



Active Ingredients 2021 Request for Proposals (RFP) Response to Supplier Q&A and Next Steps

This document is being emailed to all those who submitted a question via email before 12 February 2021. A copy will also be posted on our [website](#), alongside application guidance and key dates. The next opportunity to submit queries is within the [Expression of Interest](#), the deadline for which is 12:00 GMT on 8 March 2021.

Here we lay out:

- A) Responses to queries raised
- B) Next steps

A) Responses to queries raised

We have grouped the queries raised into 28 questions, organised by theme, so your specific query should be answered by one or more of the responses below. Please see 'Next steps' on page 7, if you feel your query has not been addressed.

Queries relating to the research team

1. Can the previous commission team leads apply as lead for this RFP?

Individuals who were team Leads in the 2020 Active Ingredients commission may not apply as a Lead in this commission but may apply as a team member. Individuals who were part of a team in the 2020 Active Ingredients commission, but not a team Lead, can apply as a team member or team Lead. Please note that you can only apply as a Lead on one proposal but can apply as a team member on more than one proposal.

2. If one of our team members is a medical professional (e.g., Psychiatrist) and the other team members are early career researchers, would that be okay?

Yes, that would be fine. We strongly encourage applications from teams involving early career researchers. If it is known that an early career researcher (e.g. PhD student, postdoc) will carry out the bulk of the work, they should be named on the proposal as Lead. We will consider the expertise and experience of the team as a whole, so teams will not be disadvantaged if the Lead is an early career researcher.

3. Do you have to have a senior researcher in the team? Would it be ok if the team comprises of PhD students who have good experience of mental health research?

The only requirement is that at least one member of the team has a relevant background (PhD or equivalent) in an area of mental health science. Please note that the team will be evaluated as a whole, and key criteria are expertise, relevant skill set and track record.

4. Can a team apply without having a PhD / equivalent on board, but having good experience and expertise in systematic reviews and psychological interventions?

If none of the named team members have a PhD in an area of mental health science, you could demonstrate 'equivalence' – for example, if at least one of the team members could



show that they took the lead on a published paper using a particular methodology or have several years' experience in industry doing research. Either way, you would need to demonstrate that someone in your team has a track record in producing publishable outputs, as one of the key deliverables we are looking for is an academic review.

5. Can the application / Expression of Interest be positioned as a collaboration between researchers from different organizations?

Absolutely. So long as the team includes a maximum of three team members, that would be fine. A team of more than three would need to be robustly justified. Please also note that when a proposal is made on behalf of a team, Wellcome will form a contractual relationship only with the Lead (or Lead's host organisation), and the Lead will ultimately be responsible for delivery of the outputs on behalf of the whole team.

6. What are some examples of justifiable reasons to have a team larger than 3?

Given the scope of this commission and in order to keep the reviewing process manageable and focused, we strongly suggest that you keep to three named team members, including the Lead. If additional expertise is needed, you can collaborate with colleagues who are not named on the proposal, and their time may be costed in a consulting or advisory capacity. We can therefore think of very few reasons why you would need a team larger than three. In very rare cases there might be a justifiable reason, for example if one of the team comprises a job share between two researchers.

Queries relating to the scope of the commission

7. I wish to develop and test an intervention for a sub-group of 14–24-year-olds. Does this come within the scope of this call?

The Active Ingredients 2020 and 2021 commissions are for secondary research only – the key outputs are review papers. Developing and testing an intervention is therefore out of scope for this commission. However, we are planning for primary research funding calls in the coming months.

8. What is the reasoning for focusing on age 14 up given that mental health risk begins to rise much earlier?

Deciding on an age range of focus is not straightforward as there are always arguments for increasing or decreasing the range. The 14-24 age range is aimed at striking a balance between including a key period of vulnerability to anxiety and depression while also capturing a growing period of autonomy for most young people. A wider age range would make it less likely that research findings would be applicable across the range (noting that even within the 14-24 age range there will be considerable variation).

9. Is it possible for a proposal to focus on a subpopulation of 14–24-year-olds (e.g. perinatal depression in adolescents, or adolescents with autism)?

Yes, this would be possible, provided that the emphasis of the proposal is still on the Active Ingredient and not on uniquely characterising the specific population. Discussing how an Active Ingredient is relevant for a specific subpopulation is in scope, so long as the



subpopulation includes at least 10 million 14–24-year-olds worldwide, and that this is evidenced in the proposal.

10. Is it best to focus in on one key age (e.g. secondary, further education or higher education) or all?

This decision would be up to the Supplier. The proposed Active Ingredient must reflect an approach that can directly target current 14-24-year-olds. However, focussing on a specific subpopulation would be possible, so long as the focus is relevant to at least 10 million 14-24-year-olds worldwide.

11. In terms of scope for the RFP – would we need to make direct links to each Active Ingredient listed / shown or are we able to make it specific to certain ingredient(s)?

The 2021 Request for Proposals seeks to commission up to 20 teams to undertake a review and interpretation of the evidence (“insight analysis”) into ONE Active Ingredient not included in the reviews of the 26 ingredients commissioned in 2020. So, the focus should be on ONE Active Ingredient only.

12. Is it preferable to focus specifically on, for example, prevention of depression, rather than prevention AND treatment of depression AND anxiety?

The decision is up to the Supplier – prevention, intervention, stopping relapse, or ongoing management are all in scope, in any combination. For example, you can select prevention ONLY or prevention AND intervention. So long as you justify your choice of ingredient, and that sufficient evidence exists to warrant a review, we will consider your proposal.

13. Would an Active Ingredient that focuses on a specific approach to delivery (such as delivery by peer or lay people) be within scope?

Yes, in theory this would be within scope. However, your proposed Active Ingredient would need to be specific and definable as an ingredient. In 2020, for example, we commissioned a project focusing on digital social connection, but digital therapy as a whole was and continues to be out of scope, exactly because it is too broad.

14. Does an Active Ingredient need to be a specific component of an intervention, or can it involve non-specific skills used across interventions?

Either option would be within scope for this commission. In 2020, for example, one ingredient commissioned was ‘improved problem solving’, defined by the team as a manualised intervention. In contrast another ingredient was ‘affective awareness’, a skill measured during the course of everyday life. It would be the responsibility of the Supplier to clearly define the scope of the proposed review in their application.

15. Does the proposal need to have an international reach / remit, or can it be national?

At the Mental Health Priority Area, our aim is to find the next generation of treatments and approaches for anxiety and depression in young people (aged 14-24) worldwide. As a starting point, we are interested in learning more about the efficacy of individual Active Ingredients, and we want to focus on those with the greatest likelihood of the most impact for



the most young people in the most contexts, globally. Therefore, while your proposal does not necessarily need to have an international reach or remit, you would need to justify your focus, to ensure it is well aligned with the overall ambition of the Mental Health Priority Area.

16. Can the research be carried out in languages other than English?

Although the deliverables for this project must be produced in English, the substantive work and literature reviewed can be in other languages. However, the Supplier must translate the final deliverables into English prior to submission and must have sufficient English to communicate with Wellcome and the wider network.

17. Would a construct such as self-compassion meet the criteria for working as an Active Ingredient?

It would, but self-compassion was an Active Ingredient that we commissioned in 2020 and so it would not be eligible for this 2021 commission. For more information on the Active Ingredients commissioned in 2020, please see the table on page 3 of the [Request for Proposals](#).

18. I focus my research on the main symptom of depression (anhedonia) and this is somewhat related to the ingredient "increasing engagement with positive activities" which was in the 2020 Active Ingredients. How can I find out if what I want to do has already been covered by this?

The 30 research teams we commissioned in 2020 are currently in the process of getting their reviews published and so we are unable to share specific manuscripts at this stage. For now, you can review [this LinkedIn article](#) by Professor Miranda Wolpert, which shares some of the selected findings from each team. You can also learn about some individual projects by reviewing the [videos](#), [blogs](#) and [podcasts](#) published by the Mental Elf. You may also want to view the [first](#) and [second webinars](#) we ran in collaboration with the Mental Elf, as they feature presentations from some of the researchers commissioned in 2020.

Unless you can make the case that you will be reviewing a different section of the literature covered by a previously commissioned Active Ingredient, your proposed project would probably be out of scope.

19. Last year 'arts engagement' was investigated as an 'Active Ingredient'. Would a further related application focusing on young people's engagement with music be accepted?

Please note that we are unable to answer individual queries regarding the scope of potential proposals (e.g., whether a proposed idea will be accepted as an Active Ingredient).

Expressions of Interest will be judged on the strength of argument for why the proposed Active Ingredient is important, including whether it is sufficiently distinct from those commissioned in 2020. Therefore, if you decide to submit a proposal on 'engagement with music' as an Active Ingredient, we suggest that you provide sufficient evidence that it differs from 'engagement with theatre and the arts'. You must also ensure that there is sufficient evidence to review in relation to young people (aged 14-24), their engagement with music



and depression and/or anxiety. To find out more about the project we commissioned on 'engagement with theatre and the arts', have a look at our [second webinar](#) run in collaboration with the Mental Elf.

Queries relating to involving young people with lived experience of anxiety and depression

20. The call asks researchers to involve young people with lived experience aged 14-24. Can you involve people that are older than 24 but have experience of anxiety and depression within that age range? In my location, for example, people do not openly talk about mental health issues. My experience has been that older people between 24-30 are more open.

Ideally, lived experience advisors or consultants should be in the 14-24-year age range, or at most a couple of years older, so that input is clearly coming from young people with recent (or ongoing) experience of anxiety and/or depression. However, we will consider applications on a case-by-case basis so please do let us know if there are strong reasons why this will not be possible (e.g., cultural attitudes in a given geography). Consulting parents and practitioners who work with young people is also in scope, although the young people themselves should be the primary focus where possible.

21. Please clarify the kind of methodology that is in scope. By interviewing and involving young people with lived experience would this not be considered primary research?

When we refer to involving young people with lived experience, we are not expecting young people to be involved as participants or subjects, as in primary research. Rather, we would expect that the young people would be involved as advisors, collaborators or co-researchers, and that their roles would be in contributing advice, knowledge and expertise to the design, governance and delivery of the project. This will likely mean that you do not need ethical approval to work with young people in this way and that you can incorporate their contributions as you would with any other advisor, collaborator or co-researcher. For further details on the kind of methodology that is in scope for this review, see page 6 and page 20 of the [Request for Proposals](#).

22. What do you mean by people with lived experience? Do they have to be diagnosed? If we are talking about preventive approach could we recruit young people from general population?

When we refer to 'young people with lived experience', we are referring to young people (aged 14-24) who identify as having experienced anxiety and/or depression, either in the past or currently. Young people do not need to have been diagnosed by professionals or have accessed formal services. We are interested in hearing from a range of individuals who have and have not received access to any form of support for their anxiety and/or depression. We also recognise that lived experience expertise could come from a range of individuals, including young people, parents and practitioners, so we expect teams to outline which forms of lived experience are most relevant for their projects.



23. I am interested in the number of young people with lived experience to be included – is there an "ideal" number we should include?

This is entirely up to the Supplier and will depend on how you plan on involving young people with lived experience. Some teams may prefer working in depth with a small group of young people or having young people as co-researchers, whereas others might prefer to work with as many young people as possible, to gather advice and input from a wider range of individuals. These approaches can also be combined to best suit your team and the objective of your project. For the projects we commissioned in 2020, teams involved anywhere between three and 45 young people with lived experience in their work, through a variety of methods. The important distinction is that young people should be involved as advisors, collaborators or co-researchers to inform the design, governance and delivery of the projects and not as research subjects or participants.

24. Have previous researchers included young people during the proposal submission stage? Was that possible to do?

Yes, some researchers commissioned in 2020 involved young people during the proposal stage, by sharing initial ideas with them and developing the proposal based on their input. Ideally, you should involve young people with lived experience at multiple stages throughout the course of the project, including at the design stage. Examples of how the teams commissioned in 2020 involved young people are provided in Appendix 1 (page 17–18) of the [Request for Proposals](#).

25. Are the young people with lived experience paid for their participation or input in the various projects?

Yes, we expect young people with lived experience to be compensated or paid for their time. Lived experience experts may either be named on the proposal or involved as consultants/advisers. In either case, the cost proposal that must be completed at the full proposal stage should include appropriate remuneration for lived experience experts.

Queries relating to contractual, administrative and financial issues

26. Please can you clarify the duration of the contract?

The project will take place between June 2021 and December 2021, with the proposed start and end dates for the contract being Monday 21 June 2021 and Friday 3 December 2021 respectively. For a more detailed timetable, please see page 9 of the [Request for Proposals](#).

27. What advice would you give on budgeting for the commission?

The maximum cost permissible for each project is £45,000 (exclusive of VAT). For Suppliers who are invited to submit a full proposal, we will require submission of a cost proposal in Excel format which should be annotated to include full details, justifying the proposed costs. When budgeting for this commission, you can include all costs deemed necessary to undertake this work, including any justifiable expense towards the production of your review and accompanying deliverables. This should, for example, include details of the hourly rate



and number of hours to be contributed by each member of the team, plus any proposed ad hoc consultancy fees or additional costs to produce some of the more creative deliverables like the video and infographic. Any costs related to this work are in scope, including institutional overheads.

28. I am aware that the maximum budget that can be awarded is £45,000, however can this be shared among applicants belonging to different Academic Institutions, even if such Institutions are outside the UK? Or only the representative for the UK based Institution will be able to receive the money, while members from the non-UK Institutions will only act as in-kind collaborators?

Where the proposal is made on behalf of a team, Wellcome will form a contractual relationship only with the Lead's organisation or institution, which can be based within the UK or internationally, provided the Supplier can accept work that is contracted from the UK. It will then be up to the Supplier to distribute the awarded budget between collaborators. We expect team members not based in the UK to be compensated appropriately.

B) Next steps

The next opportunity to submit queries is within the [Expression of Interest](#), the deadline for which is **12:00 GMT on 8 March 2021**.

Submitting an Expression of Interest is a compulsory requirement of this RFP exercise, as we will only be accepting full proposals from Suppliers that we have shortlisted on the basis of their Expression of Interest. The Wellcome team will notify suppliers of whether or not they have been invited to submit a full proposal by **22 March 2021**.

Approach to selection

Expressions of Interest will be judged on the strength of argument for why the proposed Active Ingredient is important, including whether it is sufficiently distinct from those commissioned in 2020. We will also consider plans for the inclusion of young people with lived experience in the review process. Gaining geographical and subject matter diversity will also be taken into account when choosing those to invite for full proposal.

We are looking to commission a wide range of high-quality proposals to reflect a diversity of Active Ingredients, methodological approaches, disciplines and geographies. We will be taking these factors into consideration when we make our decisions, choosing from all those who meet our quality standards as laid out in the RFP.

Further information

For further information on the 2021 Active Ingredients commission, see: <https://wellcome.org/what-we-do/our-work/mental-health-transforming-research-and-treatments#commissions-dce9>.

If you missed it, you may also want to watch a recording of our [webinar](#) on 9 February 2021.