



For children and
equality for girls

Scoping and analysis of the policy context around young people's mental health and wellbeing in the UK

Plan International UK is seeking suitably qualified researchers or consultants to carry out a scoping and analysis of the policy context around young people's mental health and wellbeing in the UK.

This Terms of Reference outlines the purpose of this work, the deliverables, what we are looking for in a researcher or consultant, budget and timeline.

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.

Background

Plan UK's January 2020 [State of UK Girls' Rights](#) report found that mental health issues amongst girls are rising, and girls do not feel their mental health is being taken seriously. Since then, the Covid-19 pandemic has exacerbated challenges around young people's mental health. Existing evidence reviewed suggests that gender leads to different trajectories in mental wellbeing with mental health issues growing steadily in girls and young women from childhood through to late adolescence.

In September 2020 we announced the [Young Health Programme UK](#), a partnership between Plan International UK and AstraZeneca. The Young Health Programme (YHP) UK supports young people to realise their right to good mental health and wellbeing, regardless of gender. We plan to reach over 130,000 young people, aged 10 to 24, over 5 years across the UK including Greater Manchester and Cambridgeshire.

The YHP UK will be designed with and for young people, following an innovative Youth-Centred Design model which places young people's voices at the centre of the programme. The YHP UK will listen to the challenges that young people face and identify what changes they would like to see happen. Then together, work to develop and adapt solutions to tackle the health inequalities children and young people face and improve health and wellbeing outcomes for young people and their communities.

The programme will also support young people to share their views and perspectives around mental health and wellbeing with decision makers in order to inform policy at national and local levels. To underpin this, we wish to scope the current state of policy in areas that impact young

people's mental and health, what the policy and political landscape looks like over the next three to five and understand more about other stakeholders who are active in the policy space on this issue.

Based on this, the analysis should identify policy areas where there is an opportunity for advocacy/influencing work by the Plan UK and the Young Health Programme to contribute to change and to further the mental health and wellbeing of young people aged 10 -24, especially girls. This includes opportunities for young people to have their voices heard by decision makers.

There are many definitions of what constitutes mental health and wellbeing and how to measure it. PIUK has chosen to think beyond the absence of clinical mental disorders to consider a broader and holistic definition of mental health and wellbeing in which 'every individual realises his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully and is able to make a contribution to her or his community.'¹

This reflects a growing recognition among stakeholders in this space that mental and emotional wellbeing should be seen as more than just the absence of diagnosable disorders.

Research questions and approach

Analysis of policy responses to promote young people's mental health and wellbeing

Using the above definition, we are interested in seeing what policy responses have sought to promote good mental health and wellbeing amongst young people. We do not need the analysis to include policy interventions that aim to improve access to CAMHS. Research questions include:

1. What have been the key policy responses to promote young people's mental health and wellbeing at a Westminster / Whitehall level in the last five years? What barriers and opportunities to promote good mental health have these sought to address?
2. Do any of these policy responses specifically address the gendered dimensions of mental health and wellbeing, and/or the experiences of different groups of young people with a range of intersecting identities?
3. What policy responses at Westminster/ Whitehall level have emerged to tackle specific issues such as self-harm and poor body image that disproportionately impact on the mental health and wellbeing of girls and adolescent women?
4. What have been the policy responses to improving young people's access to early intervention to support future good mental health? Where are the current gaps in support?
5. How successful have any of the above policy responses been, based on current evidence?
6. What policy processes (government policy, legislative or budgetary processes) are planned to promote young people's mental health and wellbeing in the coming 3-5 years?
7. What gaps exist in recent or planned policy responses?

¹This definition is taken from the [World Health Organisation](#).

Analysis of policy responses during the Covid-19 pandemic

8. What further additional/policy responses have been put in place since March 2020 in response to, and to mitigate, the pandemic's impact on youth mental health?

Analysis of political and civil society landscape

9. What is the current state of political awareness, debate and commitment on the issue of children and young people's mental health in Westminster? How has the Covid-19 pandemic affected this?
10. Who are the key non-governmental stakeholders involved in policy and advocacy around youth mental health issues at a Westminster/Whitehall level? What policy issues are they focusing on and what responses are they advocating for from government?

Policy responses in other nations

11. What are the key policy developments in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland that promote young people's mental health and wellbeing, including any that recognise the gendered dimensions of mental health?

Policy and advocacy opportunities for Plan International UK and the YHP

Based on the above findings, the analysis should recommend areas of policy where Plan UK and the Young Health Programme could best contribute to positive change for young people by advocating for policy changes to promote positive mental health and wellbeing of young people aged 10 - 24, especially girls, including through supporting young people to have their voices heard by decision makers.

In developing recommendations, researchers should consider any gaps in policy interventions to date and the barriers to progress as well as any relevant policy processes that are likely to offer opportunities for progress in the coming 3-5 years.

Deliverables

A report setting out the findings and recommendations for where PIUK and the YHP policy and advocacy work could add value, including a short (2 page) summary

Researcher profile

Researchers should be suitably qualified and have experience/ expertise in the following areas:

- Experience of working with charitable organisations similar to Plan International UK and the strategies used to make change, in particular policy and advocacy
- Experience of policy scoping, sector mapping and conducting literature reviews
- Expert understanding of youth mental health and wellbeing issues, including the gendered dimensions of young people's experiences, would be desirable.

Timeline & Budget

The allocated budget for this work is £3,000 - £5,000 inclusive of VAT. Payments will be made by BACS upon submission of an invoice.

Submission deadline	31 st January 2022, 9am
Informal interviews	Week commencing 31 st January 2022
Proposed start	14 th February 2022
Proposed completion	14 th March 2022

Contact

To discuss the opportunity please email sally.thomas@plan-uk.org