

# Safer Renting

## Research brief



Exploring new ways to engage communities experiencing poor housing conditions, and how they impacts health and housing experiences and outcomes

**Deadline for submission: 5pm on Wednesday, 24<sup>th</sup> April 2024**

**Budget £30K (including VAT)**

**Ref: IUH**

### 1. Introduction

[Safer Renting](#), a service delivered by the social action charity [Cambridge House](#), provides specialist advice, support and advocacy to help protect tenants who are victimised by criminal landlords. It is the only service of its kind and, with the need for private tenant support services growing all the time, we are committed to strengthening rights and access to justice for people exploited by rogue landlords, making private renting safe for all. Safer Renting is accredited and independently audited by Advice Quality Standard.

Grant funding from [Impact Urban Health](#) has enabled Safer Renting to develop a research project exploring how communities experiencing housing problems in the private rented sector (PRS) can be supported and empowered to improve health and housing outcomes. There are two stages to the work; a set of rapid evidence reviews (completed) and the research project that Safer Renting are currently seeking proposals for, which is a primarily qualitative project exploring ways to reach and work with communities at risk of housing problems in the PRS.

Key to our approach at Safer Renting is building the strength and resilience of communities by keeping residents in their homes and off the streets. This research will be an important part of taking this principle further. It will explore how we can work with and alongside the unique resources within communities, and help us to deliver a more user-led and accessible service model.

We are seeking a suitably experienced consultant or organisation to work closely with the project lead for the “Private Tenants Rights Advocacy – diversifying approaches to deliver best for the most marginalised communities” project and the communities they reach to deliver the research. This brief provides the information needed to submit a proposal to undertake this work. If you have questions about the project, please contact [Roz Spencer](#).

We value diversity and warmly welcome applications from disabled people, the LGBTQIA+ communities, people from Black, Asian, and ethnically minoritised communities, and candidates who share lived experience with our service users.

## 2. Context – the work so far

The first stage of the research consisted of three rapid evidence reviews. The resulting report is provided with this research brief. The three review subjects and questions are outlined below:

|  |
|--|
| <b>Review 1: inequity and disadvantage within the UK housing system</b>  |
| What kinds of inequalities associated with the UK housing system are known to particularly affect PRS tenants' health, wellbeing and social outcomes? Which dimensions of equity and which marginalised groups are known to be affected? |
| <b>Review 2: improving engagement, support and involvement for marginalised communities</b>  |
| What approaches are effective amongst health and community service providers for improving outreach, support and involvement for marginalised communities? We now summarise the learning points from this review.                        |
| <b>Review 3: embedding support for marginalised communities in the context of the PRS</b>  |
| What approaches are effective, or perceived to be effective, for embedding support for marginalised communities in the context of tenant support in the UK PRS?  |

The second stage of the research will run alongside, and be closely connected to, work that Safer Renting has already initiated in the London Borough of Lambeth which includes:

- Mapping ways to reach those experiencing housing problems in the PRS (for example, faith and community groups)
- Providing second tier support to skill organisations and individuals up to support people in their community experiencing housing problems
- Providing targeted housing advice casework resulting from identified need.

The project is iterative and the focus and methods of delivery may shift over its course.

## 3. Research requirement

The overall aim of the research is to capture and enhance the learning from the work being undertaken with communities in Lambeth, and provide an independent account of this through reports, presentations and other outputs as appropriate.

### Research objectives are to:

- i) Support the design of monitoring tools to capture basic information about the project's activities and the characteristics of those engaged with the project at different levels.
- ii) Work with project staff and communities to capture what success might look like and what outcomes (intended and unintended) are being achieved by the project

- iii) Undertake qualitative research to capture the experiences and learning of those involved in the project, including people in the community, staff working on the project, and professional stakeholders.
- iv) Provide outputs which enable Safer Renting to disseminate learning from the project - outputs will include research reports and/or summaries but may also include a range of other outputs depending on the preferences of participants.
- v) Deliver an independent account of the project's activities and outcomes to ensure that learning is robust and credible.

The research design should be outlined in proposed methodologies but is likely to draw on one or more of the following; action research, participatory research, peer research approaches, and evaluation methods. It is likely that the focus will be on qualitative research alongside inputting on the data collection. The type of methods we anticipate include; observations; semi structured interviews; focus/discussion groups; case studies; and conversation analysis. We recognise that there is a limited budget for the project and that the methods will be designed and prioritised accordingly.

The research questions should be flexible according to the themes emerging through the work being done, but current questions include:

- Are the goals of the service/Safer Renting in line with the goals of communities or is there sometimes tension or disconnect and what can we learn from this?
- What challenges, needs and vulnerabilities are people experiencing in terms of their housing and how is this impacting their mental health?
- What are the barriers to taking action on housing issues?
- How has the project adapted over time using a learning cycle?

The project should focus on insights not outcomes – e.g. the research is unlikely to provide robust evidence of quantifiable improvements in mental health, but will gather insights through self-reported/self-perceived feelings participants have about their mental health.

We would like proposers to suggest a schedule of outputs – but would anticipate a final report of a publishable standard at the end of the research alongside a presentation at an end of project event.

#### **4. Support for the researcher/s**

The project sponsor will be Roz Spencer, Head of Service for Safer Renting. The researcher will work closely with the main project officer for the project Joey Carr, who will be a source of information about the progress and activities of the project and assist with access to participants and setting up fieldwork.

There are various academics who have been engaged in the development of phase one of the research (the evidence review) who are willing to provide input as the research design progresses; Dr Julie Rugg, University of York; Jill Stewart, Greenwich University; and

Professor Matt Egan, The London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine. The project will not have to go through ethical approval and the academic partners will not have any final sign off on research tools and outputs – they are a resource to draw on where this is helpful and appropriate.

## 5. Timetable and budget

An outline timetable for the research is provided in the table below but there is a degree of flexibility as our priority is securing the right research partner.

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <b>Closing date</b>                            | <b>24<sup>th</sup> April 2024 by 5pm</b>             |
| Interviews                                     | 1 <sup>st</sup> to 3 <sup>rd</sup> May 2024          |
| Appointment of researcher                      | 10 <sup>th</sup> May 2024 (approx.)                  |
| Initiation/set up meeting                      | By the end of May                                    |
| <b>Research fieldwork and reporting period</b> | <b>June 2024 to November 2025</b>                    |
| Interim reports                                | To be agreed but approximately two during the period |
| <b>Presentation of final report</b>            | <b>December 2025</b>                                 |

**A budget of £30K is available for the research – this should include VAT where applicable.**

## 6. Guidelines for proposals

The proposal should be **no longer than eight sides of A4** and include, but not limited to, the following sections:

- i) Methods and approach
- ii) Team – roles and relevant experience (if appropriate please provide relevant links or attachments to show previous research outputs.
- iii) Risks and risk mitigation
- iv) Ethical approach
- v) Budget and timetable
- vi) Contact details for two professional referees

**Proposals, referenced IUH should be no more than eight sides of A4 and should be submitted to [recruitment@ch1889.org](mailto:recruitment@ch1889.org) by 5pm on 24<sup>th</sup> April 2024.**

## 7. Special conditions

This appointment is exempt from the provision of Section 4(2) of the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (Exceptions) (Amendment) Orders 1975 and 2001 and therefore all convictions, cautions and bind-overs, including those regarded as ‘spent’, must be declared.

If you are appointed, we will require you, and any colleagues working with you to deliver the brief, to obtain an Enhanced Certificate of Disclosure from the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS).