

Invitation to Tender: Research consultancy

Exploring feasibility and scope for a new peer research and PPI in mental health research programme

Thank you for your interest in this project. You will find details of how to apply within this document.

Project contact	Vanessa Pinfold (Research Director) Email: vanessapinfold@mcpin.org Telephone: 0207 9227875
Brief description	We are looking for a consultant or team of consultants to work with us to develop a project plan for a new programme which will build research capacity (possibly a Peer Research Academy). The aim is to develop and deliver peer mental health research and patient and public involvement (PPI) in research studies.
Budget	Maximum funding £25,000 Including VAT.
Deadlines	Applications to be received by 28 th February 2018, 5pm. Questions about the project to be received by 20 th February 2018, 12 noon.

About the McPin Foundation

The McPin Foundation exists to transform mental health research by placing people affected by mental health problems at its centre. We believe that working with experts from experience improves the quality and relevance of mental health research.

Our mission

To champion lived experience in research so people's mental health is improved in communities everywhere

Our Vision

A world where the value of expertise based upon experience is recognised and is at the heart of all stages of mental health research

Our Core Values

We passionately believe involving people directly affected by mental health problems improves research

- We are driven to produce work of the highest quality
- We are inclusive and listen to all opinions and perspectives
- We collaborate with others to deliver our mission
- We care about the wellbeing of everyone connected with us

More information about our work can be found at www.mcpin.org

Scoping study overview

In order for us to do more to support the mental health research sector, the Foundation wishes to establish a new programme of work with the specific aim to train and develop more people with direct experience of mental health problems to conduct or be actively involved in research. This is in line with the second recommendation on p33 of the new [Research Framework](#) issued by the Department of Health, December 2017, which recognises we need to build the mental health research workforce beyond mainstream disciplines. We want to complement the work of others and do more to build peer research and patient and public involvement (PPI) across the sector. That is our interest – developing a workforce able to deliver high quality peer research and PPI. The purpose of this project is to develop a strategic plan of how to achieve this aim with a start-up fund of £1 million. We have started to think about this internally (see appendix 1). The initial idea is to develop a Peer Research Academy. However, this might be too ambitious, not needed, duplicating other work and another approach might work better. Over the next 8 months we want a consultant or a group of consultants to scope different options, engaging widely with stakeholders as part of the process and present to us an options appraisal with recommendations. We also want to explore options for gaining matched funding for the resulting programme - developing this idea in partnership is our preference.

Key elements:

- Explore feasibility of the concept of a peer research academy as well as alternatives.
- Consult with stakeholders taking a broad view on whom might be able to shape these plans
- Involve McPin staff in the scoping work, ensuring co-production principles are embedded in the approach.
- Include the entire mental health research spectrum from mental health science to applied research to humanities within the scoping covering both PPI approaches and peer research.
- Assess level of demand and consider how any programme can be made inclusive to people from diverse backgrounds
- Consider what the aims and objectives of the programme should be – what should it seek to achieve?
- Identify potential partners – both delivery and funding collaborators.

Deliverables

We require the following during the process and as outputs:

- Monthly written updates delivered on progress;
- Face to face meetings once every two months with Vanessa Pinfold, Research Director—more can be arranged but this is a minimum to update on progress and share ideas;
- Contact database created of people engaged in the process, level of interest and relevant information for building a community of support;
- Map current opportunities – current provision, gaps, potential links – to understand what is currently available to build peer research and PPI capacity in health research;
- Draft report – submitted for feedback by McPin team, to ensure the final report is in line with our needs and expectations.
- Final report – with options appraisal and recommendations.

Budget

We would like to resource the person / team to a maximum of £25,000 to cover consultancy costs, engagement budget and all other expenses including travel. This is inclusive of VAT.

We anticipate the budget will include:

- Consultancy fees
- Consultant travel
- Event costs to bring people together – catering, travel, reimbursement of time.
- Travel costs of people interviewed one to one

How to apply

In order to apply for this work please submit a **proposal, CV of lead applicant and a cover letter**. If you are applying as a group of consultants, we require one application from your team not individual submissions. We recommend maximum of six pages for the proposal containing the following information:

- Your understanding of our needs
- Information about your team, skills and experiences
- Overview of proposed approach

- Detailed project plan including:
 - Approach to Scoping work
 - Feasibility assessment
 - Project management
 - Project roles – detailing what each consultant listed in the budget will contribute
 - Plans for engaging McPin staff and wider community of stakeholders
 - Plans for covering all areas relevant to mental health research
- Timetable
- Budget
- Two referees
- Applications to be submitted by email to vanessapinfold@mcpin.org Application closing date is **28th February 2018, 5pm**. We want to start this piece of work March / April 2018.

We encourage applicants to contact us with any questions about the project. We will ensure all answers are shared with those registering their interest in applying for this work, to ensure openness and fairness in the tender process. Any questions can be emailed to vanessapinfold@mcpin.org by 20th February 2018, 12 noon.

Our selection criteria

We will look at all applications and score them using the criteria below. We will interview shortlisted consultants (and their team) as part of the selection process.

APPLICATION SCORING
• Track record (consultancy work)
• Value for money
• Experience of working in relevant research area
• Alignment with McPin Foundation values
• Quality of application

Appendix one

Peer research academy: preliminary ideas

During the set-up of the McPin Foundation research unit in 2013, the Foundation set a clear commitment to developing a peer PhD research programme. This was part of a capacity building strategy, because we were aware of how few training opportunities there were for people with mental health problems wanting to develop research skills, but there was a growing interest in this area and an expanding workforce ([Patterson et al 2014](#)).

'There are very few publicly available training courses – most are developed for an internal audience (people working for or with a particular organisation) or they are integrated into individual research projects' ([Involve, 2012](#))

We also know that mental health problems can directly impact on education. Many people have a disrupted education because of poor health, and we want to address this through focusing on opportunities for people who are too often 'left behind'. Some scoping conversations were had with experts in the field to road test the concept: was there a need? How much would it cost? What considerations did we need to be aware of to ensure likely success? How far should this be a digital platform versus face to face teaching? Can we gain accreditation?

Over the four years 2013-2017 we have consolidated our commitment and gained a donation from the Pinfold family to part fund the venture (£1million including Gift Aid). Over the past year or so we have begun to extend the idea from a PhD programme to a more ambitious remit: the peer research academy. This is based upon our work with peer researchers, and our wider networks across the sector. The academy would be more than a PhD funding vehicle, and would offer learning opportunities around mental health research for people with mental health problems and carers from entry level through to advanced training. But is this feasible? We want to commission a consultant or consultant team to explore the idea and set out clear plans for what we could deliver. The overall objective is to invest in a capacity building programme that has a lasting impact on mental health research in UK. Measures of success will need to be agreed prior to funds being released.

What is a peer research academy?

We don't know and need to scope out the possibilities. The overall concept is for a learning space (physical / virtual) to develop the research skills of experts from experience. It is likely to involve a series of courses or modules that can be delivered in workshops or online, as well as partnerships with universities to support students to attend existing courses such as MSc or PhD programmes. All courses would need to be accredited. It is ambitious but also needs to be realistic. If we do go ahead, it will need partners and sustainable funding, so thought is required on how to generate income, for example by offering courses that can be sold as well as looking for matched funding. Peer support is likely to be a key feature, and a membership network may be created and offered to everyone who joins the academy.

Secondly, should the focus be mental health alone? Peer researchers are found in other areas of work like addiction, cancer, dementia, stroke, and autism research. We need to explore the pros and cons of working with other areas to generate funding, reach and sustainability.

Lastly, the legacy element of the work is important. If the programme is only deliverable in the short term (because of insufficient funding) how can it generate resources that can be used elsewhere –

such as in recovery colleges, by INVOLVE, other charities and university departments? What does it need to produce to be useful for the sector?

Preliminary goals for the peer research academy:

- **More opportunities** for people to use their skills and experiences, including those of being supported by health services, within research and evaluation teams across the entire range of mental health research from basic laboratory based research to social research
- **Increased numbers** of people feel better able to engage in conversations about research and research findings, making beneficial use of information published.
- **More people** are doing and writing about peer research, user / carer research, co-produced or collaborative research and PPI across the whole research pathway.
- **Methodologies** that are used in peer research, service user and carer focused research, survivor research, collaborative research, PPI programmes including traditional mental health science are developed further, innovation is encouraged
- **More students** learn about “peer” methodologies on mental health research courses taught in universities across UK.
- **More research teams** integrate “peer” methodologies within study designs and use innovative PPI models.

(N.B. We have not defined “people” above but likely to be mainly people with a health condition or family members, and most likely people affected by mental health problems)

Questions that need investigating:

- Feasibility. Is this doable on any scale? Will there be any interest? Is it a ‘good’ idea that will benefit individuals and the sector? Are we duplicating efforts of others? Should we even begin?
- Who do we need to speak to, to answer these and other questions?
- Should this be mental health alone or peer research / PPI more generally? What are the pros and cons of both approaches?
- What can £1 million investment achieve and over what time scale? What should our ambition look like – and what will the legacy deliver?
- How can the £1 million investment be used to lever other resource and what should the target be? Should we begin without matched funding?
- Can we lever other non-financial interest and backing in the project? Who might help us deliver this work?
- Who would access the academy? Would be for whole UK? What will we need to put in place to be inclusive and accessible?
- How would accreditation work? Who might provide that and what is required?
- Who else is doing similar work – how do we complement these activities not create competition. We do not want to create duplication or friction in the sector.
- Who and what outside of the health sector could help us – educational experts?

References

INVOLVE (2012) Developing training and support for public involvement in research. INVOLVE, Eastleigh.

Patterson S, Trite J, Weaver T (2014) Activity and views of service users involved in mental health research: UK survey. British Journal of Psychiatry, 205:68-75.