

Transforming Services for Women's Futures

Costings analysis tender

October 2022

Overview

- The 'Transforming Services for Women's Futures' project is a partnership between [Agenda](#) and [Changing Lives](#), funded by [Smallwood Trust](#), to research, explore and map how public services can be redesigned post-pandemic to better meet the needs women facing multiple unmet needs.
- [Agenda](#), the alliance for women and girls at risk, campaigns to ensure that women and girls at risk of abuse, poverty, poor mental health, addiction, homelessness and contact with the criminal justice system get the support and protection they need.
- [Changing Lives](#) believes that everyone deserves the opportunity to reach their potential. Changing Lives are experts in working with people experiencing the most challenging of circumstances, providing holistic support to help people to go on to lead happy, fulfilling lives.
- We are seeking to appoint a specialist research agency or economist, who can help to calculate the cost of public services failing to appropriately support women facing multiple unmet needs.

Background

Women who experience multiple unmet needs face a range of problem, including violence and abuse, poverty, poor mental health, addiction, homelessness and contact with the criminal justice system. Agenda's [research](#) shows that one in 20 women have experienced extensive physical and sexual violence as both a child and an adult: that's 1.2 million women in England alone. The legacy of this trauma means many women and girls go on to face a range of complex problems over their lifetime:

- 54% have a common mental health condition
- 52% have a disability
- 35% are in the lowest income tertile
- One in five have been homeless
- One in three have an alcohol problem

The COVID-19 pandemic had a significant impact on this group of women, and the specialist services supporting them. Whilst the complexity of need of women increased, with referrals

dominated by the most complex and urgent needs, many services supporting women at risk (44%) had to close, reduce, or suspend their support ([Voices From Lockdown](#), Agenda, 2021).

This was a particularly difficult for women already facing disadvantage, who were pushed further into poverty and faced additional risks to their physical and mental health as a result of the national emergency. With the ongoing cost of living crisis, these challenges are likely to be exacerbated.

Even before the pandemic there was insufficient support available to this group of women, and the current system of support available to them was often inadequate. Agenda's research has previously highlighted:

- The paucity of holistic support available for women and girls facing multiple unmet needs, with local commissioning models often exacerbating siloed approaches between services – Agenda and AVA, [Mapping the Maze](#) (2017)
- Poor data collection, unrealistic commissioning practices, siloed working, funding cuts and cultural barriers are some of the obstacles to women being given the help they need – Agenda and The Point People, [Making Places Work for Women](#) (2018)
- Too often women are bounced around or even turned away from services because of their multiple needs. Mothers are particularly let down, with the fear of losing their children preventing them from accessing help - Agenda and AVA, [Breaking Down The Barriers](#) (2019)

The failure to meet these women's needs effectively is costly on both a personal and social level, as well as being costly to the public purse. Children being taken into care, use of A&E and other health services, interactions with the police and criminal justice system and other interventions all have significant financial implications. Ineffective or under-investment in appropriate solutions, including specialist women's services in the voluntary and community sector, leads to women being repeatedly down.

About the project

Through engagement with women with lived experience of multiple unmet needs in Tyne and Wear and Northumberland (TW&N), as well as service practitioners, funders, and decision makers, the project will:

1. Convene a national [Expert Advisory Group](#), composed of 12 national policymakers and three Experts by Experience to guide and advise on the project, and later review our findings and report.
2. Bring together a local Community of Practice, comprised of 15 local practitioners and two Experts by Experience in TW&N, who will meet regularly throughout the project to

provide front-line expertise on barriers and opportunities for women facing multiple disadvantage within the local system.

3. Train and support a local research group of ten women researchers with lived experience in TW&N to co-design project research methodology for primary research, including:
 - a. Interviews with ten women with experience of multiple unmet needs
 - b. Interviews with six frontline practitioners
 - c. Interviews with three local authority officials
 - d. Surveys undertaken by 50 local women
4. Conduct desk-based research, including data from local authorities and information obtained through Freedom of Information requests, to identify the scale of the challenges facing women experiencing multiple unmet needs in TW&N.
5. Calculate the estimated cost to the public purse of the failures in these services to meet women's needs, at both local and national level.
6. Produce a final report of our findings, which will include the estimated cost of failing to meet women's needs, alongside recommendations for national policy and regional areas. This will be launched and shared with national media and national policymakers.

Activities 1 to 3 are already underway, and we are now planning for activities 4 to 6.

Purpose of the costings research

We are seeking to appoint a specialist research agency or economist who can calculate the cost of public services and local systems repeatedly failing to meet the needs of women facing multiple unmet needs – that is, those who face a combination of problems including those at risk of abuse, poverty, poor mental health, addiction, homelessness, contact with the criminal justice system and removal of children into social care.

We would like to commission research to explore the local service landscape to assess the current support available for women with multiple unmet needs.

We will incorporate the findings of this research into our overall policy report. To see examples of previous research conducted by Agenda as an indication of how we expect to present our work, please see: <https://weareagenda.org/policy-research/agenda-research-reports/>

Data analysis

We anticipate that this analysis would be based on data and modelling gathered by:

- Conducting desk-based research to develop an understanding of the financial cost of supporting women with multiple unmet needs.
- We would like this to identify:
 - o the number of female service users public services record annually, across the six local authorities within the TW&N area;

- o the frequency of contacts per individual (if possible to identify);
- o trends across the period during which the covid-19 pandemic affected women's lives and access to public service provision (e.g. the last three calendar years - 2019-2020 onwards);
- o the estimated cost of providing support to each individual per service;
- o an estimated annual cost of providing support women with multiple unmet needs as an aggregate group across TW&N;
- o an estimated cumulative cost across a time period (e.g. five or ten years) as a result of collective repeated contact with public services across TW&N.
 - From this, we would like to be able to estimate a national figure based on this local estimate, which could provide the potential cost savings of preventing this repeated contact.

Other considerations:

- We anticipate data being gathered from a combination of public data sources and Freedom of Information (FOI) requests to the six local authorities within the TW&N area.
- Data sets to explore will be determined by areas of priority identified by our lived experience researchers, community of practice members, and interview findings. We anticipate this could include: temporary accommodation for women, including access to gender-specific spaces and refuge accommodation services; welfare payments e.g. Personal Independence Payment (PIP) and Universal Credit; availability of childcare support and family hubs for women; and criminal justice including reoffending data.
- Data should be broken down intersectionally by gender, age and ethnicity where possible to determine which groups of women are most affected by these issues, and are currently accessing support.
- We are interested in particular on where women have been turned away by services, or have to repeatedly make contact to try and access support, and welcome proposals which consider how to explore this.

In addition to this data analysis we would welcome proposals which further support this with desk-based research covering the wider policy context, including:

- The impact of funding cuts and the cost-of-living crisis on local services and female service beneficiaries in TW&N.
- The ways in which Government 'Levelling Up' funds are being spent and allocated to support women with multiple unmet needs in TW&N.
- The local Integrated Care System's plan for Mental Health in TW&N, examining whether it refers to the needs of women and whether it commits to specific provision for women, including the funding and commissioning of gender-specific services.

Outputs

We would like to receive the raw data gathered during this research, in an Office compatible format (e.g. excel spreadsheets), as well as an interim report and a final report (in Word).

All data generated through the costings analysis will be owned by Agenda and Changing Lives. Agenda and Changing Lives reserve the right to retain the data beyond the lifespan of this project, and to determine which sections of the analysis to include within and publish in our final report (which will be branded as an Agenda and Changing Lives report). The researcher responsible for conducting this analysis will be credited.

Project team involvement

Agenda and Changing Lives would support this process. Changing Lives operate services in the North East area and several of our Community of Practice work within the local authority. This support could include:

- Suggesting relevant contacts in the local authorities to scope the research methodology and putting your research team in contact.
- Developing a composite case study of a woman's journey through the local public service system across a defined period of time, based on the lived experiences of the peer research team we are working with in TW&N.
- Supporting with additional desk-based research and analysis.

Audience

We would use the results of this research to influence local and national policy makers, funders and commissioners, including those working across poverty and debt prevention, housing, criminal justice, social care and public health. Our aim is to make the case for improved investment in service provision for women facing multiple unmet needs, and to advocate for sustainable investment in voluntary sector partners who provide support as part of a whole-systems approach to meeting women's needs holistically.

Overall project timescale

The project launched in spring 2022, and the final Agenda and Changing Lives authored policy report will be launched in the summer of 2023, with a subsequent media and press campaign, and influencing activities to embed and disseminate the recommendations.

We would like a final report by the end of January 2023, with interim monthly meetings to update on progress.

Appointment process

If you would like to be considered for this work, please send the following:

1. An outline of no more than 2000 words (excluding appendices) describing your proposed approach to the project. Within this, please provide an estimated budget, providing a breakdown of what you could provide for:
 - a. £10,000
 - b. £15,000
 - c. £20,000
2. All costs must be inclusive of VAT and expenses.
3. An overview of your relevant skills and experience, including examples of any similar work you may have done.
4. Details of who would be working on the project, including short biographies/CVs.

We will finalise the specification with the successful bidder and envisage that this will be an iterative process.

Timing and submission details

The deadline for proposals is 18th November 2022.

Proposals and further questions are to be sent to Nia Clark, Senior Research and Engagement Officer, at nia@weareagenda.org.