

Market Engagement Exercise for Consultancy Services to Support Identification and Prevention of Adultification Bias.

The Violence Reduction Unit will be running a market engagement exercise from Wednesday 11th September 2024 to Wednesday 2nd October 2024 at 5pm.

The London Violence Reduction Unit

The London Violence Reduction Unit is committed to understanding how violence affects children and young people and building partnerships that drive systems. We work with partners across communities and sectors- such as youth work, local authorities, education, and health- championing prevention and early intervention and putting the voice of young people and communities at the forefront of the issues affecting them. Our approach is laid out in our VRU strategy; <https://www.london.gov.uk/media/101133/download>

Background

Across different areas of a young person's life we are hearing about the harmful effects of 'adultification bias'

'The concept of adultification is when notions of innocence and vulnerability are not afforded to certain children. This is determined by people and institutions who hold power over them. When adultification occurs outside of the home it is always founded within discrimination and bias. (Davis and Marsh 2020)

Research and evidence shows that adultification bias must be understood through an intersectional lens, and Black children are disproportionately affected by this form of discrimination. Adultification might manifest in many ways and is informed by racialised stereotypes, such as that black children are more able to protect themselves, confident, 'grown up' or 'streetwise'. Adultification may also intersect with *gender*, such as stereotypes portraying black girls as strong, resilient, and hypersexual.

The VRU champion the role of trusted adults, youth workers and the integral role of practitioners to safeguard children. We are initiating a programme of work to raise awareness and support our partners in response to adultification bias, with the aim of ensuring that children are properly safeguarded by the adults around them and not being put at risk or overly criminalised because of this form of discrimination. This programme will cut across our organisation and partnership, supporting agencies to reflect on policy and practice so that all children are protected and supported to thrive.

Description of the service

The Violence Reduction Unit is seeking to commission a provider who can deliver a programme of work to increase understanding, identification and prevention of **adultification bias** across our partnership.

The key components of the programme will include;

1. Working with the Violence Reduction Unit and partners

- Delivery of **awareness raising sessions and training** for VRU staff and our partners. This will be agreed in collaboration with the VRU and will include key networks, such as; our Young People's Action Group, Youth Practitioner Advisory Board, Parent Carer Champion Network and Multi-Faith Network. Sessions will create a shared understanding of the issues, and cover concepts of

intersectionality and support delegates to see how concepts of vulnerability and victimisation might be afforded to some children more than others across different settings- and the consequences on effective safeguarding.

- Working with our Young People's Action Group on the development of a bespoke **youth-led awareness raising campaign**. The successful provider will undertake co development sessions with a sub-group of our YPAG to develop a communication campaign that highlights stories and issues that matter to our young people. The campaign will be used to raise awareness of adultification bias amongst young people, families and professionals and supporting ongoing advocacy for policy and systems change.
- Delivery of **policy review sessions**. The successful provider will support the VRU as a 'critical friend', working with the VRU's Procurement Team, Research, Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning team and EDI Network to refine internal policies and frameworks, with accompanying **training** for programme managers/officers on utilising them.

2. Improving safeguarding responses and policies across Local Authority and Education Settings

- The successful provider will deliver intensive consultancy with a **Local Authority Children's Services** to deliver systems improvements and develop learning resources that can be shared widely across London. This might include a specific focus on working with teams **Supporting Children in Care and Care Leavers** to reflect on team practices, such as workforce training, assessment criteria and safeguarding that might reinforce adultification bias and formulate strategies to address it. It is anticipated that the successful provider will work closely with the VRU to identify the most appropriate Local Authority to engage with taking into account existing networks as well as a commitment to learning and sharing findings.
- **London's Inclusion Charter** has been co-produced with young people, educators and parents/carers to ensure that education settings are a place of safety, belonging and inclusion for all. The successful provider will provide targeted consultancy with a Multi-Academy Trust ('MAT'), Fair Access Panel and a Local Authority's Virtual School to foster an environment of equity, diversity and inclusion, specifically as it relates to adultification bias. Providing direct consultancy with a group of 3- 5 schools within the MAT to review and refine school policies, teacher training and disciplinary methods to prevent reinforcement of adultification bias, whilst also providing training for senior leaders across the MAT partner.

Core capabilities:

Knowledge of adultification bias- high level of influence and reputation in the safeguarding and Children's service sector, having contributed to the evidence base on adultification bias, such as having conducted academic research, contributed to academic articles or in an advisory capacity to public bodies.

Significant experience of developing learning materials- having developed educational and learning materials/ resources relating to the issue of adultification bias for safeguarding professionals.

Track record of delivering effective training and awareness raising sessions- having delivered structured sessions directly to safeguarding, policy or commissioning professionals from different sectors on the topic of adultification bias, such as teachers, social workers and youth workers.

Culturally sensitive and culturally aware- having worked with public agencies to support them in reflecting on biases and promoting more inclusive practice

Intersectional and gender informed- having a strong understanding of how gender impacts a person's experience and the issues they may face

Partnership working- having extensive experience working with different agencies with safeguarding responsibilities in a consultancy and 'critical friend' capacity- including education providers and local authorities.

As a Unit that values lived experience, and has equity at its core, we are keen to gauge interest from organisations who have an in-depth understanding of the complexities surrounding this area of work through lived experience within London's various communities.

Response

If you are interested in the opportunity and meet the core capabilities as set out above, then please email vruprocurement@london.gov.uk and you will be asked to fill in a short questionnaire.

Please note that this exercise is in no way a call for competition and will not result in the award of a contract to any respondents to this notice.

Timeframe and Budget

The maximum estimated budget for this work is £100,000 over the total contract term of 24 months, subject to internal governance and approvals.