

Programme Advisory Group on Alcohol

CALL FOR PROPOSALS

RESEARCH ON YOUNG PEOPLE WHO DO NOT DRINK OR DRINK LITTLE

As part of our programme on drinking cultures among young people, we wish to fund one study focusing on why and how some young people do not drink at all or do not drink to intoxication, and how this choice impacts on their lives.

Background

The JRF Programme Advisory Group on Alcohol (formerly the Alcohol Research Committee) has been set up to fund research and development in the alcohol field. The PAGA's overall aim is to:

Collect and use evidence to contribute to halting or reversing negative drinking cultures and patterns among young people in the UK in order to reduce problems or harm.

Hitherto, the research funded under this programme has focused on young people who drink – and the influences on their drinking – with the ultimate aim of considering what interventions might impact on young people's drinking cultures. To this end, we have funded two research projects on family influences, three on peer influences (including one with a strong focus on ethnicity); one project on media influences (including depictions of celebrities); and a survey examining the impact of multiple influences. However, we are aware that much may also be learned from those who do not drink – or those who drink in a limited way – especially where they have grown up within a drinking culture.

As with all the work funded by the Foundation, we wish to emphasise that there is a practical purpose to this work: ultimately, we want this research to help us to identify what actions or interventions are most likely to have an impact on drinking cultures and patterns in the UK.

Reflecting the Foundation's central concerns, the PAGA programme includes a strong focus on socio-economic status, gender and ethnicity. We therefore expect proposals to address these issues, and where relevant, for the research to be designed to explore the impact of these factors.

Young people who don't drink

There is evidence from school surveys and surveys of the adult population that an increasing proportion of young people do not drink (Smith and Foxcroft, 2009). Part of the explanation for this increase may be the increasing proportion of minority ethnic and/or religious groups in the general population who are associated with low levels of drinking and abstinence. Be that as it may, there are large numbers of young people from all types of background who choose not to drink. The latest *Drug Use, Smoking and Drinking among Young People* survey (NCSA/NFER, 2008) showed that 19 per cent of 15 year olds had never had a drink and seven per cent had last had a drink more than six months ago. Regular drinkers were in the minority, with 20 per cent reporting that they had had a drink in the past week. However, by age 16 to 24, 60 per cent of young people report having drunk in the last week (GHS, 2006, referenced in Smith and Foxcroft, 2009). Drinking in this age group is more likely to be with groups of friends and in pubs, bars, clubs and public places than drinking in older age groups (*Drinking: adults' behaviour and knowledge in 2008*).

Aims of the study

We want to explore how and why some young people aged between 18 and 24 do not drink regularly or to excess, especially where their parents and peers are doing so, and how this impacts on their lives. We are interested in the following questions, among others:

- What are the key factors that appear to lie behind these young

people's decisions not to drink or to drink little?

- How was alcohol handled in their families?
- Did they ever drink regularly/to excess in the past?
- Have particular experiences or life events led them in this direction?
- What is the role of health concerns?
- How do their attitudes to alcohol compare with their attitudes to other issues, including illegal drugs? Do they take illegal drugs?
- Do they feel any pressure from friends/family/workmates to drink? How do they resist such pressure and what is the impact on their relationships? Do they deploy particular strategies in refusing persistent drink offers?
- Do they socialise with drinkers and if so, what are their experiences like? Do they go to parties, bars, clubs?
- If socialising with drinkers, to what extent do they take on the role of carer and/or the driver to take people home?
- Do their boyfriends/girlfriends/partners drink? What impact has their low level of drinking had on their sexual relationships?
- How has not drinking/drinking little impacted on their friendships?
- What are others' attitudes to them? Are they affected by stereotypes concerning non-drinkers being boring/having no fun or not being 'real men' etc.?
- How easy do they think it is for young people to choose not to drink in our current society? If difficult, how might it be made more easy/comfortable? Are there wider non-drinking identities that these young people recognise and to which they aspire?

Methods

We want to fund an in-depth qualitative exploration of the reasons that lie behind young people's decision not to drink at all or not to drink to intoxication. Given the personal nature of some of the potential reasons, we are assuming that this will mean individual interviews, although we are open to persuasion with regard to other methods.

One methodological challenge will be the need to access young people who do not drink a lot but who are embedded within drinking cultures. Applicants will need to propose a methodology for reaching such

individuals. We recognise that Higher and Further Education will provide a ready point of access for such a sample but we emphasise that we wish to see a sample that includes people from across the socio-economic spectrum.

On the question of the definition of not drinking or not drinking to intoxication, we are primarily concerned with understanding how some young people resist influences to drink harmfully. We are therefore not only interested in those who are 'abstinent' but also those who do not drink to intoxication. We recognise that 'intoxication' could be variously defined and look to applicants to explain how this would be handled.

We think that a review of the relevant literature will form an important part of this work. While it will not form a central focus of the primary research, we would like this review to cover the likely role of ethnicity/religion in impacting on the increasing proportion of abstinent young people. We also expect this review to cover relevant surveys and qualitative studies.

Policy and practice implications

As stated above, the ultimate aim of this programme is to identify ways of impacting on negative drinking cultures among young people. We therefore want this research to provide insights into how young people can resist the many pressures pushing them towards drinking excessively. At an individual level, this could be in the form of tips about how to resist pressures to drink in social situations, with minimum embarrassment, for example. However, we are also interested in how, at a social level, it might be possible to encourage or support young people in creating non-drinking social identities, which reject the excessive drinking of their friends and parents.

Resources and number of projects

A maximum of **£70,000** is available under this call for proposals and we expect to fund **a single project** with this sum.

Timescale

We want this project to start early next year (2010) and be conducted over a period no longer than 18 months.

HOW TO APPLY

It is essential that you read the [How to apply for funding](#) section of our website before submitting your proposal.

Criteria used in considering proposals

In considering proposals, the following key criteria are taken account of:

- the importance and relevance of the topic to the Foundation's priorities;
- the relevance of the proposal to the research brief in the call for proposals;
- whether the work will offer new insights or developments;
- the appropriateness of the methods proposed to the aims of the project (for research projects, this includes research design, data collection and analysis);
- demonstration of good knowledge of the area, including both research literature and the policy and practice context;
- the ability of the staff and organisation to carry out the work and complete on time;
- the policy and practice implications of the project;
- an appropriate approach to dissemination;
- race equality and appropriate supported involvement of people with direct experience, where appropriate; and
- priority within available funds and value for money.

Judgements about proposals are made on the basis of what is written down. Some proposals are turned down because the Foundation cannot give the topic sufficient priority even though the proposal is well thought

out and presented. In other cases, strong proposals may be rejected simply because, on balance, another is found to be even stronger. But proposals are most often rejected because insufficient information has been provided about key aspects or there is a lack of clarity about what is planned.

The [Application Guidelines](#) contain all the information and documents you will need to complete your application. **Please note** that in exceptional circumstances the Foundation may wish to interview shortlisted teams.

SUBMITTING YOUR PROPOSAL

THREE sets of the following documents are required:

Proposal registration form
Summary
Proposal
Budget form
Staff Costs forms
Full CVs for all Proposers

These should be sent to:
Charlie Lloyd
Programme Manager
Joseph Rowntree Foundation
The Homestead
40 Water End
York YO30 6WP

Please also **email** the **Summary and Proposal** to Christine Appleton – christine.appleton@jrf.org.uk.

**THE DEADLINE FOR RECEIPT OF
HARD COPY AND EMAIL DOCUMENTATION IS
2 PM ON WEDNESDAY 30 SEPTEMBER 2009**

Please note that this is a strict deadline. Amendments or additions to the proposal sent after this date will not be accepted.

If you wish to discuss any of the details of the proposed work, Charlie Lloyd, Programme Manager responsible for the Alcohol Research Programme, can be contacted on 01904 615911 or by email charlie.lloyd@jrf.org.uk. Administrative queries: please contact Charlie Lloyd's Administrator, Christine Appleton on 01904 615911 or email christine.appleton@jrf.org.uk.