

## REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS: RESEARCH OPPORTUNITY

External evaluation of Catch22's Care Leavers into Careers (CLIC) programme:  
Understanding the effectiveness of CLIC and exploring financial transitions for  
care experienced young people

---

<b>Location</b>	United Kingdom
<b>Application deadline</b>	17 <sup>th</sup> March

---

### Summary

Catch22 is seeking proposals from qualified research consultants or teams to conduct an external evaluation of our Care Leavers Into Careers programme (CLIC). The scope of this evaluation is to assess the effectiveness of the programme in supporting care experienced young people (CEYP) in accessing sustainable employment. The research will also be looking into understanding CEYP's experiences during their first month of employment, particularly how they manage their finances during this key transition period. Findings from this evaluation will be fed back to local authority leaving care teams, business networks offering apprenticeships to CEYP, and local and national policy and strategic stakeholders.

The assignment is expected to run for 7 months, with planning commencing in April 2026, fieldwork in June-August 2026 and a final report due by October 2026.

### Eligibility

Individual researchers, organisations or consortia are invited to submit proposals for this evaluation. Applicants must be based in the United Kingdom. Catch22 has preference for applicants who have prior experience conducting research in the employability space and that demonstrate expertise in participatory evaluations, as well as conducting research with care experienced young people or young people in similar vulnerable situations.

### Budget

A fee of up to **GBP 30,000** has been made available for this evaluation. **This does not include VAT**, so please indicate how much you would be required to pay as **we will be**

**covering that cost separately.** Budgets will be reviewed with respect to the strength of the proposal in meeting the project objectives in a cost-effective manner - we do not simply prioritise the lowest budget. This is a fixed price, service agreement contract.

### Proposal deadline

Proposals and enquiries should be submitted via email to Matilde Chora, at [Matilde.Chora@catch-22.org.uk](mailto:Matilde.Chora@catch-22.org.uk), **no later than Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> of March**. Proposals should be no more than 4 pages, plus CVs and annexes.

---

### What is the Care Leavers Into Careers (CLIC) programme?

CLIC supports CEYP aged between 18 and 30 across the Liverpool City regions and Greater Manchester using a relational, holistic approach that focuses on the individual, their barriers, goals, and intentions. CLIC is part of the charity Catch22.

Considering the specific challenges and structural barriers that CEYP face in accessing and sustaining employment, our Career Mentors provide far more than standard employability support<sup>1</sup>. The service aims to break down the barriers (real, systemic and perceived) that CEYP face when looking for career opportunities. In addition to helping young people become work-ready and secure employment, apprenticeships, training or education opportunities, they take a holistic approach - identifying wider barriers and actively connecting young people to essential services such as housing, benefits advice, and mental health support. Since its inception, CLIC has supported a total of 357 young people, including 91 who participated during the one-year pilot phase in 2023 and a further 266 supported between 2024 and the present.

Besides supporting young people directly, the service also works with employers, supporting them to navigate their recruitment process and support CEYP within the workplace.

---

### Research scope and background

CLIC has been operating since 2023 and has now reached the midpoint of delivery. This represents a timely opportunity to undertake a robust evaluation of the programme's

---

<sup>1</sup> Please note that the scope of what constitutes "standard employability support" may evolve with the implementation of the national Youth Guarantee, particularly through the development of Youth Hubs designed to provide more holistic support to 16–18-year-olds. The evaluation should take this evolving policy landscape into account and consider how changes in mainstream provision may influence programme additionality, relevance, and outcomes.

impact, ensuring that key learning and recommendations can be embedded and acted upon within the remaining contract period.

This evaluation is also particularly timely in the wider public policy context. There is growing national focus on “what works” in supporting young people into employment, and Catch22 is particularly interested in understanding what this might look like for those facing multiple and complex barriers. New initiatives, such as the national Youth Guarantee, aim to provide young people with more intensive and holistic support to access employment, apprenticeships, training, and work placements. However, without a clear understanding of the specific needs of young people experiencing additional disadvantage, there is a risk that mainstream initiatives may fail to reach those who require most tailored support.

We know from both research and evidence from Catch22's Young People's Benchmarking Forum <sup>2</sup> that care leavers face heightened barriers to entering the workforce and may experience acute financial pressure during their first month of work. While this challenge is widely acknowledged, there is limited empirical research capturing young people's lived experiences at this critical transition point. At a local level, many authorities provide financial or practical support to care leavers to facilitate transitions into work or training. However, there is little evidence on whether these forms of support are well understood, accessible, or sufficient at the point they are most needed. Moreover, the national Youth Guarantee might have implications for the type and scope of support available, as well as the extent to which that support is sufficiently tailored to meet the specific needs of CEYP.

Catch22 is therefore seeking to commission an independent evaluation of the CLIC programme. In addition to assessing programme impact, we aim to generate wider learning about this crucial transition period, strengthening the evidence base on how best to support CEYP into sustainable employment and informing both local and national policy development.

---

## Research objectives and main research questions

The research is split into three main questions (split into sub-questions):

- 1) How effective is CLIC in supporting CEYP, particularly with addressing any barriers that might hinder their possibilities of entering the workforce and connecting them with sustainable and meaningful employment?

---

<sup>2</sup> The [National Leaving Care Benchmarking Forum's submission](#) to the Child Poverty Action review includes recommendations that directly address issues faced by CEYP during this transition point, such as increasing young people's income by promoting wage stream type services.

- a) To what extent is CLIC supporting CEYP to access and sustain employment?
  - b) How effective is CLIC in supporting CEYP overcoming any barriers to work through its holistic provision, and to what extent is that attributed to its intervention model, which differs from traditional employability support?
  - c) Are there any differences in outcomes based on CEYP's protected characteristics/intersecting vulnerabilities?
  - d) To what extent do CEYP experience shifts in their financial confidence (e.g. budgeting, decision-making, help seeking, coping with shortfalls), particularly before and after starting work?
  - e) To what extent do the total monetised economic and social benefits of the programme outweigh its costs?
- 2) To what extent do CEYP experience financial hardships and cashflow gaps between Universal Credit payments and first wages?
  - 3) What financial and practical support is available from local authorities, Job Centre Plus, the local Youth Guarantee offer, employers, and other sources at job start, and how accessible is this in practice? What do CEYP and those supporting them into employment believe would make a difference?

---

## Research methodology

**Advisory Group:** The evaluation should ideally include the **involvement of an Advisory Group, comprised of CEYP**, to guide the research, help to refine the objectives, review and give ethical approval of the research methods and tools, and give feedback on findings. The CLIC team will support with recruiting suitable participants. The evaluation team should recommend a suitable composition and ways of working for this group.

**Methodological approach:** Catch22 invites applicants to propose a suitable methodology for achieving the research objectives. We seek to obtain **both quantitative and qualitative findings** from the evaluation, therefore, applications that describe a comprehensive mixed method approach would be given preference. The quantitative component will involve analysing the internal monitoring data that CLIC has gathered since the start of the programme. Kindly include data collection methods, sampling strategies, sample sizes and sources of information.

Catch22 is open to the majority of the research activity being conducted remotely. However, we encourage in-person engagement when working directly with young people, as this is often more conducive to building trust and ensuring meaningful participation. Any in-person delivery would be agreed and coordinated in consultation with the CLIC

programme team, taking into account practical considerations and safeguarding requirements. Please clearly outline your proposed approach, specifying whether research activities will be delivered in person, remotely, or through a blended model.

Preference will be given to candidates who are willing to suggest more innovative and interactive data collection approaches with young people.

**Cost benefit analysis:** The proposed methodology should include a cost–benefit analysis component, that assesses the total costs of delivery alongside the monetised economic and social benefits generated for CEYP and wider society.

**Stakeholder participation:** Please outline which stakeholders you will engage with and justify your proposed sample and its size. Consideration should be given to how these individuals can be accessed and engaged with in a manner which encourages honest responses. The CLIC team can support with connections with local authority members and employers.

**Data quality and analysis:** Describe the procedures that will be in place to ensure a high level of data quality. Describe the methods and tools used for data analysis at different levels. Describe the data analysis plan, including any data analysis software and rationale for its use, proposed analysis methods and a rough timeline. The work plan should allow for sufficient time for inputs from the CLIC/Catch22 staff before finalisation.

**Operational, safeguarding, trauma informed and ethical considerations:** Highlight any logistical, ethical and/or safeguarding issues with the proposed methodology, such as encouraging candid responses, handling of potentially sensitive information, confidentiality of respondents, sensitivity and respect to stakeholders, Do No Harm etc. Please indicate how you will monitor responses provided and mitigate response bias that may influence the research.

The research will be contracted by Catch22 and supervised by our Research & Evaluation Manager based in London. Catch22 anticipates working closely with the research team through all stages of the program.

---

### Main deliverables and high-level timeline

Main deliverables	Proposed timeline
Kick off meeting with CLIC/Catch22 team	April 2026
Complete desk review of CLIC documents and discussions with the CLIC/Catch22 team	April 2026
Finalise suitable evaluation/research methodology to answer the evaluation objectives outlined above, presented as a	April - May 2026

research protocol, which includes a realistic sampling strategy, an initial draft of all relevant data collection tools, work plan and ethical considerations. CLIC/Catch22 team needs at least 1 week to review.	
Plan for Advisory Group engagement finalised and initial meetings conducted	April - May 2026
Data collection phase	June - August 2026
Complete data cleaning and analysis	September 2026
Presentation of emerging themes at in-person event in London	End of September 2026
Draft report	October 2026
Final report	October 2026
Presentation of findings at two events (roughly 30 minutes each and can be done online)	October 2026

## Proposal format

Interested parties should prepare a proposal of no more than 4 pages plus CVs and annexes. Proposals should contain the following sections:

1. **Short biography of project lead(s) and key team members**, outlining relevant subject matter expertise and prior experience leading similar research projects. CV(s) of the project lead(s) should be included in the annex. Past report(s) from similar projects could be included as a link or in a separate annex.
2. **Methodology**, addressing the topics listed in the 'Research methodology' section of this document. This may include an estimation of sample sizes for each stakeholder group, data collection methods that will be used, and types of tools that might be applied.
3. **Team structure**, defining the role and time commitment of key project team members.
4. **High-level work plan** with timing of key project deliverables and proposed format of final report.
5. **Proposed budget** in GBP, with the following breakdown:
  - Personnel cost.
  - Other direct costs (e.g. training workshops, refreshments, software licences, devices or tools for data collection). Please do **include budget for reimbursing CLIC service users** for any participation in either data collection or through Advisory Group membership, considering at least £15/hour. The CLIC team can support the arrangements for distributing vouchers for research participants.
  - Overheads.
  - How much you will be paying in VAT.

Note that there is **no need to include design costs for the report**, which we will arrange to be designed by our internal design team.

The proposal must be written in English and sent electronically in Microsoft Office or PDF format.

---

## Criteria and scoring for assessing proposals

In reviewing proposals, CLIC/Catch22 will use the following criteria:

Technical criteria	Weighting
a. Technical capacity of the evaluation team, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Experience of conducting evaluations, with an advanced understanding of relevant quantitative and qualitative research techniques.</li> <li>- Expertise in economic evaluation including cost-benefit analysis.</li> <li>- Demonstrated experience of conducting research on sensitive topics and/or with vulnerable groups (such as experience of working with care experienced individuals).</li> <li>- Fluency in English.</li> </ul>	50%
b. Contextual knowledge of the research team, including on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Familiarity with the UK youth employment sector and/or types of issues faced by care leavers.</li> <li>- Familiarity with working with NGOs.</li> </ul>	10%
c. Team structure, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Adequate staffing levels to deliver quality project outputs within the desired timeframe.</li> <li>- Ability to conduct data collection in England.</li> <li>- Diversity among its team members.</li> </ul>	30%
<b>Financial criteria</b>	
d. Costs are proportionate to the scale of work being proposed, and consideration of all potential expenses.	10%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

---

## Commissioning timeline

<b>17<sup>th</sup> March 2026</b>	<b>Proposals due.</b> Please submit all documents to Matilde Chora at <a href="mailto:Matilde.Chora@catch-22.org.uk">Matilde.Chora@catch-22.org.uk</a> with "Proposal for CLIC Evaluation" as the email subject line.
24 <sup>th</sup> March 2026	All shortlisted research teams will be notified, and interviews will be scheduled.
31 <sup>st</sup> March 2026	Notification and feedback from Catch22