



Invitation to Tender for research on

Exploring the barriers to engaging with Alcohol Change UK behaviour change campaigns

Information and instructions to tenderers

Deadline for tenders: 09:00, Monday 11 October 2021

Prepared by

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1. Introduction and background to Alcohol Change UK

Alcohol Change UK is a leading UK alcohol charity working to significantly reduce serious alcohol harm in the UK.

We are not anti-alcohol. We're against the harm alcohol causes. And we are for alcohol change. We are for a future in which no one feels they must drink; where the issues which lead to alcohol harm – like poverty, mental health problems, homelessness – are addressed; and where those of us who drink too much, and our loved ones, have access to high-quality support whenever we need it, without shame or stigma. Driven by our belief that every person deserves to live free from alcohol harm, we create smart, evidence-driven change.

We want to change the national conversation about alcohol in a way that makes it easier for people to take control of their own drinking, and to ask for and access help when they need it. We want to see better, evidence-based policy making that takes the steps that will work to reduce harm.

We are commissioning this research to explore how our current and future behaviour change offers can overcome barriers that prevent us reaching a larger and more diverse audience, thereby helping as many people as possible to achieve meaningful, long-term changes to their drinking behaviour.

2. Context

Those of us who drink alcohol do so for a variety of often ever-changing reasons: to de-stress, to have fun, to relieve boredom, because others around us are drinking, and so on. However, drinking too often and too much can cause or exacerbate all sorts of problems with our physical and mental health, as well as adversely impacting our loved ones, friends, neighbourhoods and workplaces. In Britain, between 18% and 24% of adults regularly drink more than the Chief Medical Officer's low-risk guidelines,¹²³ and 27% 'binge drink' on their heaviest drinking days (over 8 units for men and over 6 units for women).⁴

Nonetheless, few of our drinking behaviours are set in stone which means, of course, that they can be changed for the better. We support approaches that are effective, and we promote better research into understanding exactly why certain interventions work or do not, and for whom. We believe there is no single method for changing problematic drinking, so we seek to ensure that access is as wide as possible while also being effectively targeted.

Dry January is our key behaviour change offering, aimed at helping adults who drink at or above increasing risk levels to try a month without alcohol with a view to taking control of their drinking (whatever that means to them) for the longer term. In January 2021, an estimated 6.5 million people in the UK attempted to take a break from alcohol for the month. Around 130,000 people globally signed-up to our 'official' Dry January, meaning participants were offered tailored support via online communities, daily coaching emails and a dedicated app. Research has shown that those who sign-up for the official Dry January are twice as likely to stay dry throughout the month compared to people who do their own Dry January without the support package and, for the majority of participants, Dry January has a long-lasting impact in terms of their overall wellbeing, their reduced drinking and their confidence to refuse drinks when offered.⁵ For this reason, our key focus is increasing the number of people signing up for the

¹ Burton, R. et al. (2016). The Public Health Burden of Alcohol and the Effectiveness and Cost-Effectiveness of Alcohol Control Policies: An Evidence Review.

² Scottish Government (2019). Scottish Health Survey 2018: volume one - main report. Chapter 3 - Alcohol.

³ Welsh Government (2019). National Survey for Wales 2016-17 to 2018-19: Alcohol consumption prior to introduction of minimum price.

⁴ Office for National Statistics (2018). Adult drinking habits in Great Britain: 2017.

⁵ de Visser RO (2019) Evaluation of Dry January 2019, School of Psychology, University of Sussex

official Dry January (130,000), rather than increasing the number of people doing 'a Dry January' (6.5 million).

However, we are acutely aware that, going forward, maximising behavioural change requires an offer from us that is not merely attractive but also inclusive. Despite the growing success of Dry January, for example, registered participants are predominantly white, female, educated and from higher income groups. Therefore, whilst our Dry January offer is reaching its intended audience of increasing and higher-risk drinkers, they are less likely to encompass the diverse communities that Alcohol Change UK aims to serve, especially those who are marginalised or less often heard.

3. Details of the work

3.1. Project outline

We wish to commission a research project to address the two big questions:

- What are the barriers to particular groups taking part in our Dry January offer and, more broadly, attempting and/or achieving positive changes to their drinking?
- How can these barriers be overcome?

We anticipate the project will involve:

- Initial profiling to identify and segment Dry January's target audience, namely increasing-risk and higher-risk drinkers, to better understand their drinking patterns, motivations for and attitudes to drinking and not drinking alcohol.
- Psychographic profiling, exploring factors such as their moral, ethical and political values and beliefs, activities and interests, lifestyle choices, outlook, social class, and their distinctive communication needs. The research should seek to answer: how might such factors shape people's intention and willingness to make changes to their drinking; and how might these factors affect their perceptions of Dry January?
- Undertaking qualitative research with people from this profile, specifically those who have either not engaged with the official Dry January offer, have previously signed up to Dry January but have not returned, or who have attempted an unsupported Dry January. This should explore how they perceive Dry January currently; whether this perception is a barrier to them signing up to the official Dry January offer and, if so, whether this perception can be changed; whether the official Dry January offer itself is a barrier to them signing up and, if so, how could it change to suit them better; and whether there might be behaviour change challenges or interventions other than Dry January that would be more attractive to them.

The research should seek to explore not simply what people (might) find appealing or unappealing about our current Dry January offer, but much deeper considerations about the potential barriers to changing their own drinking behaviour, and how they might be overcome. For example, does a period of temporary abstinence feel too ambitious? Are the concepts of undertaking a 'challenge' or needing 'support' helpful or disempowering? What other sorts of things might prompt someone to make potentially long-term changes to their drinking? Are there other preferred ways of reducing consumption besides temporary abstinence? How could Alcohol Change UK support people in achieving this change, and could this include some elements of our current Dry January offer, like online peer support? Does a negative perception of Alcohol Change UK itself, rather than the offer, act as a barrier to engagement?

We expect that the project will approach the research through a qualitative, rather than quantitative, lens. We welcome proposals that draw on a range of techniques to answer the research questions but expect, at a minimum, that much of the findings will be generated from a series of in-depth one-to-one interviews with increasing-risk drinkers (preferred to a focus groups approach). We welcome proposals from multi-

disciplinary teams, and we are happy to consider proposals that involve some sub-contracting of fieldwork.

3.2. Scope

- We are interested in learning more about and from Dry January's target audience, namely those drinking more than 14 units a week.
- A particular focus should be on those at-risk drinkers who are male, from disadvantaged or under-represented groups, including black, Asian and ethnic minorities, and people from areas of low higher education participation, low household income or low socioeconomic status.

We do **not** foresee this project will include:

- a content evaluation of Alcohol Change UK's Dry January offer; rather, the project should consider the barriers to engagement more broadly and how Alcohol Change UK's future behaviour change offer(s), whether Dry January and/or something else, may overcome these barriers and ensure it/they can potentially reach and connect with all increasing-risk drinkers, irrespective of their background or circumstances.
- lower-risk or non-drinkers, nor dependent drinkers or those in recovery from alcohol addiction.

We expect to discuss the project scope in further detail with the successful contractor at a project initiation meeting post-award.

3.3. Project outputs

The output of the project shall be:

- A written report that describes the research in detail, including an executive summary of the main findings. This must include practical recommendations that Alcohol Change UK could implement in current and future behaviour change offers.

This shall be provided in a suitable electronic format (to be agreed), of a suitable standard for Alcohol Change UK to publish on our website and to share widely with stakeholders and the public. Draft reports shall be provided for review and comment by Alcohol Change UK staff before final versions are submitted.

3.4. Costs

A budget of up to £42,000.00 (including any VAT) is available for the work.

Please present in your tender a clear breakdown of all research costs and overheads, to include (as/if applicable): staff costs, equipment, access to data, travel and subsistence. All costs quoted within the tender should be fixed for the period of the work. All prices and/or rates should be inclusive of any VAT. Please state any assumptions made.

Payment schedule

Payments to the successful applicant will be made as follows: 50% in October 2021, 50% in May 2022 (on project completion), dependent on satisfactory completion of project milestones.

4. Instructions to tenderers

4.1. How to tender

Applicants will need to demonstrate that they:

- Are qualified to carry out this project
- Have a successful track record in working with under-represented communities
- Have the capacity to do so to the timescales below
- Can bring to the project the necessary insight and experience that will allow for the robust interpretation of findings

Please include in your application

- a proposed project design
- a budget detailing all expenditure (including staff hours) as outlined in 3.4 above
- a CV for the lead investigator and other team members as appropriate
- rationale for preferred provider, or description of procurement process, for any subcontracted fieldwork.
- details of two people/organisations we can approach for references if your project is selected.

Applicants are also invited to complete a section entitled 'Amendments and suggestions'. This is a non-compulsory section in which, should the applying team feel that amendments could be made to improve the scope or focus of the review, those suggestions can be described in detail.

Please submit your completed proposal by email to: contact@alcoholchange.org.uk with the subject header **Tender: Behaviour Change Inclusion Research**

4.2. Tendering process and timetable

Deadline for questions and clarifications	Monday 13 September 2021 by 09:00
Response to questions and clarifications (provided to all agencies who have expressed interest)	Wednesday 15 September 2021
Submission of tenders	Monday 11 October 2021 by 09:00 to contact@alcoholchange.org.uk (subject header Tender: Behaviour Change inclusion research)
Interview with awarding panel (likely to be virtual)	Weeks beginning 11 /18 October 2021
Project awarded subject to satisfactory references	Earliest date: 19 October 2021 Latest date: 29 October 2021
Contracting period	19-29 October 2021 to 31 May 2022
Project initiation meeting with ACUK staff (may be virtual) to discuss and agree methodology and scope	01-02 November 2021
Telephone/virtual progress meetings	Informal progress meeting will be scheduled between Alcohol Change UK staff and the contractor approximately one month after commencement of the project. In addition, there shall be a formal meeting to check progress scheduled for early February 2022

Draft final report	01 April 2022
Final report	31 May 2022
Project completion	31 May 2022

4.3. Selection criteria

The selection panel will assess bids according to the following criteria:

- Has the agency demonstrated a clear understanding of the project brief?
- Has the agency demonstrated the expertise necessary to carry out the research and report the findings?
- Has the agency demonstrated a successful track record in working with under-represented communities?
- Is the methodology clearly stated and appropriate?
- Has the agency demonstrated knowledge of, and expertise in, the subject area?
- Has the agency demonstrated capacity to complete the project within budget and within the stated timeframe?
- Does the bid include appropriate project oversight and scrutiny?
- Does the bid demonstrate an ability to write clearly and effectively?
- Does the bid demonstrate value for money?
- Does the bid demonstrate creativity or innovate ideas?
- If work is to be carried out by junior staff, do they have sufficient supervision and institutional support?

4.4. Award of contract

The selection panel will decide to whom the contract shall be awarded based on the selection criteria outlined above. The panel does not bind itself to accept the lowest of any tender/quotation.

4.5. Conflicts of interests

Alcohol Change UK is an independent charity. We do not accept funds from the alcohol industry.

<https://alcoholchange.org.uk/about-us/how-our-work-is-funded>

In your application, please declare any potential conflicts of interest.

Contact for more information, questions, and submission of bids

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Appendix – T&Cs

