 

**Invitation for applicants to apply to evaluate the Mas Project (Maternal Advocacy Support)**

Women’s Resource and Development Agency (WRDA) is delighted to invite suitably qualified professionals to submit applications to externally evaluate the Mas Project, Maternal Advocacy Support. The terms of reference for the project is outlined in this document.

**Introduction**

WRDA works regionally to advance women’s equality and participation in society. Our vision is of a fair and equal society where women are empowered and are a visible force for change in all areas of life. The organisation was established in 1983 and works with women’s groups from all traditions, including ethnic minority groups, in disadvantaged and rural communities across NI.

**WRDA’s Strategic Aims 2017-2020 are:**

* Empowerment & Tackling Inequalities
* Policy & Advocacy
* Leadership & Infrastructure Support
* Organisational Development

WRDA promotes empowerment by developing the capacity of women to address inequality and advocate for themselves. We deliver training programmes that address inequalities in health, leadership, community relations and peacebuilding, and host workshops, seminars and conferences for the women’s sector to discuss issues that impact on women’s lives.

WRDA engages in advocacy and lobbying for the women’s sector on a wide range of activities. Mindful of the under-representation of women in public and political life, we advocate for greater visibility and inclusion of women to ensure their voices are heard and acted upon in local, regional, national and international decision-making structures.

**Context of the Mas Project**

In 2017 the health inspection body, the RQIA published a damning report highlighting inadequate perinatal mental health support services in Northern Ireland. The recommendations specifically highlight community based peer support as an important part of improving the lives of women with perinatal mental health problems by tackling isolation and providing long term help. A group set up by the Public Health Agency to implement the recommendations of the RQIA report has a dedicated subgroup exploring service delivery models for peer support. There is a lack of specialists trained in perinatal mental health in Northern Ireland and we do not have a mother and baby unit. There has been a commitment to funding for a specialist team but this is moving at a slow pace.

The Mas project aims to bring the voices of women from disadvantaged communities into the heart of the campaign for better mental health services for mums. We know that women from low income households are much more likely to be diagnosed with post-natal depression than those from more affluent backgrounds. Many women have told us they feel it is harder for them to ask for help because healthcare professionals can be quicker to judge them and make child protection referrals. This fear is backed up by evidence from around the UK which shows that child protection referrals have spiked in low income areas since the roll out of austerity and welfare cuts.

WRDA delivered a 6 month pilot project funded by Belfast City Council that involved setting up peer support groups in women’s centres for women to explore issues related to maternal mental health, gain tools and strategies for staying well and give feedback directly to service providers about how they could do better in supporting women. A total of 25 mums from 5 women’s centres completed the programme and received certificates at a showcase event in Belfast City Hall.

 Following the success of the pilot programme, we have secured funding from The Big Lottery Community Fund to develop the Mas project for a further 3 years to partner with 8 women’s centres to provide peer support groups as well as involving the participants in the campaign for change. We will work with 8 project workers from Women’s Centres who have been funded for 10 hours per week to support and facilitate the Mas Project. We will also work closely with Aware NI who will provide training, support and supervision to staff and participants throughout the 3 year project. The project will be coordinated by a Mas project coordinator based at WRDA who will ensure consistency across project partners and the delivery of project outcomes.

**Plan for the 3 year project**

**The Mas project will work with 200 women from 8 women’s centres over the 3 years, delivering 18 sessions per year in each of the centres.**

**Year 1:**

* Establish perinatal mental health peer support groups in 8 women's centres by training Project Workers and supporting them to recruit participants from the community.
* Work with statutory service providers to develop a peer support referral pathway for women who don't meet the criteria for clinical intervention or who need additional support in the community.

**Year 1-3**

* Develop the MAS groups as a coordinated network delivering consistent interventions under agreed thematic headings and providing high quality mental health peer support with a shared set of values.
* Deliver 2 MAS network events each year; 1 for the participants to develop relationships across the different communities and to shape their advocacy messages, and 1 that also includes political representatives and policy makers.
* Promote the MAS project with the aim of expanding the number of participants, tackling stigma related to perinatal mental health, educating service providers about the particular experiences of women from disadvantaged backgrounds etc

**Year 2& 3:**

* Support women with lived experience of perinatal mental health issues to help improve each other's lives. Provide development training to those who would like to become peer support group leaders or mental health advocates.
* Support the MAS participants to develop their own campaigns; shaping campaign demands, creating campaign materials to engage the public such as podcasts and videos, organising actions e.g. protests, petitions etc

**Requirements for the contractor:**

The contractor will be required to capture data and information about the effectiveness of the Mas Project, including the key elements of:

* Peer support
* Capacity Building
* Engaging women at grass roots in the campaign for change and improved services including engagement with decision makers
* Capturing women’s voices and experiences
* Aligning the findings with WRDA strategic aims

**Budget**

There is a budget for the evaluation of £10,000 for three years of the project

 Year 1 report - £3.000

Year 2 - £3,500

Year 3 - £3,500

The contractor can invoice on a 6 monthly basis for payment

**Candidates are required to provide**:

* A proposal for the evaluation framework and detailed methodology
* An indication of fees per day and a total costing of number of hours provided and breakdown of the work provided
* The Evaluation will be conducted in a manner that support the ethos and values of WRDA
* Selection of the evaluator will consider criteria such as proven expertise as well as the relevance/credibility of the proposed evaluation framework and the total cost

**The contractor will be required to have experience and knowledge in the following areas**:

* An understanding of the gendered nature of poverty and inequality
* An understanding of the women’s sector in Northern Ireland
* A strong understanding of how social background and disadvantage can impact women
* An understanding and knowledge of perinatal mental health provision in Northern Ireland and how poor services is harming women who need specialist support
* Experience of undertaking research and developing accessible evidence resources – evidence of previous work will be required upon request
* A commitment to the ethos and values of WRDA

It is important that applicants specifically address how their knowledge and experience meets the above criteria in their proposal

Applicants will also be required to produce 2 references relevant to their work as a consultant. References should be able to comment on how they meet the above criteria and should have knowledge of their work.

**Methodology**

The contractor will be required to use qualitative and quantitative research methods such as questionnaire, focus groups and one to one interviews with project staff, participants on the programme, stakeholders, steering group members. We envisage that the final report will detail the extent to which the programme objectives have been achieved. We would also wish the evaluator to capture and document the experiences of women with lived experience of perinatal mental health problems and the support that they received by service providers as well as detailing the impact and extent of their engagement with the Mas Project.

**Essential elements of project proposal:**

**Quality and Relevance:** Outline of how the proposal meets the project context and purpose.

**Effectiveness:** Outline of proposed methodologies, suggested outputs and ways of working to meet project aims. Overview of key sources to include mechanisms for recording information and evidence collected.

**Efficiency of Planning and Implementation:** Outline proposed use of resources and the planning stages to ensure maximum impact.

**Impact:** Outline the impact of peer support within women’s centres. Highlight the positive benefit of capacity building and engaging women at grass roots level in the campaign for change.

**Potential for Sustainability:** Overview of how the Mas Project can strengthen WRDA and the women’s sector capacity and make recommendations for future sustainable opportunities.

**Timeframe for the selection and implementation of evaluation process:**

Closing Date for Submission of Applications - Monday 14th December

Interviews and confirmation of selection - Friday 18th December

Begin the evaluation process - Monday 3rd January 2021

Submission of Year 1 Report – December 2021

Submission of Year 2 Report – December 2022

Submission of Final Report of Year 1/2/3 – December 2023

The contractor can invoice every 6 months for payment during the project.

For further information about the Mas pilot project, please read the link below:

<https://wrda.net/perinatal-mental-health-and-the-mas-project/>

The submission of applications should be sent via e-mail to Anne McVicker, Director of WRDA by Monday 14th December at 5pm anne.mcvicker@wrda.net

**CONTACT DETAILS TO BE COMPLETED BY ALL APPLICANTS**

**Please complete this form with your company details and include it with your submission:**

**Name/ Company: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Address: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

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**Postcode: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Telephone Number: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Fax Number: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Name of person to contact in connection with this submission:**

**\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Position in Company: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Telephone Number: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

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**Fax Number: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

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**Email address: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Mobile Telephone number: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Website address: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Number of employees:\_\_\_\_ Full time:\_\_\_\_ Part time:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**We would invite feedback from companies / individuals regarding this process. Any suggestions regarding how this exercise might have been improved are welcome:**

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