



Changing the narrative on single parents: Invitation to Tender

1. The opportunity

Gingerbread is seeking to commission an individual or organisation experienced in conducting narrative change, to work with us to:

- I. Identify the dominant narratives around single parents
- II. Develop new narratives
- III. Provide support to embed the new narratives

2. About Gingerbread

Life for the 2 million single parents in the UK has never been harder.

Despite most being in work, single parents are twice as likely to be in poverty than a parent in a couple. They face prejudice and judgement. And the loneliness and isolation they experience compounds things, putting their mental health and wellbeing at serious risk.

That's why we're here to fight for single parents and their children.

We campaign against the systemic inequalities and injustices – in the workplace, in the benefits system and in society – that single parents face every single day. We challenge the stigma and negative perceptions around being a single parent. We provide expert advice and information to support all single parents so that they have the tools to support their children. We provide a support network so that, with Gingerbread, no single parent is ever alone.

And we work closely with organisations who share our values and our objectives.





3. Background to the work

There are 2 million single parents and 1 in 4 of all families with dependent children are headed by a single parent. Despite this, negative attitudes, stigma and stereotypes about single parents persist. A recent review carried out by Gingerbread of research on single parents and stigma in the UK¹ found evidence that 74% of single parents say they have experienced stigma. The research studies identified a set of characteristics associated with single parent stigma - female, young, unmarried, irresponsible, welfare dependent. Of these, the stigma around welfare dependency appears to be the most salient, with single parents reporting feeling judged for being lazy, a “chav” or a “scrounger”. Data from the British Social Attitudes Survey suggests that single parents are seen by the general public as one of the least deserving categories of benefit recipients after unemployed people.

Research studies in the review identified how negative attitudes and stigma created a barrier to seeking support from friends, family and services and contributed to discrimination against single parents. The research found evidence of single parents distancing themselves from other single parents as a strategy for avoiding stigma; leading to a lack of solidarity or unity and further reproducing stigma and stereotypes.

These deep-seated negative attitudes and assumptions about single parents do not only affect single parents at an individual level, they also affect Government policy and wider systems. Single parents are ignored, discriminated against and penalised in areas such as benefits, housing and employment.

At Gingerbread we believe that it is time to “change the system by challenging discrimination and negative attitudes to single parents”². Our organisational theory of change includes a longer-term outcome to improve attitudes and behaviours towards single-parent families from society. We therefore plan to commission an organisation or individual to conduct a programme of work to identify the current dominant narratives and understand stigmas and prejudices among the public and policy makers; develop and test reframed narratives to underpin our communications and campaigns; and reflect on our learnings and establish how we can best use these new insights to make society become more accepting and inclusive of single parents.

¹ Unpublished internal review, available on request

² Gingerbread organisational strategy 2022-30



4. Scope and key deliverables

We would like to commission an individual or organisation to carry out the following work:

- **Phase 1: Identifying the dominant narratives** – conduct research to identify and articulate the deep-seated narratives that exist in the UK about single parents.
- **Phase 2: Developing and testing new narratives** – using a variety of methods, identify new narratives and test these on a range of audiences.
- **Phase 3: Embedding the new narratives** – provide Gingerbread with support and guidance to embed the new narratives through our communications and campaigns work. This may include practical guidance, training, tools, toolkits, messaging and strategies.

We invite bidders to propose appropriate approaches and methods for each phase but would expect to see:

- A range of methods including desk-based research, media analysis, workshops, focus groups, surveys or polling.
- Engagement with a range of stakeholders including Gingerbread staff, key organisations (including single parent, anti-poverty and parenting organisations), single parents and the general public.
- Approaches that take into account how experiences and attitudes vary by gender, ethnicity, age and class.

Key outputs and deliverables

- Project plan, including key dates and timeframes for completion of individual phases and proposals of what will be reported back and when throughout the process
- Written report and presentation of the findings of phase 1
- Written report and presentation of the findings of phase 2
- Guides, tools or training for phase 3 as proposed and agreed.

Progress reporting

We will require a named key contact to be responsible for communicating and reporting to Gingerbread. Frequency of meetings will be agreed at project inception, but we suggest that these are at least fortnightly in the early stages of the project with potential to move





monthly. We will require a short written monthly update summarising progress and next steps.

Involving key stakeholders

There are a range of individuals and organisations keen to be part of this work including Gingerbread staff from different teams, single parents, academics and representatives from organisations such as One Parent Families Scotland, Single Parent Rights, Mumsnet and Pregnant then Screwed.

We will be guided by the successful bidder as to the best way of involving these stakeholders; whether to form a working/advisory group to meet regularly throughout the project, or to involve individuals or groups in the research activities as appropriate.

5. Timeline

We would expect the work to start in November 2024 and be completed by May 2026.

6. Budget

We have total budget of around £120-150k including VAT to cover all three phases of this work. We welcome proposals that outline a range of costed options, for example a basic option, with optional costed “add-ons”. This could be particularly appropriate for phase 3 where we envisage the scope for the support provided could span a wide range of options.

7. To apply

Please submit a proposal of maximum 8 pages including:

- 1) Information about you/the organisation
- 2) Relevant experience and why you are well placed to conduct this work
- 3) An outline of the proposed approach, methods and timescales for the project
- 4) A costed budget including number of days for each phase
- 5) The proposed team for this work (please also provide CVs for the proposed team as a separate document)





- 6) How you will conduct the work ethically
- 7) Any risks and how you would mitigate them

Please send any clarification questions to naomi.harflett@gingerbread.org.uk by Friday 18th October 2024.

Email the proposal and CVs to sarah.lambert@gingerbread.org.uk by midnight on Monday 28th October 2024.

Submitted proposals will be scored on the basis of:

- a) Relevant experience
- b) Proposed approach and methods
- c) Value for money

Shortlisted applicants will be invited to an online interview.

8. Timetable for application

Deadline for submitting clarification questions	Friday 18 th October
Deadline for submission	Midnight Monday 28 th October
Interviews for shortlisted applicants	Tuesday 5 th November
Work commences	Monday 25 th November

