

INVITATION TO TENDER

OUTCOMES AND PROCESS EVALUATION OF CASS+ COMMUNITY ADVICE SERVICE

OVERVIEW

The Centre for Justice Innovation and CASS+ are inviting tenders for an organisation or partnership to conduct an evaluation of the CASS+ Community Advice Service. The service provides practical help, emotional support and service signposting to members of the public attending magistrates' court in four locations in Devon and Cornwall¹.

We are seeking an evaluation which covers both process and outcomes, with a particular focus on changes to client well-being. The budget for this work is £50,000 (including VAT) and we are anticipating that the project will run from April 2020 to June 2021. The evaluator will need to provide two outputs: an interim process evaluation report to be published by October 2020 and a final outcomes report to be published by June 2021.

This evaluation is being funded by the Lloyds Bank Foundation as part of a larger grant which seeks to promote the uptake of the community advice model across the UK².

We are asking for potential providers to submit short expressions of interest by **10am on Monday 24 February**.

SCOPE OF THE EVALUATION

CASS+ has been operating since 2005 and has been the subject of a number of previous evaluation activities, including the development of a theory of change and a report on stakeholder perspectives. We are now seeking a full, mixed-methods evaluation which can inform commissioning decisions and guide the development of future community advice services.

We anticipate that this evaluation will answer the following research questions:

Process evaluation

1. To identify the key elements of the CASS+ operations which support offenders in terms of:
 - a. Targeting – how and to what extent CASS+ identifies and works with appropriate offenders;
 - b. Effectiveness – how and to what extent CASS+ resolves individual offenders' presenting problems and supports behaviour change both in the short term and the longer term;
 - c. Affordability – the extent to which CASS+ delivers its operation efficiently and at scale;
 - d. Proportionality – how CASS+ engages with clients and the extent to which this engagement is proportionate to service user needs.

¹ For a summary of the existing evidence base on CASSPLUS, see Annex 1.

² For an outline of the broader Lloyds Bank Foundation-funded project, see Annex 2.

2. To identify those elements of the CASS+ model which are essential in order to replicate the service in other locations and those which are desirable.

Outcomes evaluation

1. To demonstrate quantitatively the short term and the longer term outcomes for service users in terms of i) reoffending, b) resolving presenting problems, and c) well-being.
2. To build a qualitative and quantitative profile of the service based on an assessment of service users' perceptions.
3. To build a qualitative and quantitative profile of the service based on the assessment of local partners including statutory agencies in the criminal justice and health and social care sectors, and on third sector providers.

METHODOLOGY

We recognise that potential evaluators will have their own preferred methodologies which they will bring to bear to answer the research questions and accordingly are keen not to over specify the approach to be used. However, we have identified a number of elements which we believe could usefully contribute to the goals of this project, and which providers may want to consider.

Process evaluation

- A description of the operating model of the service and how it works to create change for clients and other stakeholders, presented as a theory of change or other logic model;
- An outline of key elements of the services which should be included in any replication – this could be presented as critical success factors or similar;
- A descriptive analysis of the demographic, needs and offending profile of the client group, based on the service's existing data and potentially how this has changed over time and / or how they compare to other groups in the criminal justice system.

Outcomes evaluation

- A quantitative analysis of the impact that CASS+ makes on the presenting needs and overall well-being of clients;
- An assessment of how the impact of the service is sustained over time which draws on longitudinal data and / or client experiences;
- Client perceptions of the service;
- Stakeholder perceptions on the impact of CASS+ on local partners including statutory agencies in the criminal justice and health and social care sectors, and on third sector providers;
- An exploration of the relationship between client characteristics;
- An analysis of the service's impact on reoffending – though this can be obtained via the free service provided the Ministry of Justice's Justice Data Lab³ or undertaken in-house.

³ See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/justice-data-lab>

HOW TO SUBMIT AN EXPRESSION OF INTEREST

Expressions of interest should be submitted in the form of a word document of no more than four pages which covers the following points:

- Your understanding of the brief
- Your proposed methodology including your approach to research ethics
- Key deliverables of your project
- An outline budget
- Your relevant experience in similar projects

Tenders should be emailed to Stephen Whitehead, Head of Data and Evidence at the Centre for Justice Innovation at swhitehead@justiceinnovation.org.

We are happy to speak with potential providers to explore the project in more detail. Please contact Stephen at the address above if you'd like to set up a meeting or phonecall.

ANNEX 1: THE EXISTING EVIDENCE BASE ON CASS+

CASS+ (Community Advice and Support Services+) is a service which provides free advice and support from court settings for people involved in the criminal justice system (CJS). They opened their doors in 2005, originally as a programme of PACT, and became independent in 2015. Today they provide services within four magistrates' courts in Truro, Bodmin, Plymouth and Newton Abbot.

The service provides advice and support from court settings without judgement, but with respect and fairness to vulnerable people who are at risk or have been processed through the criminal justice system. Services users are provided with practical help with managing issues like fine repayments and benefits, referral to long-term support for chronic issues like addiction, and support with the often difficult experiences that come with involvement in the criminal justice system.

The service has been the subject of a number of evaluation activities:

1. A 2013 process evaluation undertaken by the Centre for Justice Innovation and the New Economics Foundation⁴, which found that:
 - CASS (as the service was then known) was seen as a valuable local resource for the courts and those professionals working within the court;
 - The service had played an important role in connecting community services to the court and those who come to court and vice versa;
 - The service was addressing the significant unmet need of people who are coming to court
 - The service had adopted practice which is strongly suggestive that it was making an impact on its overarching aims to improve compliance with and the effectiveness of court orders, and thereby reduce reoffending and reduce the costs incurred by those returning to court.
 - The service was helping clients feel like they are being treated more fairly.
2. A 2014 review of the service's data by Plymouth University. The review developed a picture of a "modal" CASS client:⁵
 - Male, White British, Under 50 years
 - Not employed / receiving 2+ benefits
 - Rented accommodation/ living in middle to most deprived neighbourhood
 - Single
 - Using drugs habitually/Cannabis
 - No general health issues
 - Mental health issues (depression, anxiety)
 - Has previous conviction
 - Alcohol or drug related offence (possession)
 - Offence 'trigger' – drunk/ excess alcohol

⁴ Stephen Whitehead (2013) *Better Courts Case Study: Plymouth Community Advice and Support Service* (London: Centre for Justice Innovation / New Economics Foundation). Available online at https://justiceinnovation.org/sites/default/files/media/documents/2019-03/better-courts-case-study-plymouth-community-advice-and-support-service_0.pdf

⁵ Tim Auburn, Jill Annison, Daniel Gilling and Gisella Hanley Santos, Plymouth University. (2017) *Plymouth Community Justice Court: A Summary of Problem Solving Intervention Data - Final Report*. Available on request

- Not represented by a solicitor
3. A 2017 stakeholder evaluation, undertaken by Westpoint Social Research, which found that⁶.
- CASS+ Clients often had complex multiple needs such as debt; homelessness; mental health challenges, drug/alcohol abuse and repeat offending.
 - CASS+ offered diverse support and was able triage for immediate need and facilitate sustained support to address longer term challenges.

⁶ Westpoint Crime and Social Research (2017) *Stakeholder Evaluation of CASSPLUS Support Service Delivery*. Available on request

ANNEX 2: BACKGROUND TO THIS PROJECT

The criminal justice system concentrates its resources on managing or imprisoning the most persistent, prolific or dangerous offenders. But it is missing opportunities to intervene earlier. Nine out of ten prisoners have been convicted at least once before being imprisoned and half have been convicted at least fifteen times⁷. By creating new interventions that can trigger as early as the first time that a person is convicted, or even the first time they are arrested, we can address the issues driving their offending before they escalate.

In order to successfully address the flow of low-level offenders an early intervention must satisfy four criteria:

1. Targeting – it must be able to identify those offenders with outstanding support needs;
2. Effectiveness – it needs to be successful in resolving problems and changing behaviour;
3. Affordability – it needs a model which can be feasibly delivered to a large number of people;
4. Proportionality – it must avoid intensifying or prolonging people’s involvement with the justice system beyond what is warranted by their offending.

We believe that one model that meets these criteria is CASS+’s community advice service which supports people attending magistrates’ courts in Devon and Cornwall. The service uses volunteers to offer practical advice, personalised support, and help to access services. It addresses a range of issues, including debt, homelessness and mental illness. A 2017 evaluation found that the service “has a considerable and enduring impact on the clients it supports”⁸.

The goal of this project will be to increase the provision of effective early intervention services like community advice in the justice system. We believe that this will create long term reductions in crime and interrupt the pathway which leads to intensifying offending and justice system involvement.

In order to pursue that goal, we will work toward three main outcomes via a range of activities:

1. The evidence base behind the community advice model of early intervention is more robust;
 - Commissioning an independent outcomes evaluation of community advice
 - Supporting the development of three demonstration projects implementing locally tailored variations of the community advice model
2. The case for investing in early intervention and the strengths of the community advice model are more widely understood by local and national policy makers;
 - Publishing a briefing on the case for early intervention
 - Conducting a programme of parliamentary engagement including public events, private briefing sessions and contributing to APPGs and Inquiries
 - Engaging with central government via roundtables for key officials, direct communication with ministers and other activities as appropriate
 - Producing tailored briefings for key local and regional stakeholders highlighting the relevance of the community advice model of early intervention to their local context

⁷ Data taken from Ministry of Justice Criminal Justice Statistics Quarterly March 2019 (Offending History Pivot table). Figure excludes summary motoring offences.

⁸ Westpoint Crime and Social Research (2017) *Stakeholder Evaluation of CASSPLUS Support Service Delivery*. Available on request.

- Conducting a range of local and regional engagement activities including visits to demonstration projects.
- 3. The capacity of local areas to replicate the community advice model of early intervention is increased;
 - Developing a toolkit for implementing community advice.
 - Convening a community of practice including which meets regularly and engages in peer-to-peer learning.