

INVITATION TO TENDER

Notice

**Delivery of an East Midlands focused digital
advertising campaign for the recruitment of
UASC specific foster carers & supported
lodgings hosts**

December 2025

Invitation to Tender

East Midlands Councils (EMC) invites qualified and experienced marketing professionals and/or agencies to bid for a contract for the delivery of an East Midlands focused digital media buy-in campaign for the regional recruitment of Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC) specific Foster Carers and Supported Lodgings Carers.

This campaign is expected to utilise our existing recruitment website, branding, and digital marketing materials.

Overview

Regional UASC Programme Background

The East Midlands has a strong background in partnership working to welcome and care for UASC and our member authorities responded positively to the National Transfer Scheme (NTS) when it was first established in 2016.

The NTS is a protocol for transferring children from those entry points, principally Kent, to authorities across the country. Children are transferred via a Rota system operated by the Home Office liaising with regional strategic migration partnerships who then work with Local Authority partners to find suitable placements for children.

The NTS was established as a voluntary system in 2016. However, due to an increasing number of small boat crossings following the establishment of the NTS it was made mandatory in 2021 in order to reduce the pressure on Kent County Council's children's services.

As a result, East Midlands authorities have since seen a significant increase in the number of UASC coming into their care through the NTS, where placements for children need to be found within short timescales putting pressure on Local Authorities to find placements in an increasingly saturated marketplace.

In response to rising pressures EMC alongside Leicestershire County Council (LCC) led a regional pilot project 'Place to Call Home' which aimed to recruit more Foster Carers and Supported Lodgings carers specifically for UASC.

The 'Place to Call Home' pilot, which ran from October 2020 to October 2021, found that 83% of the prospective carers who had an initial phone call with the recruitment team were solely interested in caring for young asylum seekers. This demonstrates that there is a pool of prospective carers for UASC that can be recruited without impacting upon the efforts of Local Authorities to increase the number of internal foster carers for the general looked after population.

As a result, the Regional UASC Programme was developed with the recruitment of UASC specific Foster Carers & Supported Lodgings Carers at its heart.

To date we have delivered a campaign website with an enquiry form, employed a Regional UASC Carer Co-Ordinator (12-month post) with the objective of engaging communities and the VCS sector to drive enquiries through our website, run an 8-week digital advertising campaign over the summer of 2025 and run a 4-week radio advertising campaign over the course of September 2025.

We are looking to build on the learning from our previous campaigns to improve the number and quality of enquiries that we receive through the campaign.

Requirements

EMC is looking to work with a suitably qualified partner to deliver a digital advertising campaign starting in early 2026, informed by the learning from campaigns to date, this is outlined as follows.

EMC has undertaken activity over the course of 2025 to engage communities and generate enquiries from individuals who are interested in caring for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children either by becoming a foster carer or a supported lodgings host.

This activity has consisted of the following:

- Recruitment to a 12-month Regional UASC Carer Recruitment Officer post.
- Engagement of VCS organisations and community groups via meetings and events attended by the Regional UASC Carer Recruitment Officer, where the UASC Recruitment Officer was actively making contact between February 2025 and November 2025.
- Launching of a regional website, utilising the campaign branding, on 16th May 2025.
- Running of an 8-week digital marketing campaign following the development of campaign branding, digital and physical marketing materials from 19th May 2025 to 19th July 2025.
- Running our own campaign Facebook page, this started with the digital campaign and was continued afterwards by the Regional UASC Carer Recruitment Officer.
- Running of a 4-week radio advertising campaign with a local diaspora focused radio station where four 30 second adverts per day were run at peak drive time during September 2025, this also included one promotional social media post from the radio station and a recorded interview aired as part of a programme.

To date as a result of this activity 24 genuine enquiries have been submitted through our website with at least one prospective carer currently going through the local authority recruitment process.

Based upon the lessons learned over the past year and building upon the lessons learned through the original 'Place to Call Home' pilot we require all or a majority of the following activities to be delivered by the successful bidder, but bidders have some flexibility to amend delivery options based on their own expertise as part of our renewed advertising campaign:

1. Build and launch intent-led search activity
 - Develop targeted search campaigns (Google and Bing) for users actively seeking information related to fostering, supported lodgings, refugee support, and UASC.
 - Create concise, action-focused ads tailored specifically to the UASC fostering offer.
 - Direct all traffic to the dedicated landing page with full GA4 tracking and UTM parameters, GA4 Tracking and UTMs are to be configured pre-launch where the bidder will lead on delivery with oversight of the EMC communications lead.
2. Run contextual and programmatic placements to reach community and diaspora audiences
 - Target placements on relevant community, volunteering, safeguarding, charity, and diaspora content where UASC fostering interest is more likely.

- Use contextual filters to ensure placements relate to vulnerable young people, care, community support, or refugee contexts.
 - Serve static, display, and video formats as appropriate.
3. Implement structured remarketing across platforms
 - Re-engage users who start but do not complete the enquiry form
 - Re-engage users who engage with case study videos.
 - Tailor messaging to reinforce the opportunity, address potential barriers, and prompt completion.
 4. Optimise campaign delivery every two weeks
 - Review targeting accuracy, especially geographic match to the East Midlands.
 - Adjust bids, placements, and channel split based on form starts and completions.
 - Reduce spending on any placement driving low intent traffic.
 - Shift budget toward proven high intent channels as data builds.
 5. Maintain a full funnel tracking and monitoring framework
 - Ensure tracking captures visitor location, form starts, form completions, device usage, and source attribution.
 - Use GA4 to monitor user flow and identify points of drop-off.
 - Maintain weekly internal checks to ensure data accuracy.
 6. Deliver performance reports to EMC
 - Reporting to be bi-weekly at the start of the campaign and can be reduced to monthly reporting based on satisfactory progress towards achievements of overall objectives.
 - Report on visitors, form starts, form completions, and geographic accuracy.
 - Provide breakdowns for the two-week period only, not cumulative.
 - Include clear optimisation actions for the following period.
 7. Ensure compliance with safeguarding and ethical advertising standards
 - Ensure campaign messaging is clear, factual, and aligned with UASC fostering requirements.
 - Avoid any advertising practices that could imply targeting based on immigration status or sensitive personal data.

Constraints

The following constraints apply to the renewed advertising campaign:

- No Meta or Radio Advertising.
- Budget capped at £15,000 (includes agency fees).
- Campaign minimum period of 4 months.

- Geographic targeting essential (70% minimum; 80% stretch target of website visitors & enquiry submissions from East Midlands)
- Campaign to launch in first quarter of 2026.

Bids should demonstrate how these requirements will be fulfilled. Please see the scope and specification document for further context around requirements, audience, and targets.

Tendering Arrangements

Prospective tenderers must complete the application form included with the tender documentation and submit their completed forms via email by 5pm on Friday 30th January 2026 in order to be considered, any application forms received after this deadline will not be considered.

Email address for completed application forms: SMP@emcouncils.gov.uk

Within the application form bidders should outline their proposal within the section on Technical & Professional ability by answering all the questions relating to:

- Specific outputs proposed to meet the requirements.
- The suggested approach with respect to delivering the requirements and targets set out within the ITT documentation.
- Organisational and team member experience
- The suggested approach within campaign towards continuous improvement.

All information relevant to the bid must be included within the application form and answers to questions should adhere to the prescribed word limits, any supplementary information included with the form or links to webpages/documents embedded within the form will not be considered during the marking process.

The marking scheme and scoring criteria are included within the application form.

For additional information please see the scope and specification document.

Prospective Payment Schedule

It is proposed that the payment of fees to the successful bidder will be split into three equal amounts, as illustrated in the table below:

Payment Number	Payment Condition	Payment Amount (%)
1	Payment upon signing agreement after appointment.	33.3
2	Payment at half-way point of campaign subject to being on-track towards achieving targets.	33.3
3	Payment upon completion of campaign subject to successful achievement of targets.	33.3

The above schedule is a proposal and is open to negotiation with the successful bidder.

Internal Project Management

The UASC Programme Manager, Stuart Turner, is leading this project and will be the primary contact for a successful bidder.

The UASC Programme Board alongside the UASC Programme Manager will define the project acceptance criteria and approve the products delivered as part of the project.

Submission

Please read our full scope and specification before applying.

Please ensure that your bid conforms to the conditions set out within the Tendering Arrangements section of this document. Bids that do not meet these conditions will not be progressed to the next stage of the tender process.

The deadline for submitting questions regarding the tender is Monday 19th January 2026 (5pm), all questions and answers will be appended to the application portal no later than Thursday 22nd January 2026 (5pm) and will be available for all potential applicants to view.

The deadline for submitting written proposals (including completed application forms) is Friday 30th January 2026 (5pm), which outlines your approach and suitability for the project.

Please return your tender submissions via email to: SMP@emcouncils.gov.uk

Submissions by post will not be accepted.