



**Advonet: Leeds Autism AIM Service**

Dear Sir or Madam:

**Invitation to Tender: Leeds Autism AIM Evaluation Partner Contract**

You are invited by Advonet to tender for the above contract.

We are looking for experienced Independent Evaluators with a creative approach who will work together with our autistic staff, clients and partners to ensure they are at the heart of the evaluation process. We anticipate that interested parties will potentially have research experience from across a variety of services and backgrounds.

Bidders must be able to start this work by mid -September 2019

The contract award is for bids in the region of £11,000 from September 2019 to July 2021 to assess National Lottery funded work, with an interim report in July 2020. We have also included £3,000 for an evaluation of the CCG funded post diagnostic pilot work to report April/May 2020.

The closing date for expressions of Interest is **12 noon 19<sup>th</sup> July 2019**

The closing date for questions from bidders is **31<sup>st</sup> July 2019**

The deadline for submission is **12.00 (Noon) on 5<sup>th</sup> August 2019**

Interviews will be held on **15<sup>th</sup> August 2019**

Notifications of award: **19<sup>th</sup> August 2019**

Yours faithfully,

Wendy Cork

AIM Team Manager / Advonet Advocacy Development and Partnership Director

Email: [Wendy.Cork@advonet.org.uk](mailto:Wendy.Cork@advonet.org.uk) Telephone: 0113 2440606/ 07581571380

## **Background**

The Leeds Autism AIM service is an innovative, autistic led service providing advocacy, information and mentoring for autistic adults in Leeds. The service is part of Advonet, an independent advocacy organisation.

AIM services are aimed at autistic adults who have little or no formal funded support who may have previously fallen through gaps in services. It was co designed and developed with them and is majority staffed by autistic people.

The service developed from an initial autism citizen advocacy project, then established an autism information directory and one to one autism mentoring service. It expanded its services through an initial 6 months funding stream from the Autism Innovation fund and support from Leeds City Council in venue provision to develop an autism hub drop in services. These services were short term funded by the Leeds Clinical Commissioning group and became increasingly well used and established, supported by partnership work with other agencies and increasingly led by autistic adults themselves.

The service supports over 500 people a year by:

- Information and signposting: through website information, phone and email;
- Autism hub drop in sessions: weekly averaging 33 attendees a session, providing peer support, CAB support, employment support, information and support to access services, personalised resources to put forward needs, advocacy, a range of groups; and workshops plus partner support;
- Mentoring: one to one support in the community or at the hubs from specialist trained volunteers, providing volunteer hours and volunteers a year;
- We developed a second quieter session with additional CCG funding for more complex appointments with employment groups, CAB/advocacy and a focus on peer support to understand the condition and explore management strategies;
- We are developing a post diagnostic pilot (also with additional CCG funding) that explores how autistic led support can better support people after diagnosis.

AIM was developed by autistic adults from its inception, is led by an autistic steering group and has gradually grown its autistic staff team to lead the service. It is one of the few services of its type to be genuinely autistic led and is constantly striving to improve its services to meet the needs of the autistic adults it serves.

We welcome Independent Evaluators who can assess and recommend on how to build on this innovative service, advise and support us in identifying what we are doing well and identify areas to improve to further develop for the future.

Funding for this evaluation comes from the National Lottery Community fund which has provided 3 years funding for the main drop in service, mentoring and signposting. Leeds

Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) has provided additional funding since the award enabling us to enhance and develop existing services, develop the second session and funds the post diagnostic pilot. We are measuring the impact of the Big Lottery support in this evaluation and also the impact of the CCG post diagnostic pilot.

The audience for this evaluation is National Lottery and CCG funders, partners, clients and other stakeholders and possible future funders of continuation work. We also would aim to use this evaluation wider to demonstrate the benefits, barriers and opportunities in developing more autism led provision and to provide examples that can be adapted more widely.

### **Key outcomes for evaluation for National Lottery funded work:**

- Local services will be more aware of autistic requirements and individuals will feel more supported and their needs better met enabling them to manage independently on a day to day basis;
- Autistic adults are supported through volunteers, peer mentors and specialist trained staff, enabling them to access information, training and employment opportunities;
- One to one support from trained mentors (autistic and non-autistic) increases confidence and community participation reduces isolation and loneliness and helps address long term crisis situations;
- To enable autistic adults to have a greater voice in the community, supporting them to engage in wider services and address and tackle barriers that prevent them from reaching their goals;
- The organisation will have increased its capabilities (knowledge/skills/confidence) acquired relevant supporting tools where/if appropriate and used these newly developed capabilities to deliver outcomes more effectively and sustainably for beneficiaries.

### **How we will work with you**

We will support you in engaging with the client group and partners to facilitate the evaluation. We have a range of qualitative and quantitative data to support the evaluation through our monitoring, Charity Log database, case studies, feedback/evaluation forms and interviews.

### **What we are looking for**

We are looking for evaluators who will use a creative, flexible approach, and put autistic adults at the heart of the project. Consultation, co-production of knowledge and co-development of the project are central to achieving this aim. Experience of using a mixed method approach of both qualitative and quantitative research methods, and person-centred tools which enable autistic adults to participate in the process are essential. We also

welcome applicants who innovatively ‘think outside the box’ given this is an autistic-led service.

We would expect evaluators to explore data and information collated through our own evaluations such as statistics of use and evaluation/feedback forms and to use their skills to advise us in exploring future evaluation methods to better suit our service going forward.

We anticipate that evaluators will have demonstrably developed pragmatic guidance and service/client recommendations with achievable outcomes and produced timely, high quality reports and outputs.

We require evaluators to be experienced and confident in using approaches that suit the needs of this client group and are respectful of their abilities and communication differences.

We welcome your enthusiasm, ideas and innovative approaches so as to further develop our evaluation of this service.

**Submitting Expressions of Interest:** this should be no more than 2 sides of A4 with key contacts. Please explain your background and experience and outline your research proposal and what you bring to the evaluation. These should be emailed to [Wendy.Cork@advonet.org.uk](mailto:Wendy.Cork@advonet.org.uk) by 12 noon 17<sup>th</sup> July, 2019.

**Submitting tender: electronic copies to be received by 12 noon on 2<sup>nd</sup> August, 2019.**

**More detailed information on how tenders are rated will be available for those expressions of interest short-listed but we are looking for evidence of:**

- Your evaluation experience and background, including demonstrating experience working with third sector partners and an understanding of the sector;
- Your experience/knowledge of working with autistic adults;
- How you propose to consult, work with and engage the client group;
- A detailed specification of methods you propose to deliver;
- How you will work to timescales to deliver work and produce high quality reports;
- How you will disseminate research findings/ learning;
- How you will work flexibly with both partners and the AIM steering group;
- References from previous work x2;
- A full breakdown of costs for the evaluation.

**If you require further information we would be happy to provide this any time before 26th July. Contact: [Wendy.Cork@advonet.org.uk](mailto:Wendy.Cork@advonet.org.uk) Tel: 0113 2440606**