

Supporting Disabled Older Workers – Research Partner ITT: Clarification Questions

Thank you for all of your clarification questions, see answers below. Please note, where questions were similar or considered duplicates we may have combined them or just provided one answer but have ensured all themes have been covered.

Applications:

1. For section 1 of the written return, if team members have knowledge of the area but no direct experience of working within the area, will this count against them?

We would advise all bidders to outline any relevant experience and knowledge of the subject matter in the relevant section of the bid. All bids will be assessed against the criteria and scored accordingly.

2. Do you expect responses in the template provided, or are we able to use your titles but submit it in our own format (e.g. in PowerPoint?)

Yes, we would expect all responses in the template provided.

3. In preparation of the budget, I would like to find out if you have a budget guidance/rules to follow.

Ageing Better has no additional guidelines for bidders, ensure bids are within budget and indicate clearly day rates and how many days per staff member are budgeted for each aspect of your approach and any additional costs. Any overheads should be built into day rates, rather than budgeted for as a separate line.

4. Is the timeline for this research project expected to continue until May 2025 and what scope, if any, is there for flexibility in completing to a quicker timeline?

The ITT states no later than May 2025, if the research and findings are completed earlier, this is acceptable.

5. For the video submission, what will be the evaluation criteria, and does this need to be professionally produced (we are aware that not all agencies will have the same in house facilities)?

There is no expectation for videos to be professionally produced, a recording using video meeting technology (e.g. Teams or Zoom) or on a mobile device (provided a tripod or similar is used) is sufficient. They will be scored by the steering group on the basis of how well the questions are answered, and how clearly answers are communicated - with consideration of accessibility - not on the quality of the video itself.

Contracting:

6. Please confirm how you'd require a freelance team contract to be set up: as tri-party contract, subcontracting between us, or something different?

We would expect to contract one Project Lead who would then subcontract to others.. We would require evidence of such contracts as a guarantee that all individuals or organisations associated with the project were being guaranteed remuneration for their work.

7. As freelancers, would you require us to hold Employers Liability Insurance (considering we won't be employing anyone)?

In this case as no one is employed we would not need to see employer's liability insurance.

Scoping:

8. We're noticing how broad your target group of people (e.g. long term disabled, later acquired disability, long term health conditions, with and without work etc.) and target stakeholders (national and local government, employers and/or employment support providers and/or other actors) is there scope for the project to narrow either of these groups down?

The scope of sampling is something we would expect researchers to develop in conversation with the steering group and Ageing Better. The main focus for this project is on lived experience, with stakeholder engagement aimed at providing context along the way.

9. Is this project focused only on England, or other parts of the UK also?

The project covers England only as this is the current geographic focus of our programmes at Ageing Better.

10. Is there a wider Ageing Better stakeholder group that will also need to be engaged throughout this process, alongside the core team and the Steering Group?

Not at this time, if this becomes applicable it will be Ageing Better's responsibility to assemble any internal stakeholders for feedback.

Pre-existing research:

11. Does Ageing Better have any existing reports, literature review or similar around the experiences of older disabled workers and what works and doesn't work in employment support? Would desk research be part of your anticipated methodology?

We are currently conducting a scoping review of the evidence on the relationship between work, health and age. We will be able to share the findings of this with the successful bidder before it is published. We have also conducted a lot of work looking at employment support for older people more generally (which does look at health alongside other issues) – you can find out more about the latter [here](#).

[This research](#) carried out by the Institute for Employment Studies during the pandemic highlights the challenges faced by employees with long-term health conditions. It warns that more support is needed to help people manage their conditions in the workplace if the state pension is to rise further.

Whilst Bidders are not expected to undertake a literature review, the quantity of desk research Bidders will need to undertake will be proportionate to their experience in this subject area.

Recruiting participants:

12. Please could we clarify the recruitment requirement? Will the chosen supplier be expected to source and recruit all participants, or do Centre for Ageing Better have a pool of participants to tap into?

We are expecting the appointed research team to conduct all recruitment for the project. Ageing Better has some relevant contacts that might be shared where appropriate, but the research team should not rely on these for their recruitment approach. To date there has been significant interest in this project and we are confident that it is realistic for the successful bidder to recruit at least 30 participants for this work.

13. You mention a minimum of 30 participants - is there any flexibility here?

Due to our funding requirements it needs to be a minimum of 30 participants. We are not necessarily suggesting that this needs to result in 30 in-depth interviews, and welcome bidder suggestions around methods for reaching this number (or more).

Research design and approach:

14. We note that you want this work to influence practice and policy, what does the evidence need to look like to work for these stakeholders? For example numbers engaged, types of data.

We want to produce evidence that convincingly outlines the key problems in this area and potential solutions to these problems. We conceptualise these as ‘opportunity spaces’: areas of policy and/or practice where we can see potential to make changes which would alleviate some of the challenges faced by this group in accessing good employment.

That means that the potential audiences for this work are varied and will emerge as the work progresses. As our priority is 'opportunities' rather than a set of immediately actionable recommendations, we do not think that tailoring the outputs of this contract to a specific audience is necessary or feasible.

We expect the research team to outline what kinds of data they will collect and how that will explore both problems and solutions, bearing in mind our ultimate aims of influencing a range of stakeholders (potentially including but not limited to national/local policymakers, commissioners of services, service providers etc.). Depending on the direction of the project it might make sense to focus more on one set of stakeholders than another, but this is something we would want to explore during the research.

15. Does Ageing Better have any existing relationships with experts in disability and employment (not just employment)?

The project will be informed by the lived experience of Disabled people on our experts by experience group. AB also has relationships with a wide range of relevant organisations, including a national Disability rights organisation.

16. How are you defining the target group? We notice in the Annex 1 research assumptions that it should include older people who are not working. Does this intentionally mean to exclude those who may be working but who, for example, might be under-employed or working in particular roles because of their disability/health condition?

No, we are not excluding people in work, please refer to section 2.5 of the ITT where we outline that people must have personal experience of any of the following:

- Have faced challenges finding fulfilling work because of their age and disability
- Have recently left work because of challenges in the workplace related to their age and disability
- Have found that employment support doesn't meet their needs
- **Are in work but are facing challenges staying in work**
- Want or need to be in paid work
- **Are in work and have received appropriate support to stay in work**

Other criteria for the target group can also be found in this section. We would include both those who are under- or over- employed within the highlighted categories. We also expect bidders to outline their ideas around sampling in their bids and the successful bidder to work with the Experts by Experience Steering Group and Ageing Better to develop and refine these towards the start of the project.

17. What definition of disability does Centre for Ageing Better envisage adopting for this research, and who will be included in the research? Will people who self-identify as disabled be included in the research, or only those people who claim benefits/have medical certification?

We will include anyone who has a disability or long term health condition expected to last 12 months or more that affects day to day activities. This includes both people who identify as Disabled, and those who do not but meet the criteria. This is a widely used definition of disability, related to the Equality Act 2010. There is no need for any medical certification or for individuals to be claiming disability benefits.

18. What expectations do you have in terms of research methodology?

The ITT lays out our current expectations with regards to the research methodology. We are open to a wide range of methods and are looking for bidders to suggest methods and justify their choices. We also expect the successful bidder to work with the Experts by Experience Steering Group and Ageing Better to develop and refine methods in the early stages of the project.

19. In terms of sample, do you have particular ethnic groups, or other demographics that are of specific importance?

As with all sampling decisions, this is to be agreed between the contractor and Ageing Better once the project has started, with input from the Steering Group. Due to the size of the project we are not necessarily expecting a representative sample, but want to be inclusive of different groups' experiences. This also applies to consideration of balance between the different types of impairments experienced by participants.

20. Do you have any more thoughts or information on the balance you would be keen to achieve between those who are disabled and those who have long term health conditions within the sample?

We do not view these as two separate groups. People who have long term health conditions that affect day to day activities are, defined under the Equality Act 2010 as disabled. However, we include reference to long term health conditions in the project as we are aware that some people with long term health conditions may not view themselves as disabled, and we want the project to be as inclusive as possible.

Experts by Experience Steering Group (Steering Group):

21. Please can you provide as much information as possible about the Experts by Experience Steering Group?

As outlined in the ITT - The Steering Group is made up of 10 individuals aged 50 and over who are all disabled and/ or have a work-limiting long term health condition. Within the group, there is a mix of gender, ethnicity, employment status and age. This group has a nationwide geographic spread, and it is expected that all meetings will take place online. They have a co-produced 'working together effectively' document and have met on a number of occasions.

All members of the Steering Group submitted an expression of interest form, went through a shortlisting process and took part in an onboarding conversation. The Steering Group have a range of relevant experience, skills and a wealth of information to offer. We cannot share any further personal details about the group at this stage.

22. Question on involvement with Experts by Experience Steering Group: Is the expectation that the supplier will attend each meeting with the group outlined in Annex 2 of the brief?

No, the research partner is not expected to attend all of the meetings, although we would expect the research partner to attend a minimum of 5-6 of the sessions. The exact content of many these sessions is still to be decided, but we would expect the successful bidder to engage the Steering Group on most aspects of the research process.

The image library review meeting is a separate piece of work from this project and is being held outside the allotted meetings for this project. The keeping in touch (KIT) sessions are designed as a way to keep the Steering Group informed of research updates, but the content of these sessions can be shaped with the research partner.

23. To what extent is the schedule of the Experts by Experience Steering Group meetings set?

They're not firmly set, this is the indicative list that was sent to the Steering Group in their information pack but it does state that these are subject to change.

24. You mention that the team at Ageing Better will manage the Steering Group. We just wanted to check whether this extends to incentives, or whether the supplier would be expected to budget for these?

As outlined in the ITT, Ageing Better are responsible for the remuneration of the Steering Group, this includes any incentives for planned group meetings. However, if you wish the Steering Group to act outside of the allotted meetings, this would need to be budgeted for in your work and agreed with Ageing Better beforehand.

25. Is it possible to confirm the decision-making distinction between the Ageing Better team and the Experts by Experience Steering Group? In which sorts of decisions will each group lead/have sign off?

Each decision will need to be reviewed on a case-by-case basis as we would like to ensure as many opportunities as possible for the group to lead in decision making. There will be instances where for legal, financial or contractual reasons Ageing Better will be the sole decision maker. However, in other cases sole decision making will be given to the Steering Group for example the 'Working Together Effectively' document or shared decision making may be done through discussion and voting.

26. Would it be possible to see the 'working together effectively' document from the Experts by Experience Steering Group, so that we can ensure our suggested plans for working together align with this?

We will share this with successful shortlisted Bidders. Whilst this document has been co-produced and agreed, it is a working document and subject to development as the group progresses.

27. We've noticed that the Steering Group have meetings already scheduled to talk about other parts of the organisation's work (e.g. the image library). What percentage of those sessions will be ringfenced for this project?

The only one presently designated for work outside of this project is highlighted, this sits outside of the 12 agreed meetings for this project. If the research team choose not to use all of the allocated meetings Ageing Better reserves the right to utilise the Steering Group's time. Ageing Better may also choose to work with the Steering Group on other organisational activities such as our ageism campaign this will not affect the allocation of the current meetings.

Outputs:

28. Is it hoped that the project outputs will amplify the voices of Disabled older people, or that they will act as tools and evidence for Ageing Better to do that?

We feel this is not an either/or scenario and would be keen for Bidder's to outline how they would achieve either/both, and justify their approach.

29. We've noticed that you're keen to have opportunities and recommendations developed around both policy and practice - as deliverables these can be framed in very different ways to help you set up for next steps. We're interested to know what your ideal next steps might be to help us shape suggested outputs?

We want this contract to set us up for a potential further phase of work (funding permitting), where we would take a deeper dive into one or two of the 'opportunity spaces' identified, and work up/test a more specific set of recommendations or service models. So our ideal next step is to be able to make the case for that work to be done, and have a clear starting point for that co-design/policy development. As this initial project develops, we are open to narrowing down earlier if it becomes clear that this is needed.

At the same time, we want to make sure we can share any actionable insights that emerge from this work with our established policy and practice networks (eg. National and Local Government policymakers; our forum of employment support service providers; and our Age-friendly Employer Pledge network). The most important thing is well-defined and clearly communicated insights, which we can then take to the appropriate audiences. We will work with the successful bidder to shape these.

30. How many case studies are you hoping to collect from the 30+ research engagements (as a minimum)?

At this stage we are not expecting exact numbers of case studies to be outlined, but rather the approach that will be taken to develop them. We want any case studies to be illustrative of the research findings and inclusive of different groups/individuals experiences. We are also aware that sometimes case studies can make it possible to identify individuals involved in research, so personas based on research findings are also a possibility. Bidders should outline what their approach would be with regards to this.

31. The budget is for research activities only and there is a separate budget for publication of outputs. Can we assume that analysis and writing up of findings is part of research activities?

Yes, analysis and write-up of findings is covered by research activities and is part of this contract. Our budget for publication sits outside of this budget and refers to designing up the outputs into publishable formats. In terms of timelines we expect the content of all outputs to be finalised by the end of the contract, but we are not expecting to publish outputs within this timeframe.

32. Question on outputs: Is there an expectation or preference for the final output in Word or PowerPoint?

Final outputs will be designed in collaboration with the Steering Group and will need to consider accessibility so more than one format may be required.

33. Would you be able to expand on what success looks like in terms of outputs from the project – in terms of research outputs, recommendations and also the final reporting requirements

We expect outputs to be accessible, faithful to the research findings and identify opportunities for further action (either by Ageing Better or other key stakeholders who have the power to make changes to policy and practice).

34. Are you anticipating that the agency create recommendations, or would this be done in conjunction with your team?

We would expect the successful bidder to highlight an initial set of opportunity spaces for development based on the analysis of the research, done in partnership with the steering group. We conceptualise these 'opportunity spaces' as areas of policy and/or practice where we can see potential to make changes which would alleviate some of the challenges faced by this group in accessing good employment. See question 29 for further discussion of next steps.

35. Clarity on whether results of this project may be published in an academic outlet (i.e., journal) with appropriate measures in place to protect participants anonymity.

We don't plan to publish in an academic journal but are open to this if the contractor wishes to do this, all we ask is that we are kept up to date with plans. It is also worth noting that the outputs required for this contract would need to be significantly reworked for an academic journal. Any time for developing academic journal articles has not been budgeted for by Ageing Better and should be done with the successful bidder's own resources.