**Research Consultancy - Review of Strategic Signposting: Specification**

**Summary**

We would like to commission an expert, independent, researcher consultant to undertake a review of the needs of all users of community and strategic signposting in West Berkshire. The findings of this review will then be used to provide options for the way forward after the existing contract concludes in May 2023 and inform the scoping for future service specifications.

We are looking for a single supplier who can provide applied research expertise. This project will look to specifically evaluate the needs of the users of the West Berkshire Directory and it’s functionality but will also take into account the necessary and desired platforms that it interfaces with.

**Strategic context**

This consultancy work will support the following priorities within our [Council Strategy](https://info.westberks.gov.uk/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=47200&p=0):

* Support everyone to reach their full potential
* Ensure our vulnerable children and adults achieve better outcomes
* Ensure sustainable services through innovation and partnerships.

The Council has committed in its Recovery and Renewal Plan 2021, to enhancing communications and community engagement. In addition the [Communications and Engagement Strategy 2020-2023](https://www.westberks.gov.uk/media/49982/Communications-and-Engagement-Strategy/pdf/Comms___Engagement_Strategy_2020_-_FINAL.pdf?m=637508159233300000), contains an action to maintain signposting and connections to community support functions.

Further to the above, recent engagement with our Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) has shown a need for greater collaboration amongst the local VCS that an updated community signposting capability could assist with. The engagement demonstrated the opportunity for improved networking and collaboration of groups and organisations across the sector where:

* 76% of respondents needed support now with promoting their group or organisation
* 69% of respondents needed support knowing about, talking and meeting other groups and organisations.

Important to the strategic context is that the Council has a statutory duty under the Children and Families Act to provide signposting information for the Family Information Service and services for children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities.

**Contract value**

Funding has been approved by the Council for expert research consultancy support to review the needs associated with community signposting.

A financial envelope is therefore estimated up to £20,000.

**Duration of Funding**

This funding is one-off spending to be initiated in 2021/22 and anticipated to be spent by June 2022.

**Overall Outcome**

The outcome(s) we are seeking with this project includes:

* Increased influence for service users, families, carers, residents and communities over the decisions and services that affect their lives. These community determinants build control and resilience and can help buffer against disease and reduce inequalities - often referred to as social capital[[1]](#footnote-1).
* Increasingly engaged and empowered communities. Community empowerment gives more self-control, self-direction and self-determination of individuals and communities.
* Improved community life through social connections which makes a vital contribution to health and wellbeing.
* Clarity for service users, families, carers, residents and communities on where to access the services and activities they need.
* Fulfilment of West Berkshire Council’s duty to provide a community signposting service which can support improved connections between professionals and communities.
* A robust evidence-base to inform future commissioning and spend on a directory of services for West Berkshire to ensure it meets the needs of the Council, our partners across all sectors, our communities and individual residents.

**Locality**

The project will assess the community and strategic signposting needs of the area covered by West Berkshire Council.

**Groups / Audience**

The audience of the final product (a report on community and strategic signposting needs) will be the officers of the Council, partner organisations, VCS organisations and the residents served by West Berkshire Council. In particular, consideration of those whose voices are seldom heard will be needed.

**Location**

The service will be delivered online and where appropriate meetings will be held in the offices of West Berkshire Council (Newbury, Berkshire).

**Objectives**

Research consultancy expertise is required to:

* Conduct an independent review of the needs for community and strategic signposting in West Berkshire (including the meeting of the Council’s legal duties under the Children and Families Act)
* Identify the audience and function for community and strategic signposting through engagement with stakeholders including West Berkshire Council staff, Voluntary & Community Sector, Businesses and other organisations, residents of West Berkshire
* Undertake a SWOT analysis of the current provision
* Undertake the mapping of existing provision both internal and external
* Undertake research and benchmarking to establish best practice provision of similar function in other areas
* Research emerging innovations in provision of similar functions
* Research format and accessibility needs
* Write reports and presentation(s) on the findings

The following deliverables are anticipated through the project:

1. Fortnightly highlight report
2. Evaluation report of existing directory and future requirements, including a SWOT analysis
3. Future options report
4. Presentations to: Project Working Group, Customer First Programme Board

**Skills and experience**

The following outlines the skills and experience sought to deliver this project:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | **Essential / Desirable** |
| Strong interpersonal and customer engagement skills | E |
| Experience of undertaking primary and secondary practice-based research | E |
| Experience of conducting qualitative analysis | E |
| Experience of designing and undertaking evaluation | E |
| Understanding of processes and databases (preferably relational databases) | E |
| Project Management Qualification or relevant experience | E |
| Experience of report design and writing | E |
| Knowledge of West Berkshire, its demographic and communities | D |

**Performance monitoring**

Monitoring and evaluation of this project will be through regular project monitoring meetings against the deliverables described above. More specifically; the following describes anticipated measures of success:

|  | **Success measure** | **Target** | **Timescale for delivery**  **(following contract signing)** | **Indicative delivery dates** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Contract start date | | | 21st March 2022 |
| 1 | Stakeholder needs analysis | Complete | 2 weeks | 4th April |
| 2 | A SWOT analysis of the current provision | Complete | 3 weeks | 11th April |
| 3 | Map of existing community signposting provision (both internal and external) | Complete | 4 weeks | 18th April |
| 4 | Research and benchmarking to establish best practice provision of similar function in other areas | Complete | 4 weeks | 18th April |
| 5 | Research on emerging innovations in provision of similar functions; including format and accessibility needs | Complete | 8 weeks | 16th May |
| 6 | Final review report to outline the needs for community and strategic signposting in West Berkshire (including the meeting of the Council’s legal duties under the Children and Families Act) and options for the Council to provide the most effective community signposting in future. | Complete | 12 weeks | 13th June |

1. What Makes Us Healthy (2012) <http://www.assetbasedconsulting.co.uk/uploads/publications/WMUH.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)