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# Invitation to Tender: Evaluation of Just Law for Kids’ Case Work Model

## Background

Just for Kids Law’s vision is for all children and young people in the UK to have their legal rights and entitlements respected and promoted, and their voices heard and valued. Its mission is to work with and for children and young people to hold those with power to account and fight for wider reform. It achieves this by providing legal representation and advice, direct advocacy and support, and fighting for wider systemic reform through strategic litigation, campaigning and equipping others to work for children’s rights.

The brief story of Just for Kids Law development is at: <https://justforkidslaw.org/about-us/our-story>

Just for Kids Law has funding from the Oak Foundation and the National Lottery Community Fund to support its casework and to assist the charity develop a greater understanding of its impact. Key to this endeavour will be an independent evaluation of the charity’s casework model.

## The casework model

The charity’s casework with individual young people aged 10 to 25 years old, mainly in London, is delivered through a model which combines direct advocacy and development opportunities with legal advice and representation. The model is delivered by a team of youth advocates, a youth opportunities worker, and lawyers in the charity’s legal team working together to support children and young people navigate their way through challenging times; whether they are facing difficulties at school, immigration problems, are homeless, in need of social care support or are caught up in the criminal justice system.

The nature of the individual casework is holistic, both in the way that it seeks to provide support covering multiple areas of need that a young person has and in the way that they are supported by a team of advocates, lawyers and a youth opportunities worker who are co-located to provide a joined-up package of help.

Through delivering the casework model, the charity aims to facilitate a path from crisis to stability in children and young people’s lives by resolving the individual needs young people present with. For example, in relation to a criminal legal case, this might be achieved by securing an out of court disposal for the young person, the case not progressing against the young person or the young person receiving a mitigated sentence compared to sentencing guidelines. In relation to housing cases, it might be a young person either accessing accommodation, securing improvements to their current accommodation, or avoiding homelessness. These outcomes and others were developed as part of case recording outcomes pilot, and from autumn 2020 this outcome recordings method has been rolled out for all cases.

Each young person accessing the service may work with a lawyer, an advocate, or both. Some young people also choose to take up help from the youth opportunities worker who specifically works with our clients to support them to explore education, training or employment (ETE) opportunities. This part of the casework model was developed to provide continuity of support on ETE as young people told us they did not want to have to engage with another organisation.

Just for Kids Law’s model of advocacy is distinctive and not the same as statutory youth advocacy services that are provided for children and young people in the care system, the secure youth justice estate or in-patient mental health units.

The youth advocates work in the community, offering support to address the complex issues young people face. They do this by listening to and being led by the young person’s wishes and feelings, working at their pace and designing an individual package of support to cover all areas of need. They work to ensure the young person’s voice is heard, to help them understand their rights and entitlements, and to improve communication and support from professionals and other services.

A Just for Kids Law youth advocate will:

* Attend meetings with a young person to ensure their wishes and feelings are heard, for example at looked after child reviews, school exclusion meetings or child protection conferences
* Provide written and telephone advocacy on the young person's behalf
* Inform young people of their rights for support from, for example, social services, housing and being in care
* Provide urgent support if the young person is homeless
* Access specialist support, for example, mental health support
* Access legal advice and representation.

Youth advocates ensure that young people know their rights and entitlements and help them to understand where they can access information on them. With the support of the Just for Kids Law legal team, advocates can directly access specialist legal advice and representation relating to:

* School exclusion and Special Educational Needs (SEN)
* The duty of care, including housing and social care, owed by local authorities
* attending a police station, court proceedings, and criminal records (spent and unspent convictions)
* The immigration system and processes for regularising status.

## Research aims and objectives

A simple qualitative evaluation that focused on the advocacy part of our casework model and a particular programme, Advocacy Year, which has now come to an end was published in January 2019 – see [An evaluation of Just for Kids Law’s casework with young people delivered through the Advocacy Year programme](https://justforkidslaw.org/sites/default/files/fields/download/Just-for-Kids-Law-Advocacy-Year-programme-final-report-evaluation.pdf).

We are now seeking to build on this evaluation to understand in greater depth how our casework model makes a difference to the children and young people we work with and what elements of the model contribute to that difference. We want to understand whether the model is particularly ineffective or effective for young people with different needs or in different circumstances, and which components of the model work well, for whom, and why.

Specifically, we would like the research to answer the following questions:

1. What are the impacts of Just for Kids Law casework model?
* To what extent does the model help young people navigate challenging times, resolve their problems, and have their needs met?
* To what extent does the model ensure that young people have their legal rights and entitlements respected and promoted?
* To what extent does the model enable young people to feel more confident about facing problems?
* Does the model have any unintended impacts (positive or negative)? What are they?
1. Which aspects or components of the casework model’s design and implementation enable or inhibit its effectiveness? Including but not limited to:
* Referral routes and access
* The legal advice offered
* The advocacy support offered
* The youth opportunities support offered
* Partnerships with other agencies
1. What are young people’s experiences of Just for Kids Law? How do these experiences vary depending on young people’s needs or circumstances?
2. How might the casework model by developed in the future to more effectively achieve its aims and serve the needs of the young people we work with?

The evaluation will be used to:

* Facilitate organisational learning and development
* Directly inform how we develop our casework model and practice
* Demonstrate our impact to funders, the media and policy makers

## Methods

## We are seeking a primarily qualitative evaluation to answer the questions above. We are interested in approaches drawing on a realist methodological perspective asking ‘what works for whom and why’, but would welcome tenders laying out alternative or additional approaches to meeting the evaluation aims. We envisage the methodology involving research with different groups we work with (by age, presenting need, ethnicity, area etc.). We anticipate that the research design may also benefit from involving Just for Kids Law staff and key external stakeholders that we work with.

We do not think it will be possible to explore the duration or longevity of impacts as we do not maintain contact with the majority of young people we work after we have finished working with them, however, we are interested in researchers’ proposals on this.

Though we expect the research to be mainly qualitative rather than quantitative, the researcher/research team will be able to draw on data from our SMS text message survey that is sent to all young people we work after 4 months asking three questions. We will also be able to provide data from our client database and the data we are beginning to collect on capturing outcomes as set out above. Our impact report includes casework data that we publish every year – see <https://justforkidslaw.org/what-we-do/our-impact>.

## Format of bids

The tender proposal should include the following information:

* A description of the approach and research methods the research team intend to employ, including:
	+ The approach to sampling to be taken
	+ Frequency and format of data collection
	+ The approach to data analysis and write up
	+ The ethical implications of the research and how these will be managed
* A workplan and timetable
* Details of the staff team undertaking the work and their roles, including management structure
* CVs of key members of the evaluation team
* Relevant experience in similar evaluations/research projects by the research team
* An account of project risks and how these will be mitigated, including the challenges presented to undertaking research in the context of potentially ongoing COVID-19 social distancing and lockdown measures
* Project budget
* Details of a single named point of contact for all correspondence relating to the project
* Details of two referees who can comment on the research team’s previous work

## Data Protection

The contractor must act in accordance with General Data Protection Regulations and Just for Kids Law’s data protection policy and approach to client confidentiality.

## Timetable and outputs

* Deadline for proposals: 23rd October
* Interviews with prospective candidates: 2nd November
* Commencement of research: January or February 2021
* Interim findings: June 2021
* First draft final report: November 2021
* Publication: January 2022

Outputs should include an interim set of findings that could be in PowerPoint format; a final report; a final standalone summary findings report.

## Budget

£35,000 inclusive of VAT.

This should include all research costs and production of final report and a summary findings document.

## Contact details

For further information and to send proposals please contact:

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