

Commissioning Specification

Investigating the causes, consequences, solutions and preventative measures for low income, poverty and worklessness in Oldham

Introduction

Oldham is now ranked as the 42nd most deprived local authority area overall (average of area scores, Indices of Deprivation (ID) 2007), one position worse than its ranking of 43rd in ID2004. The biggest deterioration in relative position between the Indices of Deprivation 2004 and 2007 has been on the Income Scale. It is noteworthy that a relative reduction in employment deprivation has not been accompanied by improved rankings with respect to income deprivation, local concentration of deprivation or overall deprivation (average of area scores) – but rather the opposite.

Income Deprivation has increased such that:

- The number of income-deprived Super Output Areas (SOAs) has increased within each of the most-deprived bands, with particularly high levels of income deprivation concentrated in Oldham's central wards;
- There are now 11 SOAs where at least 50% of people are living in income-deprived households, compared with 3 in 2004;
- The proportion of children experiencing income deprivation is higher than that of the population generally. Income deprivation affecting children has increased such that there are 22 SOAs in which at least 50% of children live in income-deprived households, compared with 17 SOAs in 2004;
- The proportion of people aged over 60 who live in income-deprived households is disproportionately high in Oldham and has increased compared to ID2004. In 2004 there were 6 SOAs in the Borough where at least 50% of older people were living in income-deprived households. By 2007 this had increased to 11.
- One SOA (in Coldhurst) is ranked 3rd most deprived nationally in relation to income deprivation affecting older people, with 87% of older people (and 81% of all people) living in income-deprived households.

In addition to this, Oldham has not met its stretch target to 'Increase the total number of people who have been claiming an incapacity benefit and living in one of the 7 priority wards helped by Oldham Partnership into sustained employment of at least 16 hours per week for 13 consecutive weeks from 0 to 260 (an increase of 260 people over the three years of the LAA)'.

Recent social, economic and performance trends, together with the strategic priorities of the Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS) and Local Area Agreement (LAA) (which include tackling worklessness), provide strong rationale for investigating the "causes, consequences, solutions and preventative measures for low income, poverty and worklessness in Oldham". The Oldham Partnership's Strategic Research Working Group is therefore seeking to commission an independent research organisation/agency or consultant to investigate issues related to low income, poverty and worklessness in Oldham, using both qualitative and quantitative research methods.

The project will be overseen by a multi-agency steering group selected by the Oldham Partnership Strategic Research Working Group.

The outcomes of the research will develop the contextual evidence base to support work to deliver the following LAA indicators and targets in particular for the Oldham Partnership, as well as further informing the development of strategies to address low income, poverty and worklessness in Oldham:

LAA Indicator	LAA Target
NI151 Overall employment rate	72.2% (2010/11)
NI152 Working age people on out of work benefits	14.5% (2010/11)
NI153 Working age people claiming out of work benefits in the worst performing neighbourhoods	29.8% (2010/11)
NI20 All-age all cause mortality rate	Males - 752 Females – 520 (2010/11)
NI116 Proportion of children in poverty	22% (2010/11)
NI75 Achievement of 5 or more A*-C grades at GCSE or equivalent including English and Maths (Threshold)	50% (draft) (2010/11)
NI173 People falling out of work and on to incapacity benefits	Not set
NI106 Young people from low income backgrounds progressing to higher education	Not set
NI102 Achievement gap between pupils eligible for free school meals and their peers achieving the expected level at Key Stages 2 and 4	Not set
NI107 Key Stage 2 attainment for Black and minority ethnic groups	Targets set by ethnicity
NI108 Key Stage 4 attainment for Black and minority ethnic groups	Targets set by ethnicity
NI166 Average earnings of employees in the area	Not set
The number of people who have been claiming an incapacity benefit and living in one of the 7 priority wards helped by the Oldham Partnership into sustained employment of at least 16 hours per week for 13 consecutive weeks or more	260 (2008/09)

The research will involve three elements:

- A literature review;
- Collation and (further) analysis of secondary quantitative data;
- Primary qualitative research, most likely using focus groups and possibly in-depth interviews.

Proposals are invited to deliver the research project by:

- Using and developing robust research methodologies and instruments through discussions with the steering group;
- Undertaking a literature review;
- Analysis of secondary data (some data and analysis provided by the steering group, but there is an expectation that the successful party will identify additional sources of data as required to ensure a comprehensive analysis of secondary data);
- Undertaking primary qualitative research – fieldwork is likely to involve focus groups as the principal method, with the possibility of supplementary in-depth interviews (sampling, respondent recruitment with assistance from the steering group);
- Data analysis;
- Report writing.

Interested organisations/ agencies and consultants must be able to demonstrate expertise in the following areas:

- Low income/poverty/worklessness research;
- Quantitative data analysis, particularly analysis of official statistics;
- Qualitative research methodologies, particularly focus groups and in-depth interviews;
- Qualitative data analysis;
- Report/presentation writing.

The researchers will be required to:

- Present findings and recommendations at two relevant meetings/ research dissemination events;
- Share interim findings as they emerge through meetings with the Project Steering Group and provision of interim draft reports (it is anticipated that some elements of the research will be completed before others);
- Attend meetings with the Project Steering Group and be in regular contact with the Project Manager;
- Provide draft reports;
- Provide ten bound paper copies of the final report and two unbound paper copies of the final report;
- Provide electronic versions of the draft and final reports;
- Provide anonymised transcriptions of the focus groups in paper and electronic form, accompanying the draft report.

The project will be managed by a steering group of members of the Oldham Partnership. It is expected that the research organisation, in consultation with the research steering group, will take the lead role in developing the methodology and tools to be used in the research.

The total cost of the research will not exceed £38,000 exclusive of V.A.T. The research must be completed by the end of June 2009.

The final report shall be the property of the Oldham Partnership who shall have the right to produce and distribute additional copies and to publicise research findings.

Evaluation of the submissions will be based on the following criteria:

- Clear, detailed description of the methodologies to be used in the research. The methodology should be fit for purpose and the description should include consideration of practical and ethical issues that may emerge, together with approaches for addressing these;
- Evidence of expertise of team members in conducting qualitative and quantitative research, with particular reference to the qualitative methodologies proposed;
- Evidence of relevant experience through undertaking similar work elsewhere, including expertise relevant to the research topics;
- Ability to deliver the required outputs to a high quality within the specified deadlines;
- Value for money.

The commissioning parties reserve the right not to accept the lowest tender; the decision will be based on an assessment of the most suitable proposal.

Expressions of interest should be submitted on the template provided and addressed as below to arrive no later than **3pm on Thursday 26 February, 2009.**

Private and Confidential
 Ref: **Worklessness**
 Ian Flanagan Smith
 Oldham Partnership
 Oldham Business Centre
 Cromwell Street
 Oldham
 OL1 1BB

Programme Specification

Project Title	Investigating the causes, consequences, solutions and preventative measures for low income, poverty and worklessness in Oldham
Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To understand the causes, consequences, solutions and preventative measures for low income, poverty and worklessness in Oldham; • The project also aims to identify routes out of poverty and ways of building resilience; • To contribute to the evidence base that will help the Oldham Partnership deliver against its strategic priorities as outlined in the Sustainable Community Strategy and Local Area Agreement.
Target groups/themes	<p>The project requires that the following three age cohorts are each give a specific focus by the research (although it is anticipated that there will be overlaps across all dimensions of the research):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children and young people; • People of working-age; • Older people. <p>The Households Below Average Income Series has demonstrated that age is a key factor relating to the distribution of low income, poverty and worklessness.</p> <p>In addition to this focus on specific age groups, potential target groups could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents/carers with dependent children; • Children and young people; • People of working-age, including people with disabilities;

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Older people; • Individuals who regularly move between employment and unemployment; • Particular consideration will need to be given to the ethnic group composition of focus groups; • Place focus e.g. Wards or SOAs that exhibit particularly high levels of poverty, deprivation or worklessness. <p>The steering group and other partners in Oldham have also identified the following additional themes that are likely to require exploration through the research (this is not necessarily a final or exclusive list):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health • Disability • Well-being • Education and skills • Families and households • Housing conditions • Fuel poverty • The ‘poverty premium’ • The poverty trap • Social security (benefits and tax-credits) • The informal economy • Transport • Social exclusion and cohesion • Ethnicity, culture and language • Discrimination • Social capital
Interventions	N/A However the final report should seek to make bold recommendations that can be presented to Oldham’s strategic leaders.
Number of beneficiaries/ research participants	Beneficiaries - N/A The number of research participants should be stated in the submission as part of the proposed methodology.
Duration of programme	<p>By 13th March 2009 a full research project plan, building on the submitted research proposal, should be discussed and agreed with the steering group. The project plan should detail the methodology to be used, with key milestones/target dates indicated.</p> <p>By the 10th April 2009, the literature review (first draft) should be complete.</p> <p>The work will be paid for in instalments upon submission of key outputs and/or completion of key stages of research – to be agreed in the contractual agreement.</p> <p>All research must be completed and final report available by 30th June 2009.</p>
Funding	Up to £38 k

available	
Additional requirements	<p>Suggested Methodologies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The secondary data phase of the research will involve the collation and (further) analysis of data relating to the key themes of the research (e.g. patterns of deprivation and unemployment in recent years, evidence of the concentration or spread of low income, poverty and worklessness respectively in Oldham). • The analysis of secondary data will be complemented by a literature review highlighting known causes and consequences of low income, poverty and worklessness, as well as routes out of poverty and preventative measures – locally, regionally and nationally. Particular attention should be drawn to any issues or challenges that are particularly prominent in Oldham. • It is proposed that primary research will be qualitative in nature, in order to speak to Oldham residents first-hand about their experiences, to gain a more in-depth and holistic understanding of experiences of low-income, poverty and worklessness and suggested routes and barriers to routes out of poverty, in order to inform and influence policy and strategy development. • It is anticipated that focus groups will be the primary method. The steering group will work with the successful party to identify the composition of a range of focus groups. The following suggestions are made for possible composition of focus groups: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Parents/carers with dependent children; - Children and young people; - People of working-age, including people with disabilities, young single people; - Older people; - Individuals who regularly move between employment and unemployment; - Particular consideration will need to be given to the ethnic group composition of focus groups; - Place focus e.g. Wards or SOAs that exhibit particularly high levels of poverty, deprivation or worklessness. <p>The Steering Group would consider alternative methods to focus groups if it is demonstrated that such methods would deliver the required outputs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Given that the project is looking at ‘causes and consequences’, interviews drawing on the ‘life-history’, ‘biographical’ or ‘narrative’ approach may also be particularly useful. One optional component of the fieldwork, therefore, may be to approach focus group respondents, or additional respondents, to participate in an in-depth interview.

Research organisations/Agencies/consultants should submit proposals detailing how these methodologies would be used to meet the objectives of the research.

Agencies/consultants will be expected to submit a detailed proposal for recruiting different types of participants for focus groups which is cost effective and meets the time constraints of the project.

Alternative, innovative approaches to undertaking the research will also be considered.

Anticipated outputs:

Draft/ interim reports will be required for each stage of the project.

The final output will be a single research report that integrates findings from all aspects of the research.

The report should be more than a collection of qualitative and quantitative data – it should seek to make bold recommendations that can be presented to Oldham’s strategic leaders.

Detailed breakdown of outputs:

- Electronic copy of final report;
- 10 bound and two unbound colour copies of final report (which reproduce well in black and white);
- Electronic copies of draft and interim reports, as well as draft final report;
- Transcripts (electronic and paper) of focus groups and in-depth interviews, accompanying the draft report;
- Underlying datasets as appropriate;
- 2 presentations of the final findings and recommendations.

Considerations for Submitted Proposals:

- Methodologies, including alternatives to those suggested;
- Proposal must show examples of similar work carried out by those who will be undertaking the work;
- Pricing structure detailed in a way which clearly shows alternatives and prices for the individual aspects of the work including costs for briefing and debriefing sessions with presentation of findings, at least 3 progress meetings.

If you require any further details about this project please contact ian.flanagansmith@oldhampartnership.org.uk or 0161 770 5257