



Invitation to tender

Public right to justice: Evidence review

Summary

Full Title: Evidence review - *Engaging the public in justice: participation, representation, and transparency in the justice system*

Commissioner: Nuffield Foundation

Aim: In support of the Nuffield Foundation's *Public right to justice* programme, this evidence review will synthesise, critically appraise, and present in an accessible way research, data, and other evidence on different aspects of the justice system's engagement with the public. The review will cover evidence on the public's opportunities, willingness, and ability to participate in the administration of justice, the representativeness of justice system actors, and the transparency of the system. The review will also look at any evidence on the impacts of these factors on key outcomes for the justice system, including public trust and understanding.

Timescales and key dates

Deadline for submission of clarification questions: 11am, 22 August

Deadline for submissions: 11am, 22 September

Appointment: 9 October

Project start date and inception meeting: 16 October

Delivery of first draft outputs: April 2026

Project completion date: July 2026

Budget

Tenders are invited up to a maximum of £65,000 (exclusive of VAT) for the review.

Please provide a statement whether or not VAT will be added to the price

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Introduction and background

There is considerable concern about the state of the justice system in England and Wales, prompting growing calls for change and profound questions about the extent to which the system is effectively delivering justice. In March 2024, the Nuffield Foundation held an event entitled [“Where has my Justice gone?”](#) which highlighted the negative experiences of many users of the justice system, including long delays, difficulties navigating the system, a lack of help or advice, and a wider sense of a system that can lose sight of the needs of the public that it serves.

We want to explore what can be done to move beyond just further diagnoses of these problems and develop evidence-based approaches to solving them. This is the central goal of our new [Public right to justice](#) programme. However, to establish firm foundations for this work, we first want to review and consolidate the current state of existing knowledge on key areas. In doing so, we believe that the problems identified in the justice system are not solely due to a lack of evidence – in many areas, there is already a good deal of research, past and present. Rather, there is a need to use that evidence in a more coordinated and effective way to find solutions, and to create an informed and persuasive case for change.

While we have a strong interest in the kind of legal needs and problems that people experience, our primary focus here is on the role and efficacy of the processes and institutions formally responsible for addressing legal issues, and for administering and enforcing the law. This is what we mean by ‘the justice system’. Our particular interest is in the processes leading up to and including adjudication by courts and tribunals. The primary focus is on the justice system of England and Wales, although we are interested in comparisons with other jurisdictions where appropriate. While we are interested in the system as a whole, our particular priorities are the administrative, civil, family, and youth justice systems.

We are now seeking a contractor to deliver an evidence review focusing on *Engaging the public in justice: participation, representation, and transparency in the justice system*. The contractor will be responsible for developing a review protocol, searching for, reviewing, and synthesising relevant evidence and data, and presenting this in an accessible and engaging way.

This review will be one of several that are either planned or are currently in progress. These other reviews will be delivered by different contractors under discrete contracts.

About the commissioner

The Nuffield Foundation is an independent charitable trust with a mission to advance social well-being by funding research, encouraging innovation, and supporting the use of sound evidence to improve people's lives. As set out in our recently released [Strategic Review](#), our work on [Justice](#), including the new *Public right to justice* programme, illustrates our belief that a fair and effective justice system is essential for everyday social and economic life. The Nuffield Foundation is also the founder and co-funder of three centres: the [Nuffield Council on Bioethics](#), the [Ada Lovelace Institute](#) and the [Nuffield Family Justice Observatory](#) (NFJO). In particular the NFJO, with their expertise in influencing policy and practice, are a core partner of the new programme.

Public right to justice: evidence review - aims and objectives

This review is part of the first phase of our *Public right to justice* programme which is focused on developing reform proposals for the justice system of England and Wales, with particular attention to the needs and experiences of those encountering the system. Taken together, various reviews will draw together and synthesise the existing evidence base on different aspects of the justice system and provide a critical assessment of that knowledge base.

Aims for the reviews are two-fold:

1. Each review will provide a standalone, robust synthesis of a thematic area of interest, comprehensively drawing together the available research and evidence on a topic.
2. The reviews will critically appraise and identify gaps in the evidence base and be used to identify priority areas for further research in subsequent stages of the *Public right to justice* programme.

We have already commissioned other reviews, including on the experiences and views of users of the justice system, and the state of the justice system. We anticipate there may be overlapping interest between the review we are seeking to commission here and work we have going on elsewhere as part of the *Public right to justice* programme. To reduce duplication of effort and to share learning and insight, we will work with successful bidders and the other review teams to coordinate activity.

Specification

This review will be rigorously conducted, with an objective and transparent approach to searching and analysing the evidence base. It should provide an authoritative synthesis of the evidence on the *Engaging the public in justice: participation, representation, and transparency in the justice system* topic area, and be able to stand up to external scrutiny and challenge. The review should include an interpretation of the evidence base, providing commentary around the strengths and weaknesses of the research and evidence currently available. We also require a critical review of how the evidence base has been used (or not) to shape justice system policy and practice, though here we are open to engaging with the successful contractor about the feasibility of this.

To fit with the timeframe of the overarching programme of work, we expect first draft outputs to be delivered by end March 2026, and for the review to be completed and ready for publication by July 2026.

Review methodology

We set out below the specific requirements for this review, though we are open to considering alternative methods and methodological approaches. Tenderers are free to suggest whichever approach they feel is most appropriate to the task and which fits with available resources and the timetable. Irrespective of the chosen approach, the search, extraction, and synthesis of the data and research evidence should be systematically conducted.

The choice of an appropriate review methodology should be explained in the tender response. The review should be underpinned by *a priori* review protocol which should be shared and signed off by the Nuffield Foundation's *Public right to justice* team and included as an annex to the main review and synthesis output.

The review

Tenderers are invited to submit bids for the review, the specifics of which are described below. While we have set out the purpose and key research questions for the review, interested tenderers are, with appropriate reasoning and explanation, invited to suggest refinements in scope or approach.

Evidence review title:

Engaging the public in justice: participation, representation, and transparency in the justice system

Purpose

Though the primary focus of our *Public right to justice* programme is on how individuals experience and are affected by contact with the justice system, and how that might be improved, we are also interested in that system's role as a key societal institution, including how it reflects and upholds wider democratic and public values. The justice system serves the public by administering justice, upholding rights, and enforcing laws. Key elements of that function include the justice system's openness to, and engagement with, the public, beyond their direct involvement as individual system users. These elements are considered essential to ensure the legitimacy of the system and its role in upholding the rule of law. We want to understand what the evidence says about the nature and impacts - and challenges - of putting these principles into practice.

Specifically, the purpose of this review is to summarise and assess the existing evidence in respect of the following questions.

Research questions

1. What are the underpinning conceptual and practical justifications (drawn from legal and jurisprudential theory and other disciplines) for valuing the effectiveness and legitimacy of the justice system by the nature and extent of its engagement with the public, and demonstration of wider social values like diversity and transparency?
2. What do the public – aside from when acting as individual users in contact with the system – want and expect from the justice system (including any views on their willingness and ability to do so) in terms of:
 - a. opportunities to engage or participate in the scrutiny or delivery of the administration of justice
 - b. its transparency and openness to public understanding and scrutiny; and
 - c. the diversity and representativeness of actors within the system?
3. To what extent, and how, does the justice system engage the public by enabling:
 - a. their involvement in the scrutiny or delivery of justice
 - b. their ability to see and understand the processes of justice, including individual case proceedings and outcomes; and
 - c. ensure that those acting in any official capacity within the justice system (including in lay roles such as magistrates and jurors) reflect the socio-demographic composition and diversity of UK society?

4. What effect does achieving or pursuing public engagement with the justice system have on outcomes and attitudes, including trust and confidence? Are there variations here depending on socio-demographic differences?

Scope

This review will provide commentary and critical appraisal of how, as an institution of a modern democratic state, the justice system is able to engage with, involve, and represent the public it serves – including any practical and conceptual limits and tensions with this.

Work should cover all jurisdictions/areas of law, although we are especially interested in the evidence on administrative, civil and family justice - which may be compared and contrasted with the situation in criminal justice. Where possible, there should be a breakdown of available evidence by jurisdiction. Our interest is primarily in the area of adjudication and the work of courts and tribunals, and less so on the agencies which act up and downstream of these - although we recognise that examples of public engagement or involvement in the delivery of justice may well cover some of the latter. Policing is out of scope, however. Where relevant, the review should also consider the role of alternative/different dispute resolution methods in relation to the research questions.

We recognise that this review is seeking to empirically assess what are essentially normative positions and principles. Recognising the challenge this brings, we anticipate working closely with the contractor to refine the approach in a flexible and agile way. We are open to suggestions from bidders about different or additional ways to frame or address the key issues and questions at the heart of this review.

We expect the main focus to be on the jurisdiction of England and Wales but would welcome comparative work and insights to be drawn from the other UK jurisdictions and other comparable jurisdictions elsewhere, where relevant.

Noting this, we anticipate the review will:

- (i) Provide a concise overview of the conceptual principles underpinning the justice system's position within a democratic state and in relation to the people it serves, with particular reference to issues of public engagement, system transparency, and diversity/representativeness. Again, to note by 'people' we are referring to the public more widely and not just as individual parties to a legal case.
- (ii) Review and synthesise evidence on the public's willingness, ability, and opportunities to be involved in the administration and delivery of justice, and their understanding of the system.
- (iii) Review and synthesise existing evidence on the socio-demographic profile and characteristics of key justice system professionals and the extent to which this reflects the wider population and justice system users they serve.

- (iv) Identify, describe, and appraise initiatives to enable public engagement, participation, and transparency of the justice system, including those to make the system more representative of the people it serves.
- (v) Critically interpret the collective evidence base to provide insights about the value, challenges, and outcomes of public involvement and engagement with the justice system - for example on trust, confidence, and perceptions of fairness and effectiveness.

Outputs

We anticipate three outputs for this review, all of which will be delivered to a high-quality, publishable standard and suitable for digital dissemination. All outputs will be provided to the Nuffield Foundation for its own use:

1. **Main report (including Executive Summary):** with a guide length of no more than 50 pages, providing a review and synthesis of research findings and evidence. This should include an extensive review of the existing published research, including academic and grey literature, and analysis of readily available data. The review should also incorporate an expert-led critical appraisal of evidence, policy and practice, though this should be clearly separated/distinct from the main review and synthesis itself (e.g. as a standalone chapter or sectioned off chapter summaries). The critical assessment should provide insights on the nature of the research and evidence, and flag major knowledge gaps as well as potential priority areas for future research. The critical appraisal should also include commentary about the role and importance of representativeness, participation, and transparency within the justice system.
2. **A two-to three-page policy and practitioner brief:** summarising and presenting key findings, implications, and recommendations for policymakers and practitioners. The brief should be designed to be an accessible and engaging quick read, providing this audience with key information about the review, and prompting consideration as to how they might respond to it. The brief should be geared towards an informed but non-expert audience and be written in plain English.
3. **A presentation slide deck:** the successful tenderer will be expected to present before the *Public right to justice* Expert Panel and at other Nuffield Foundation organised events as required, using a full set of presentation slides (in PowerPoint or equivalent package).

External contractor: roles and responsibilities

We wish to commission organisations with a strong knowledge of the UK justice ecosystem to deliver the following activities in partnership with the *Public right to justice* project team at the Nuffield Foundation:

- Develop an approach to collate, synthesise and present the research base on the evidence review described above.
- Bring skills and experience of conducting evidence reviews using an appropriate review methodology, as well as deep expertise and insight about the operation and structure of the justice system of England and Wales.
- Have the necessary permissions and resources to access a comprehensive range of research outputs and data, including those behind paywalls (i.e. academic and professional journals).
- Provide regular updates to the Nuffield Foundation, including the delivery of a search protocol, and interim report.
- Draft a range of high-quality outputs (see *Outputs* section, above) to time and to standard.
- Present at key *Public right to justice* events organised by the Nuffield Foundation associated with the programme.

We welcome tenders from both single organisations or consortia.

Expectations around accessibility of outputs

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

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

- Consider using images, illustrations, video, audio, and symbols to help clarify meaning.
- Complex diagrams will require [a text description](#) that can be used as an alt text tag on images for screen readers.
- Use inclusive language.

It may be helpful to refer to the gov.uk [guidance](#) on content design for further information.

Indicative deliverables, milestones and outcomes

This timetable will be reviewed and agreed with the contractor

Deliverables, milestones and outcomes	Date
Inception meeting and finalisation of project initiation document	16 October 2025
Deliver search protocol, and proposed structures and format of final output	24 October
Interim report: post-search phase	19 January 2026
Delivery of first drafts of final outputs	10 April
Early insights presentation (including slide deck) to Expert Panel	22 May
Delivery of second drafts of final outputs	22 May
Sign-off of final outputs	12 June
Publication and post-publication dissemination activity	July

Legal and contracting

Confidential information

You agree to keep confidential at all times, whether during or after the selection procedure, any confidential information, whether it's marked "Confidential" or deemed to be Confidential, and to take all necessary steps to preserve the confidentiality of such Confidential Information including, without limitation, by disclosing relevant material to your employees or agents only on a strictly 'need to know' basis, and only for the purpose of this selection procedure and on the basis that they maintain the confidentiality of the Confidential Information. You must not distribute externally or publish any Confidential Information provided by the Nuffield Foundation in connection with this ITT (save where required by law).

You are not entitled to make any announcement relating directly or indirectly to this ITT, without the written consent of the Nuffield Foundation.

Warranty

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

Intellectual property

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

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

Publications

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

The Nuffield Foundation is committed to publishing, promoting and sharing outputs from this research, but reserve the right to request changes, edit and / or delay publication if an output is

considered not to be of publishable standard. Outputs may also be subject to external peer review prior to publication being agreed.

Contracting

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

Ethics, safeguarding and data protection

We anticipate these reviews pose minimal ethical challenges or data protection issues, but we would welcome applicants to set out:

- The ethical and safeguarding considerations for this work and how they will be addressed (especially if any primary research or consultation is likely to occur).
- *If necessary*, a data protection impact assessment showing how any personal data collected in the course of the work will be processed in accordance with the UK GDPR.

Project management

Please set out your approach to project management to ensure the timely delivery of the project, including staffing, timetable, risk management and production/delivery of outputs. We would like to know how you propose to work with the *Public right to justice* programme team at the Nuffield Foundation, as well as other relevant justice system stakeholders. We would be especially keen to know how you will quality assure your work to ensure that deliverables and project outputs are able to meet our requirements and overall project aims.

Budget and indicative timetable

We expect proposals to be **within** a guide budget range of £45,000-65,000 exclusive of VAT. Please provide a statement whether or not VAT will be added to the price. Please note, as

detailed in the assessment criteria (below), there is a price competitive element to our assessment of tenders, so it is important that the budget being applied for is clearly explained.

Commissioning activity	Date
Issue tender	6 August 2025
Submission of clarification questions	11am, 22 August
Publish response to clarification questions	29 August
Deadline for submission	11am, 22 September
Shortlisting	25 September
Appoint contractors	9 October
Project start and inception meeting	16 October
Project end	July 2026

Submitting a proposal

We welcome bids from individual organisations or consortia.

To submit a tender, you must first **obtain an application form by completing this [Expression of Interest form](#)**.

Upon receiving your Expression of Interest, the Nuffield Foundation will email an application form – please allow up to two working days to receive the application form. **Please note, tenders must be submitted using the emailed application form** – any tenders that are submitted not using the form will not be considered.

The Nuffield Foundation will also forward a guide budget and resource template. We would urge the use of the template to show how the budget and staff resources will be distributed across the project. Tenderers are invited to use an alternative budget template if they so prefer. However, it is advisable to review the Nuffield Foundation budget and resource template before preparing any costings to ensure that right the level of detail is provided to assess a tender.

Upon receiving the application form, bidders should note and be mindful of word count limits. Tenders should clearly set out:

- An understanding of our requirements and awareness of the importance and relevance of this work.
- A proposed approach and methodology for conducting the evidence review.
- A project plan with timescales for key activities, milestones and deliverables.
- Risk management.
- Ethics, safeguarding, and data protection.
- Staffing, project roles and responsibilities, and time directed towards the project.
- Relevant expertise and experience, including references to examples of relevant projects and outputs. Please provide short-form (one page) CVs for each member of the project team.
- Budget breakdown. Please refer to the budget and resource template that will be provided alongside the application form upon submission of an Expression of Interest. Please also provide a statement whether or not VAT will be added to the price.

To be considered, tenders must be received by **11am on 22 September 2025**, via email sent to contactjustice@nuffieldfoundation.org.

Submitting clarification questions

We welcome clarification questions to be submitted in one of two ways.

1. When completing an Expression of Interest form
2. By sending an email to contactjustice@nuffieldfoundation.org

In both cases, all clarification questions about the process or specification must be submitted by **11am on 22 August 2025**.

Responses to clarification questions will be published on or **by 29 August 2025**. All questions and responses will be anonymised and made available to all potential tenderers. An email notice announcing the publication of clarification question responses will be sent to anyone who has completed an Expression of Interest form.

Assessment criteria

The assessment panel will comprise staff from the Nuffield Foundation.

Tender applications will be assessed using the criteria laid out in the table below. We will apply a minimum threshold score to all of the key criteria except the budget. A tender which fails to meet ANY of the minimum thresholds will be excluded from further consideration.

Criteria	Max. score	Min. score	Weighting	What we are looking for
Understanding of the requirement	100	50	10%	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ An understanding of what is being commissioned, and recognition of its relevance to policy and practice development in the justice system■ Existing knowledge and familiarity with the topic being reviewed
Methodological approach	100	50	30%	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The application of an appropriate review methodology■ Clear delivery plans and project timetable
Experience and expertise	100	50	30%	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Proven track record of delivering evidence reviews and high-quality, accessible research outputs■ Expert knowledge of the justice system and the specific issues under review
Team capacity	100	50	20%	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Overall capacity to deliver■ Appropriate distribution of tasks and activities across the project team
Budget	100	-	10%	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Cost, value for money, and feasibility

Invoice schedule

- 10% on signing of contract
- 45% at delivery of interim report
- 45% on publication of final outputs