

THE IMPACT OF THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC ON GIRLS' LIVES IN THE UK

Call for Submissions

Plan International UK is seeking submissions from suitably qualified and experienced researchers to conduct primary and secondary research which explores how the pandemic has impacted, and will continue to affect, the lives of girls aged 12-21 in the UK.

This Terms of Reference outlines the purpose of the research, the deliverables, budget and details of how to apply. See Appendix for definitions.

About Plan International UK

Plan International UK is a global children's charity. We strive to advance children's rights and equality for girls all over the world. As an independent development and humanitarian charity, we work alongside children, young people, our supporters and partners to tackle the root causes of the challenges facing girls and all vulnerable children, so that children can realise their rights.

At Plan International UK we believe that girls' rights are universal, but across the UK as well as internationally, girls' rights are threatened by poverty, gender inequality, violence, unfair policies and ingrained discriminatory attitudes.

Context & Background to the research

The coronavirus outbreak has swept the globe, causing the worst health crisis of a generation. While children's health appears to be less directly impacted by coronavirus than adults, the impact of the pandemic on children, especially girls, will be long-lasting.

Through more than 80 years' experience working internationally, we know that health crises have a gendered impact on children and young people. We are already seeing this pattern in the UK, with increased reports of violence against women and girls, increased unpaid care work (shouldered by women), exacerbated economic gender inequality, reduced access to sexual and reproductive healthcare and gendered mental health issues

Girls across the UK were already facing barriers to their rights, and many of these challenges will be exacerbated through the pandemic. Our report, [The State of Girls' Rights in the UK](#) found that between 2016-2019, 522 recommendations were made by international treaties bodies for improvements in human rights in the UK. All affected girls and over half were directly relevant. Concerns were raised in relation to mental health provision, child

poverty, violence against women and girls, sexual harassment in education settings, amongst others, with many of these concerns raised by girls themselves.¹

Robust analysis of the impact of the pandemic on the lives of girls in the UK is essential. Girls are often invisible in data and policy making, and their needs often overlooked and unmet. When girls are young, they tend to be gender neutralised in services, policy and data as 'children' and subsumed into the adult-focused category of 'women' without consideration for the unique challenges girls and young women face.

To start to fill this gap, in 2020 we conducted a survey of more than 1,000 girls and young women aged 14-21, exposing the challenges girls are facing during the pandemic. [The state of girls' rights in the UK - Early insights into the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on girls](#) report revealed the significant impact the coronavirus pandemic was having on girls in the UK and the long-term damage this could inflict on their rights. Access to period products and contraception, the impact on their mental health and education, and fear for their safety in public are among the main issues they shared in the report.

However, much more research into the impact of the pandemic on girls is urgently needed, including girls who are the most marginalised and least heard. **We are looking to work with suitably qualified and experienced researchers to understand how the pandemic has impacted, and will continue to affect, the lives of girls aged 12-21 in the UK, with an emphasis on the impact on girls' lives beyond lockdowns.**

Purpose and objectives

The purpose of the research is to understand how the pandemic has impacted, and will continue to affect, the lives of girls aged 12-21 in the UK, which can be utilised to raise awareness, influence and develop programmes responsive to girls' needs and issues.

The research project objectives are:

1. Provide an overview of existing data and research on the impact of the Coronavirus pandemic on girl's lives. This is to develop hypotheses and emerging issues for girls which to explore via primary research. This should incorporate reviewing the prevalence of issues highlighted in Plan International UK's The state of girls' rights in the UK - Early insights into the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on girls report, which include:
 - Girls' safety and public spaces
 - Mental health and wellbeing
 - Sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR)
 - Education
 - Participation and voice
2. To gather in-depth insight to reveal the experiences of girls and the impact of the Coronavirus pandemic on girls' lives, which is the focus of the project. This requires iterative and responsive primary research to be undertaken with girls aged 12-21 in the UK. We are open to suggestions on the approach, however this should:

¹ Plan International UK (2020) The State of Girls' Rights in the UK 2019-2020 <https://plan-uk.org/file/plan-uk-state-of-girls-rights-report-2020pdf/download?token=42bpRbf8>

- Include a quantitative survey as well as qualitative insight gathering, for example via in-depth interviews, focus groups or online ethnography.
 - Pay specific attention to how the pandemic, beyond the impacts of lockdowns, will continue to affect the lives of girls aged 12-21 in the UK.
 - Explore what have been the positive impacts, as well as the negative impacts of the Coronavirus pandemic, on girls' lives in the UK.
 - Include a diverse range of 14-21 year old girls from each nation of the UK, including girls who are the most marginalised and least heard.
3. To highlight the key issues for girls, as well as provide an overall summary of the impact of the pandemic on girls' lives in the UK.
 4. As a result of the research, Plan International UK can develop messaging to highlight the impact of the pandemic on girls' lives and develop high-quality programmes that are responsive to girls' needs and issues.

Project Deliverables

1. A paper that meets the objectives outlined above, and consists of:
 - Compiling and summarising existing data and research on girls' experiences and the impact of the Coronavirus pandemic on girls' lives in the UK.
 - Identifying and presenting gaps in research and data, including potential topics or key questions for future primary research.
 - Summarising in-depth insight on girls' experiences and the impact of the Coronavirus pandemic with specific attention to how the pandemic, beyond the impacts of lockdowns, will continue to affect the lives of girls aged 12-21 in the UK.
 - Outlining what have been the positive impacts, as well as the negative impacts, of the Coronavirus pandemic on girls' lives in the UK.
 - Presenting an overall summary of the data and insight, including key findings.
 - A fully referenced report, written in a plain English style.
2. Primary research, including a quantitative survey as well as qualitative insight, with girls aged 12-21 years old. This includes:
 - The researchers being responsible for the recruitment of research participants, in agreement with the project manager.
 - Ensuring research participants include diverse and marginalised 14-21 year-old girls from each nation of the UK with a mixture of urban, rural and coastal considered.
 - The researcher designing the survey, interview/focus group discussions guides, in consultation with the project manager
 - All data and transcripts will be typed up and copies given to Plan International UK, with accompanying consent forms.
3. Oral presentation and debrief session with Plan International UK staff.
4. Weekly communication with Plan International UK staff conducted throughout the project either by telephone call or through a weekly email note on progress.

Safeguarding and Working with Young People

Plan International UK has zero tolerance against all forms of abuses and exploitation against child, youth and adults and will adhere to Plan International's Safeguarding Policy to ensure that no one (and especially children, young people and adults at risk) is subjected to any form of harm as a result of their association/involvement with the organisation and its programme. We understand harm as any form of or threat of physical and emotion violence, exploitation including sexual exploitation, neglect.

Plan will lead on overseeing and ensuring accountability for safeguarding during the project duration through the implementation of its policy, [Say Yes! to Keeping Children and Young People Safe and Protected](#). Plan International has been a pioneer in child safeguarding and has invested resources in its mainstreaming across the organisation through development of minimum standards, procedure and tools all using an intersectional lens.

All agencies undertaking work on behalf of Plan International UK will be expected to read and sign up to our safeguarding policy, as well as undertake Disclosure and Barring checks.

Risk assessment

The consultant / research partner together with Plan International UK, will lead a risk assessment of potential unintended negative impacts and a risk management plan detailing explicit protocols to minimize risks. The consultant / research partner will be expected to sign and abide by Plan International UK's Data Protection policy and Safeguarding Children and Young People policy, research principles, and guidelines. The consultant / research partner will apply for ethical approval from their affiliated academic institution or organisation. For independent researchers or small organisations, ethical approval will be sought through Plan International's Global Hub. The consultant / research partner will also be required to be DBS checked.

Intellectual Property Rights

Plan International UK retains Intellectual Property Rights of all the research we commission (unless the research is explicitly in partnership, where we would share the IP Rights with the partner), but we would always give credit to the researchers in any external publications. For this project, we would retain IP Rights.

Timeline & Budget

The budget is £20,000-£25,000 inclusive of any VAT payable, expenses and participant incentives. Payments will be made upon submission of an invoice, by BACS.

Application deadline	Wednesday 21 st April 2021 9a.m.
Informal interview	During the week commencing Monday 26 th April 2021
Contract and safeguarding process completed, including safeguarding policies read and signed and DBS certificate received.	Week commencing 3 rd May 2021
Work commences	Week commencing 10 th May 2021 for approximately 10 weeks. N.B consideration will need to be given for time taken for ethical approval.
Project ends	Approximately August 2021

Application

We welcome applications from consultants or researchers who meet the following criteria, which applications will be judged against:

- Experience of undertaking similar projects
- Experience of research and expertise in gender equality and qualitative research methods, particularly focus groups.
- Experience of applying gender lenses to research and analysis
- Experience of working face to face with girls, especially those facing disadvantage.
- Experienced and skilled in using effective listening tools, facilitating, and managing emotional or difficult conversations.
- Excellent writing skills, including the ability to write clearly and create coherent, structured papers
- Ability to work through a project flexibly and adapt to the changing needs of partners and external environments.

To apply, please submit an expression of interest that includes:

- The approach to the research
- The relevant experience and expertise of the consultant(s) or research(ers)
- Ability to meet the deliverables and project timelines
- At least one example of previous similar work with girls
- Resourcing for the project
- Budget breakdown

Deadline for applications Wednesday 21st April 2021 9 a.m.

Please submit applications or any queries to Plan International UK by emailing ukgirlsrights@plan-uk.org

Appendix

Definitions

Who is a girl?

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) defines a child as anyone under the age of 18. But the definition of 'girl' varies across research. For the purposes of this report, a girl has been defined as anyone identifying as female up to the age of 18 and a young woman aged up to 25.

Sex and Gender

The concept of gender refers to the norms, expectations and beliefs about the roles, relations and values attributed to girls and boys, women and men. These norms are socially constructed, they are neither invariable nor are they biologically determined. They change over time. They are learned from families and friends, in schools and communities, and from the media, government and religious organisations.

Plan International UK believes that we cannot realise our vision for gender equality without working towards the realisation of the rights of all children. We believe that gender inequality is a key obstacle to the achievement of children's rights and that it is therefore central to achieving our mission and vision.

We recognise that data will be predominantly binary in nature. As with previous reports we will strive to be inclusive of non-binary and trans young people by using a child rights lens in our literature review.