

RESEARCH INTO THE IMPACT OF ILLEGAL DRUG USE IN CALDMORE AND PALFREY

TERMS OF REFERENCE/ PROJECT SPECIFICATION

Research into patterns of drugs use and drug supply among young people in South Walsall, with particular reference to Caldmore and Palfrey, commissioned by Union of Muslim Organisations - Walsall (UMO) in partnership with, and funded by, Walsall Council and West Midlands Police.

Invitation to apply: UMO -Walsall seek applications from suitably qualified consultants or agencies to undertake the specified research outlined in this brief/ terms of reference.

Fee: £7000 to include all general expenses and VAT if it is to be charged.

1. Background and Rationale

Recent evidence gathered through crime surveys and statistics indicate that Walsall has one of the highest incidences of illegal drug use in the West Midlands. Many agencies believe that this illegal use, in common with other urban areas is mirrored in the growth of the illegal selling of drugs in Walsall and is also linked to the increased prominence of gang culture and rise in knife crime and associated violent crime. Feedback from agencies and from community groups also suggests that the use of drugs and the associated issues related to the supply of drugs, is having an important impact on young people and that young people are being both drawn into the use as well as the supply of illegal drugs and are increasingly vulnerable to the risks posed by gang culture and associated crime.

Caldmore / Palfrey area

This research focusses on the Caldmore / Palfrey area of Walsall, and although the commissioners of this research recognise that there may be issues driving the incidence drug use and its impact which are common with wider Walsall, we wish to focus on the distinct communities of this area. Our main concern is to identify some of the key drivers and impacts in South Walsall and to understand its relationship with the community make-up and particularly the involvement of young people.

Scope of the research

We understand that issues relating to drug use are complicated and diverse and very much related to that of other substance misuse, however the focus of our research is relatively narrow in so much as we would like to understand the impact on young people and communities and also start to develop a strategy to combat its (perceived) growth. This means we particularly want to target the involvement of agencies working in and across the area, to signpost and support strategies that are working to reduce the impact and spread of illegal drugs as well to identify new approaches and strategies where relevant linked to best practice nationally. We would also like to consult with young people and those working with them, to understand the impact on them and their lives and to understand their ideas for improving the situation. Although this research project is relatively small we hope that its findings can act as a catalyst to improve local strategy and be a magnet to attract future investment.



Walsall Council

Why now?

Although the Pandemic saw a drop in crime generally in Walsall, since the lockdowns have ended, many crime levels have returned to pre-pandemic levels. The Union of Muslim Organisations - Walsall (UMO) has received feedback from its member organisations, many of them mosques, about their fears regarding the impact that drugs and gangs are having on the young people they work with. There is certainly widespread concern that the situation is worsening, and this preoccupation is shared by other agencies in the area working with young people, many of whom have had their funding reduced in recent years and who feel they are not able to respond adequately.

2. Audience and Use of Findings

The main audience for this research are agencies working in the local area and potential funders and strategy makers as well as other stake holders who have an interest in working with young people or issues related to the sale and use of illegal drugs. For this reason, we particularly want the research to focus on the issues affecting local communities, effective strategies that are working locally and further afield and potential ways forward to tackle the problem. While we believe that more connected policies and working policies could make a difference in the area, it may be necessary to use the research to help us campaign for increased resources to act on its recommendations or make further applications for money to support practical programmes of work or future research. To this end we need the research to be both rigorous and evidence-based while also outlining clear strategies forward.

3. Research Objectives

- To understand patterns and the extent of illegal drugs use and drug supply among young people in Caldmore and Palfrey.
- To understand the impact that the use and sale of illegal drugs has on young people and the wider community.
- To identify key research nationally and best practice to help inform the work in Walsall.
- To involve agencies, key stake holders, community members and young people in identifying the extent of the problem and to involve them in making recommendations for strategies to improve the situation.
- To identify and make recommendations for a clear strategy going forward.

4. Research Methods

We expect the successful candidate/consultant to be able to outline their research strategy and research methods in their proposal. At the very least we would expect an outline and signposting of key documents and policies to be undertaken as part of the desk research to inform the research and an outline of key stake holders and research participants and their method for engagement. While we would expect the research to be meaningful, evidence-based and ethical, we understand the limitation of resources will necessitate reliance on local intelligence in identifying research participants. Members of the steering group are happy to facilitate contact with key agencies and individuals and Mark Webster, who is managing the research project is happy to be the first point of contact in accessing venues and supporting communication between research participants.



5. Confidentiality, Ethics and Consent

Because of the nature of the research and the likely profile of participants, confidentiality both in the collection of data and the final report is essential. When referencing local agencies, we understand that it will be important to name services and sometimes key individuals in relation to offices they hold, with their consent, however we expect that community members should be guaranteed confidentiality.

Equally we would expect the research to conform to the key precept of informed consent. This means that everyone engaged in the project should be fully informed of the nature of the research, their rights in relation to their confidentiality and their right to withdraw consent. For the purpose of this project, following the good practice guidelines of Oxfam and others, we consider all participants of 16 or over to be capable of giving personal consent to be involved in the research while others under the age of 16, or are otherwise vulnerable, will need the consent of a parent, guardian or responsible person.

We therefore consider it an essential part of the project proposal that the candidate provides a method statement in relation to confidentiality and ethics, showing how they will obtain informed consent, how they will store and process data and how they will ensure confidentiality in the final report while also demonstrating a rigorous evidence-based approach.

We would also expect the consultant (or members of the research team engaging with the public) to have an up-to-date DBS certificate before starting work on the project.

6. Research Outcomes

We would expect the key findings and recommendations to be contained in a written report that is made available to us (the commissioners) both in a paper and digital form. We would also expect that as part of the final report there is an executive summary suitable for dissemination to partners and participants.

One essential outcome of the research will be the participation of the successful consultant in hosting a dissemination event in a central Walsall venue attended by key stake holders, partners and community members.

We also require that a PowerPoint presentation is prepared by the consultant outlining the research findings and recommendations which can be used as part of the dissemination event and can be used by members of the steering group and key stakeholders in presenting the findings to a wider audience.

Notes on style

We expect that all documents produced as part of the research will be legible by all research participants. We also expect the research report to use consistent referencing in relation to the presentation of evidence and data. Where relevant we would expect the final report to be designed using good layout techniques and graphics and visual content to make the report more legible to a lay audience.



7. Research Management and Timescale

Project management and support comes from Mark Webster working in collaboration with the project steering group*. Mark wrote the terms of reference/ brief for the project in collaboration with the steering group and will manage the appointment of the consultant. Mark will then be available to assist the consultant where necessary in the execution of the research and can help with introductions to local stake holders and access to venues etc, where necessary, as well as supporting dissemination events and activities.

Our projected timescale would see the appointment of the consultant in early- mid November 2022 and the bulk of the research take place between November 2022 – March 2023, with a draft report to be produced by April 2022 for consultation with the steering group. We expect the final report to be available and launched at a dissemination event in May/ June 2023. Once appointed the successful candidate's first point of contact will be the research manager who will support in the making of initial contacts. However, it will be the responsibility of the researcher to maintain their own contact list, once initial introductions are made.

Limited support can be offered where necessary for example, in facilitating focus groups or interviews, accessing venues or in the preparation of dissemination events.

*Mark Webster is an experienced social researcher and project manager who has lived and worked in and around Caldmore and Palfrey for over 30 years. The Steering Group for the project is made up of Trustees of UMO and key project stake holders.

8. Qualifications and Experience

We expect the successful consultant to be an experienced social researcher with a demonstrable track record of successful research. We welcome collaborative applications as well as applications from research agencies, however it is essential that all applications have a named lead researcher and that the names and experience of all potential team members are identified in the application submission.

9. Fees

A fee of £7000 is available to undertake the work. This is to cover all travel and other expenses as well as printing and design costs as relevant. Certain costs related to the accessing of local venues, local office base while undertaking field work and hosting costs for dissemination events etc may be avoided or absorbed in part or in whole by accessing resources available to the project through UMO or partner organisations. All such arrangements to be negotiated by prior arrangement. Payment by bank transfer to be made on the submission of 4 invoices.

- 1) 20% when contracted.
- 2) 30% at agreed mid-point on the submission of a satisfactory progress report.
- 3) 30% on agreement of draft report.
- 4) 20% on submission of final report in paper and digital form, executive summary, power point overview, after dissemination event.



10. How to apply to undertake the research?

Potential applicants should outline their approach, paying particular attention to the terms of reference. As a minimum we would expect:

1. A CV or personal statement outlining relevant experience and qualifications. Where an application is being made by an agency or a collaborative team – please provide information regarding the experience and qualifications of each member of the proposed team.
2. A method statement outlining their research strategy signposting key policies/ research/ reports they will reference as well as identifying key challenges and assumptions in undertaking the work.
3. A statement outlining their approach to ethics. Including how they would ensure confidentiality and how they would ensure informed consent.
4. Confirmation of up-to-date DBS certificates for each member of the team (or willingness to obtain them).
5. An outline of their expectations for support from the steering group/ project manager.
6. A project overview and timescale.
7. The names and contact details of two referees with knowledge of your research work.

Completed applications should be submitted by midnight on November 18th by email to mark.webster@phonecoop.coop

All applications will be acknowledged by email within 24 hours. If you do not receive an acknowledgement please call Mark on 07986 106952. Shortlisted candidates will be notified by email within in 7 days of the closing date and will be invited to interview which may be online or in person at the discretion of the interview panel.

For an informal discussion about the project before submitting your application please write directly to the project manager Mark Webster on mark.webster@phonecoop.coop with a phone number where you can be reached and a range of times when you may be available.

