About Youthlife

Youthlife supports children and young people aged 5-25 years who have experienced bereavement, separation, divorce or loss of a significant person. We provide person-centred 1:1 Counselling, Art therapy and therapeutic groupwork, all of which is free of charge to all clients.

We receive over 200 referrals per year, two thirds of which come from statutory sources such as CAMHS, Social Work teams, GPs, Children’s Court Officers, Educational Psychology Service and Schools.

Youthlife is a registered charity (NIC105568) and a company limited by guarantee, governed by a voluntary Board of Directors. We are based at 23 Bishop Street, Derry/Londonderry and have outreach clinics in Strabane and Limavady.

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# Overview

Youthlife would like to commission an independent evaluator to conduct an evaluation of The Opting In Project, a six-year project funded by Big Lottery NI for children and young people who have experienced bereavement, separation, divorce or loss. The evaluation will commence in August 2017 and will deliver a final summative evaluation within three months of the end of the project.

This document sets out the purpose and requirements for the evaluation, and instructions for submitting a proposal.

# About The Opting In Project

For the past ten years, Youthlife’s core funding has come from the Big Lottery NI: In 2011 we were awarded five year funding from Big Lottery under their ‘Empowering Young People’ funding stream.

In 2016 we were awarded an additional extension year, following the change of Centre Manager in January 2016. The 4 Outcomes of the Opting In project are:

**Outcome 1:** Care experienced young people are better supported to develop emotional and social skills

**Outcome 2:** Young people who have disengaged from education receive positive messages from their peers and engage in an alternative education programme

**Outcome 3:** A reduction in anti-social behaviour in communities

**Outcome 4:** The physical mental emotional and social health and well-being of bereaved young people will improve

Each of these Outcomes has a set of indicators attached. These are agreed with the funder and have changed over the lifetime of the Project to reflect changing needs of the project and its participants and potential beneficiaries.

# Purpose and aims of the evaluation

We are seeking an experienced and independent evaluator to conduct a robust evaluation of The Opting In Project. The overall purpose of the evaluation is to learn about how the programme has worked and the impact it has had in order to facilitate formative learning which can be put into effect after the programme. The evaluation aims include:

* To test and review the Theory of Change underpinning the programme
* To evidence and summarise the activities and outputs of the Opting In Project, including exploring the different strands of activity within the programme
* To assess the extent and ways in which the Opting In Project has been implemented a) as intended and b) effectively
* To identify any internal or external challenges the project has encountered and the ways and extent to which these have been overcome
* To explore and assess the extent to which the project has brought about the impact and outcomes that it sought to achieve, where it has done so and why, and where and in what ways its impact could have been greater
* To identify formative lessons learned and recommendations for the future design and delivery of Youthlife Programmes for children and young people affected by loss.

As well as using the evaluation for the purpose of learning and development, we also seek to use it for the purpose of communicating about the project’s impact with a range of stakeholders.

# Evaluation outputs

We require the evaluation provider to deliver the following outputs and deliverables:

* A theory of change and evaluation framework (including detailed evaluation questions) to underpin the evaluation
* A final evaluation report by March 2018 which provides a summative assessment of the overall programme (its implementation and impact), including lessons learned for future Youthlife programmes
* A presentation (to an audience of stakeholders) to communicate the key findings of the evaluation

# Evaluation methods

We invite interested providers to put forward a methodology which will best allow them to fulfil the aims of the evaluation within the required budget and timeframe, and in relation to the outputs described above. Nevertheless, we expect the methodology to include the following elements:

* A mixture of quantitative and qualitative methodologies
* Drawing on existing evidence, documentation and data which the Youthlife team has collected
* Drawing on the insights, perspectives and experiences of:
  + Youthlife staff
  + Young people who have or are directly participating in the project (including a strategy for engaging these young people in the evaluation)
  + People less directly involved in the project but who may have useful insights (including a strategy for engaging these people in the evaluation)
* A balance between an overarching exploration and assessment of the project, as well as more in-depth analysis of key cases (e.g. of young people’s experiences, of events, and/or of elements of activity within the project)

# Selection criteria

We are seeking an evaluation provider who meets the following criteria:

* Extensive experience and successful track record of conducting evaluations using mixed-methodologies
* Demonstrable knowledge and expertise in relation to one or more of the following research areas: child and adolescent programmes; youth mental health and wellbeing interventions; alternative education programmes; counselling and psychotherapy
* Experience conducting sensitive, ethical and inclusive research with a wide range of people, including children and young people, vulnerable groups and cross-community groups.
* Ability to work flexibly and to be available for the lifetime of the project
* Preferably based in Northern Ireland
* Two References

# Key dates

The table below presents the intended timeline for the commissioning and delivery of the evaluation.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Milestone** | **Date** |
| ITT published | 07/07/2017 |
| Deadline for questions | 14/07/2017 |
| Deadline for submisions | 28/07/2017 |
| Successful provider notified | 11/08/2017 |
| Project launch meeting | w/b 14/08/2017 |
| Final evaluation report delivered on or before | 31/03/2018 |

# Submitting a response

Please submit your proposal to Tricia Kelly, Youthlife Manager by 5pm on Friday 28th July. The proposal should include the following elements:

* A description of your qualifications and experience
* Understanding of our requirements
* A detailed proposed methodology
* Risk analysis
* Ethical considerations
* Examples of three relevant research or evaluation projects delivered within the last five years
* Details of approach to project management, including a project plan
* A full and fully inclusive cost breakdown (including day rates and overheads)

# Questions about this ITT

Any questions about this ITT should be sent to Tricia Kelly, Youthlife Manager by email to [manager@youthlife.org](mailto:manager@youthlife.org) by 5pm on 14/07/2017

# Budget

The overall and total budget for this evaluation is £4,500 (including VAT and all expenses).

# Appendix 1: Opting In Project intended outcomes

**1 Care experienced young people are better supported to develop emotional and social skills**

**Indicator 1.1** 36 Care experienced young people who complete a post questionnaire report an improvement in their quality of life annually. 170 by the end of the project

**Indicator 1.2** 40 Care experienced young people from clinic sessions and other Opting In participants who complete a growing Through Change Residential Programme annually

**2. Young people who have disengaged from education receive positive messages from their peers and engage in alternative education programmes**

**Indicator 2.1** 20 Young people disengaged from education attend ‘theme nights’ in the café and are supported by peers annually.

**Indicator 2.2** 17 Young people disengaged from education receive support from tutors to achieve a formal educational qualification delivered by tutors in the youth health café annually

**Indicator 2.3** 90 Young people re-engage in formal education or use their qualifications to build a career path as a stepping stone to employment by the end of the project.

**3. A reduction in anti-social behaviour in communities**

**Indicator 3.1** 70 Young people complete work on anger management, taking responsibility for choices and managing challenging behaviour delivered through the opting in project annually

**Indicator 3.2** 80 Young people from ‘hot-spot’ areas who attend the youth health café will receive support to reduce their incidents of anti-social behaviour annually

**Indicator 3.3** The PSNI report fewer incidents of anti-social behaviour relating to the young people we are working with in the youth health Café

**4. The physical, mental, emotional and social health and wellbeing of bereaved young people will improve**

**Indicator 4.1** 25 Young people who complete a Safe Futures Residential programme indicate on post questionnaires a reduction in self-harming and less reliant on GP annually

**Indicator 4.2** Staff, parents and professionals observe and document improvement in mood, behaviour and appearance in 25 young people following participation in the programme annually.

**Indicator 4.3** A 10% reduction in suicidal ideation among the young people we are working with will be noted.