

Clarification questions raised for the Reducing Perinatal Mental Health inequalities programme via the VCSE Brokerage Framework – December 2025

The following are responses to clarification questions raised by VCSE organisations either through the online engagement events held on 16th and 18th December or via a direct email to the proposals@bnssgvcsealliance.org email address.

Deadline for clarification questions is midday 19th December 2025. We will add responses to questions raised by VCSE organisations to this document on a weekly basis, up until the deadline.

1.If we already have partners that we work closely with in perinatal mental health, are you open to accepting partnership bids for already established networks?

As outlined in the Information & Guidance document proposals must be from VCSE organisations based and/or working in BNSSG and that have either been accepted onto the VCSE Brokerage Framework (with or without conditions) or have an application in process. This includes all named partners in a partnership proposal. We especially welcome proposals from small/micro VCSE organisations that have built strong, trusting relationships within their local communities.

If your organisation (or any of its partners) has not yet applied to join the VCSE Brokerage Framework we encourage you to do this as soon as possible. Applications must be made before the proposal deadline (23rd January at 5pm). The application forms can be found here: [Brokerage Framework - BNSSG Healthier Together](#)

2.What are the reporting requirements for this programme?

As outlined in the Information & Guidance document, the frequency and methods of reporting will be agreed with the VCSE organisations that receive awards.

3.Are we able to provide an annual forecast rather than monthly forecasts of our financial position?

The information on the template provided allows finance checks for the organisations whose proposals are recommended for award. The ICB recognises that organisations do things differently and may provide finance documents in varying ways. The provision of information for finance checks at the proposal stage is optional. If necessary, further information may be requested during the finance checking process to ensure that the

recommended grant award(s) can be made with confidence and minimal risk to public funds.

4. Is there specific work being done in tandem with this to make specialist NHS services more accessible?

Yes, one of the key aims of this programme is to ensure that alongside more women and birthing people from underserved communities accessing perinatal mental health services that the specialist perinatal mental health services become more accessible and culturally appropriate. There are several elements of this work within this programme:

- Black Maternity Matters training for staff in specialist perinatal mental health services and for any perinatal mental health staff across the BNSSG Integrated Care system. All VCSE organisations that are awarded a grant will be able to attend this training over the term of their grant
- Creation of additional collaborative network spaces where grant holders will engage with specialist perinatal mental health services work together to ensure views of women and birthing people from underserved communities are heard and can influence how specialist services are delivered
- One of the ways to track the progress of this programme quantitatively will be to closely monitor of ethnicity demographics the caseload of specialist Perinatal Mental Health services over the 3 year period. A key long-term outcome of the programme will be this data reflecting the ethnicity demographics of the population of BNSSG

5. My organisation is not a VCSE organisation, are we able to be a partner with a VCSE organisation for this programme?

As outlined in the Information & Guidance document and in Question 1 above, proposals must be from VCSE organisations based and/or working in BNSSG and that have either been accepted onto the VCSE Brokerage Framework (with or without conditions) or have an application in process. This includes all named partners in a partnership proposal.

6. The proposal form asks for confirmation of whether the proposal is for continuous or new activity. Please can you clarify what this means.

If your organisation is currently providing the activities you are outlining in your proposal, even if the proposal is requesting funding for additional staff, this is continuous activity. If your proposal is for activities that your organisation is not currently providing this is new activity.

7.You have outlined a number of priority groups for this programme. Does our proposal have to focus only one of these, or can it focus on many?

Your proposal does not have to focus on only one of the priority groups outlined in the documentation. In the proposal form please indicate all the priority groups which your proposal would support.

8.Question 3 of the proposal form asks for the number of people involved in the proposed activities. Is this the number of people who would receive support or the number of people involved in its delivery?

This question relates to the number of people who would receive support.

9.Please can you confirm how often a participant would be expected to receive support, has this been defined?

No, we have not indicated how long a participant would need to receive support from through the proposed activities and this would be dependent up individual need. Please indicate within your proposal what your model proposes to deliver.

10.The programme has two elements; groups and engagement work. Is there a difference in weighting between these two elements, i.e. is one higher than the other?

There is no difference in weighting between the two elements of the programme.

11.Please can you confirm if a proposal is able to cover all of the priority groups outlined whether one organisation is able to be awarded all of the funding.

The programme is welcoming proposals of a maximum of £30,000 per priority group.

12.Please can you confirm whether the word count can be increased if our proposal includes partners.

No, the maximum word count is for all proposals, whether they are an individual or partnership proposal.

13. Where do we put information about whether our proposal is a partnership bid on the proposal form?

This information can be integrated into your responses to any of the following questions 2.1 (short description of the project), 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9.

14. Please could you kindly provide clarification regarding the overall budget allocated for this programme? The previous perinatal procurement envelope was £222,000; however, the Information and Guidance document indicates a reduction to £180,000 – is this correct? If so, please could you indicate where the balance will be spent?

The remainder of the programme budget is funding the second element of the programme which Black Maternity Matters training for Perinatal & Infant Mental Health staff across the BNSSG Integrated Care System. This training is available to any organisation working in Perinatal & Infant Mental Health regardless of whether they have an NHS Standard Contract or grant agreement.

15. Please could you outline the risk analysis undertaken in relation to the mobilisation period, particularly for non-perinatal mental health service providers?

Organisations making proposals are invited to describe plans for implementation and delivery.

16. What is the anticipated duration of training for organisations without prior experience in perinatal mental health? Please provide further details of the training programme and clarify how it upskills non-perinatal mental health organisations to deliver work safely and effectively with the requisite skills and expertise needed. Will this be available to all successful providers?

This training will be available to all successful providers. This training will be co-produced with a range of women and birthing people and system partners, further details of this training are being finalised in the coming months.

17. What is the expected length of the mobilisation period and when will this happen? What is the anticipated date for delivery to begin?

Organisations making proposals are invited to describe plans for implementation and delivery and provide this information within their responses. The proposal form requests that organisations specify their proposed start date, to commence before 1st June 2026.

18. Please could you provide details regarding the non-VCSE membership of the proposed Community of Practice?

The details of the Community of Practise are being finalised in the coming months. It will follow a similar format to the Community of Practise meetings that Health Innovation West of England host for participants of Black Maternity matters.

19. Please could you clarify the process for partnership bids, specifically where multiple organisations intend to submit joint applications?

As outlined in the Information & Guidance document and in Question 1 above proposals must be from VCSE organisations based and/or working in BNSSG and that have either been accepted onto the VCSE Brokerage Framework (with or without conditions) or have an application in process. This includes all named partners in a partnership proposal.

If your organisation (or any of its partners) has not yet applied to join the VCSE Brokerage Framework we encourage you to do this as soon as possible. Applications must be made before the proposal deadline (23rd January at 5pm). The application forms can be found here: [Brokerage Framework - BNSSG Healthier Together](#)

We welcome partnership proposals from established partnerships and also encourage new ones. To support this, during the pilot phase of the Brokerage Framework, organisations have been given the opportunity to complete a partnership expression of interest form, so we can share their contact details with other organisations who are considering being part of a partnership bid. You can however develop your own partnerships too, independently of this.

20. Please could you outline the “in tandem” initiatives proposed to enhance accessibility and inclusivity of specialist services, and explain how these will operate alongside successful VCSE organisations?

One of the key aims of this programme is to ensure that alongside more women and birthing people from underserved communities accessing perinatal mental health

services that the specialist perinatal mental health services become more accessible and culturally appropriate. There are several elements of this work within this programme:

- Black Maternity Matters training for staff in specialist perinatal mental health services and for any perinatal mental health staff across the BNSSG Integrated Care system. All VCSE organisations that are awarded a grant will be able to attend this training over the term of their grant
- Creation of additional collaborative network spaces where grant holders will engage with specialist perinatal mental health services work together to ensure views of women and birthing people from underserved communities are heard and can influence how specialist services are delivered

One of the ways to track the progress of this programme quantitatively will be to closely monitor of ethnicity demographics the caseload of specialist Perinatal Mental Health services over the 3 year period. A key long-term outcome of the programme will be this data reflecting the ethnicity demographics of the population of BNSSG

The AWP Specialist Perinatal Community Service are also working closely with BNSSG Maternity services on a wider project reviewing the ethnicity data of women and birthing throughout their journey from maternity into Specialist Mental Health services. This programme will work closely in tandem with the Reducing Perinatal Mental Health Inequalities programme.

21. Please could you clarify whether the delivery required is signposting, information and guidance, or service delivery ie groups and one to one work, as both are mentioned in the Information and Guidance document.

The BNSSG VCSE Brokerage framework welcomes co-designed proposals from VCSE providers describing how they would use this grant funding to contribute to the aims of the programme. We are welcoming VCSE expertise based on their trusted relationships with and experience of working with communities. As this will be an NHS Grant Agreement, it will not impose an obligation to provide specific services and will not specify exactly how the work will be delivered but will require the grantee to use the money towards the intended aims of the programme.

22. Please could you clarify which demographic groups are encompassed within the category of Asian women and birthing people?

As listed in the 2021 Census, ethnic groups defined as Asian or Asian British are:

Pakistani
Bangladeshi
Chinese
Any other Asian background

23. Please could you clarify which demographic groups are encompassed within the category of women and birthing people of mixed heritage?

This definition applies in this context to women and birthing people who recognise themselves as having two or more different racial or ethnic backgrounds.

24. Could you please confirm whether the priority group defined as having experience of the care system encompasses both care-experienced individuals and mothers who have experienced child removal, or whether it refers exclusively to care-experienced individuals?

Within this programme 'women and birthing people with experience of the care system' applies exclusively to individuals who have experience of the care system and are in the perinatal period.

25. With respect to financial forecasting, could you confirm whether annual forecasts, as opposed to monthly forecasts, would be acceptable? The spreadsheet requests forecasts for years 24/25 and 25/26. Would annual accounts as filed with the Charity Commission be acceptable for 24/25? Please could you clarify how you would like to receive financial forecasts for the first year of delivery namely 26/27.

As outlined in Question 3 above, the information on the template provided allows finance checks for the organisations whose proposals are recommended for award. The ICB recognises that organisations do things differently and may provide finance documents in varying ways. **The provision of information for finance checks at the proposal stage is optional.** If necessary, further information may be requested during the finance checking process to ensure that the recommended grant award(s) can be made with confidence and minimal risk to public funds.

26. The document describes 'Offering one to one support to women and birthing people when engaging with perinatal mental health services'. Can you clarify

whether this is one to one support that would be delivered by the VCSE organisation awarded a grant?

In this context, one to one support is referring to helping women and birthing people whilst accessing statutory mental health services. It's recognised that statutory mental health services are not easily accessible for women and birthing people from the priority community groups identified by the programme and often that these services are not culturally appropriate, and it is recognised that women and birthing people can benefit from having additional support from a trusted VCSE partner whilst they are having assessment and/or treatment with statutory perinatal mental health services.

27.We run similar activity and already have existing groups which are running. Please can you clarify what type of group support you are looking for from this programme.

As outlined in Question 21 above, as this will be an NHS Grant Agreement, it will not impose an obligation to provide specific services and will not specify exactly how the work will be delivered but will require the grantee to use the money towards the intended aims of the programme. VCSE organisations are asked to outline their model of delivery and what they can offer within their proposal, to enable the programme to best meet its objectives.

28.Are you looking to award a maximum of £30,000 for activities for each of the identified community groups.

Yes.

29.We don't currently work with a particular target group but do work within the field of mental health. Are we eligible to apply for this programme?

We welcome proposals from any organisation(s) on the Brokerage Framework. Your proposal should outline how you intend to engage and establish strong links with the identified targeted communities.