can be reviewed if the working environment changes significantly.</p>	Blake Stevenson Directors
Access to IT/shared files is compromised	Low	Medium	<p>Blake Stevenson has provided all IT equipment necessary for staff to work safely and effectively at home.</p> <p>All files are saved on the server and all staff have remote secure access.</p> <p>IT support company, CMYK, is available for assistance and all equipment has up to date firewall and anti-virus software.</p>	Blake Stevenson Directors
Contractor resilience	Low	Medium	<p>We are a in a healthy financial position, with all of our current contracts continuing during the COVID-19 outbreak. Some contracts continue until the end of 2021 and these will support our core team.</p> <p>We check our forward cashflow monthly. If any issues arose that affect the viability of the company, we would respond appropriately, e.g. reduced working hours, reduction in non-essential spend, use of our guaranteed bank overdraft facility and so on.</p>	Blake Stevenson Directors
Backups are not maintained	Low	Medium	<p>Backup drives are taken from an on-site server but our two Directors and Business Manager, who all live within close proximity of the office, have been visiting the office regularly to ensure that backups are maintained.</p>	Blake Stevenson Directors

SCHEDULE 7 – FORM OF TENDER TO THE SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT

We the undersigned do hereby contract and agree on the acceptance of the Tender by the Scottish Ministers, to provide the services in the Specification of Requirements (Schedule 2) in accordance with the Schedules, at the prices entered in the Commercial Proposal (Schedule 5) and in accordance with the Terms and Conditions of Contract (Schedule 8) which appear in this set of documents.

We the undersigned undertake to submit a tender in accordance with the following documents:

- **SCHEDULE 1** **Instructions for Tenderers**
- **SCHEDULE 2** **Specification**
- **SCHEDULE 3** **Evaluation Guide and Instructions**
- **SCHEDULE 4** **Quality Questions**
- **SCHEDULE 5** **Pricing Schedule**
- **SCHEDULE 6** **PO and Invoicing Requirements**
- **SCHEDULE 7** **Form of Tender**
- **SCHEDULE 8** **Scottish Government Terms & Conditions of Contract**

We agree to abide by this tender from 17 July 2020, the date fixed for receiving tenders, until the Award of Contract.

We understand that the Scottish Ministers are not bound to accept the lowest or any tender and shall not be bound to use the Contractor as a sole supplier.

We understand that the service provision is expected to commence 28 August 2020 and end not later than 31 March 2021, **with option to extend for one month unless** the Contract is terminated in accordance with the Terms and Conditions of Contract of this Invitation to Tender (ITT) document.

We understand that the Scottish Ministers are not bound to accept this or any Tender for this project, however, any contract that may result from this Tender will be subject to Scots Law and the Tenderer hereby irrevocably submits to the jurisdiction of the Scottish Courts.

We agree that this Tender remains open for consideration for 3 months from the date fixed for receiving Tenders.

By submitting a Tender, we acknowledge that our Tender is a bona fide Tender, intended to be competitive, and that we have not fixed or adjusted the amount of the Tender by or under or in accordance with any agreement or arrangement with any other person.

Signature

Name:

(BLOCK CAPITALS)

Designation

Director

Duly authorised to sign Tenders for and on behalf of:

Name of Tenderer Blake Stevenson Limited

Address

Telephone

Date

16 July 2020