

Invitation to Tender for research on



Family no/low drinking practices:

Young people's consumption of no and low alcohol drinks in family settings

Information and instructions to tenderers

Deadline for tenders: **9am, Thursday 26 September 2024**

Prepared by

Dr Laura Harvey
Alcohol Change UK

laura.harvey@alcoholchange.org.uk

July 2024

1. Introduction and background to Alcohol Change UK

Alcohol Change UK is a leading UK alcohol charity. Our mission is to significantly reduce serious alcohol harm in the UK.

We are not anti-alcohol. We're against the harm alcohol causes. And we are for alcohol change. We are for a future in which no one feels they must drink; where the issues which lead to alcohol harm – like poverty, mental health problems, homelessness – are addressed; and where those of us who drink too much, and our loved ones, have access to high-quality support whenever we need it, without shame or stigma. Driven by our belief that every person deserves to live free from alcohol harm, we create smart, evidence-driven change.

We want to change the national conversation about alcohol in a way that makes it easier for people to take control of their own drinking, and to ask for and access help when they need it. We want to see better, evidence-based policy making that takes the steps that will work to reduce harm.

We are commissioning this research to understand more about young people's consumption of no and low alcohol drinks in family settings in the UK.

2. Background to the project

No and low alcohol drinks are products below 1.2% ABV that look and/or taste like alcoholic drinks and are generally marketed as alcohol substitutes. The production, availability and consumption of no and low drinks has been rising quickly over the last few years. There is increasing attention on the issue among policymakers, academics, market researchers and the public health community. No and low alcohol drinks are of particular interest to Alcohol Change UK as our experience of supporting people who are changing their drinking has highlighted the role that these drinks play in many people's lives.

The research on these drinks is still in its early stages.¹ Emerging research suggests that some people find no and low drinks helpful in reducing and managing their alcohol consumption.² However there are also potential negative impacts, including the possibility that the drinks could trigger cravings for alcohol for some people;³ the potential that the drinks could introduce children and young people to the taste, ritual and branding of alcohol; and the potential for increasing health inequalities.

We know that drinking practices among young people in the UK are changing, with rates of

¹ See for example University of Sheffield (2022) [University of Sheffield experts research public health effects of alcohol-free and low alcohol drinks](#) [Accessed 8th January 2024]; Homes, J., Angus, C., Kersbergen, I., Pryce, R., Stevely, A., Wilson, L. (2024) [No and low alcohol drinks in Great Britain: Monitoring Report](#).

² Piper, R. and Leyshon, M. (2023) [Do alcohol-free drinks help heavy drinkers cut their drinking?](#) Alcohol Change UK; Yoshimoto, H., Kawaida, K., Dobashi, S. et al. (2023) [Effect of provision of non-alcoholic beverages on alcohol consumption: a randomized controlled study](#). *BMC Medicine* 21(379).

³ Hew, A. and Arunogiri, S. (2023) [Zero alcohol, but not zero risk?](#) *Australian & New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry* 58(1)

consumption overall in decline, and young people more likely to drink alcohol at home than in public spaces, compared to previous generations.⁴ At the same time, harms caused by alcohol are rising, with recent data from the Office for National Statistics recording the highest number of deaths caused by alcohol on record.⁵ While there is a growing international body of evidence on youth drinking cultures and practices, including in family settings, less is known about young people's consumption of no and low alcohol products.

Families and the home are places where some young people learn and negotiate ideas and norms about alcohol consumption.⁶ However little is known about how no and low alcohol drinks fit into this picture. Existing evidence shows that the normalisation of alcohol consumption via advertising, marketing and peer norms is associated with higher risk behaviour with alcohol.⁷ No and low alcohol drinks on the one hand challenge alco-centric drinking cultures. At the same time, by imitating standard strength drinks, they risk initiating children into the taste and look of alcoholic drinks.

This is an exploratory study to investigate how and why young people consume no and low alcohol drinks in family contexts. We are interested in how the drinks are perceived by adults in the family, the role that the drinks play, and how they relate to the consumption (or non-consumption) of alcohol by young people in family settings.

⁴ Fenton, L., Pennay, A. and Holmes, J. (2024) [Youth drinking is declining – myths about the trend, busted](#) *The Conversation* 6 February [Accessed 10th July 2024]; Fenton, L., Fairbrother, H., Whitaker, V., Henney, M., Stevely, A.K. and Holmes, J. (2023) [Geographies of alcohol and generation: Examining the decline in youth drinking in England through a spatial lens](#) *Drug and Alcohol Review* 43(3): 675-684

⁵ Office for National Statistics (2024) [Alcohol-specific deaths in the UK: registered in 2022](#)

⁶ Mitchell, S., Campbell, R. and MacArthur, G.J. (2022) [Parent/caregiver attitudes, motivations and behaviours in relation to alcohol use among offspring aged 13–18 years: a qualitative study](#) *BMC Public Health* 22(656)

⁷ Gupta, H., Pettigrew, S., Lam, T., Tait, R. (2016) [A Systematic Review of the Impact of Exposure to Internet-Based Alcohol-Related Content on Young People's Alcohol Use Behaviours](#) *Alcohol and Alcoholism* 6 (26): p763-771; Commission on Alcohol Harm (2020) ['It's everywhere' – alcohol's public face and private harm](#); Anderson et al. (2009). [Impact of Alcohol Advertising and Media Exposure on Adolescent Alcohol Use: A Systematic Review of Longitudinal Studies](#) *Alcohol and Alcoholism* 44(3): p.229-243; Smith, L. & Foxcroft, D. (2009). [The Effect of Alcohol Advertising, Marketing and Portrayal of Drinking Behaviour in Young People: A Systematic Review of Prospective Cohort Studies](#) *BMC Public Health* 9 (51); Jernigan, D. et al. (2016). [Alcohol Marketing and Youth Consumption: A Systematic Review of Longitudinal Studies Published Since 2008](#) *Addiction* 112 (S1): p.7-20; Sargent, J. D., & Babor, T. F. (2020). [The Relationship Between Exposure to Alcohol Marketing and Underage Drinking Is Causal](#) *Journal of studies on alcohol and drugs. Supplement* Supp 19: p113-124; Donaldson, L. (2009). [Guidance on the Consumption of Alcohol by Children and Young People](#). Department of Health; Critchlow N., MacKintosh AM., Hooper L., Thomas C., Vohra J. (2019) [Participation with alcohol marketing and user-created promotion on social media, and the association with higher-risk alcohol consumption and brand identification among adolescents in the UK](#). *Addiction Research & Theory*. 27(6):515-526; McClure AC., Stoolmiller M., Tanski SE., Engels RC., Sargent JD. (2013) [Alcohol Marketing Receptivity, Marketing-specific Cognitions and Underage Binge Drinking](#) *Alcoholism, Clinical and Experimental Research* 37 (Suppl 1): E404-13.

3. Details of the work

3.1 Aim

To investigate young people's consumption of no and low alcohol drinks in family settings in the UK

3.2 Research questions

- How is the consumption of no and low alcohol drinks in family settings by under-18s perceived by different sociodemographic groups in the UK?
- What role do families play in the consumption of no and low alcohol drinks by young people under the age of 18?
- What are young people's drinking practices of no and low alcohol products in family settings?
- How does young people's consumption of no and low alcohol products relate to their consumption (or non-consumption) of alcohol in family settings?
- How do adult family members perceive the consumption of no and low alcohol drinks by under-18s in their family?

3.3 Objectives

- To investigate UK population perspectives on the use of no and low alcohol drinks by under-18s in family settings
- To analyse sociodemographic patterns in no and low alcohol consumption by 16-25 year olds in the UK
- To explore how and why no and low alcohol drinks are consumed by young people in family settings in the UK
- To investigate how young people's consumption of no and low alcohol products relates to their consumption (or non-consumption) of alcohol in family settings.

3.4 Study type and scope

We welcome tenders with methodologies that will address the aim of the project outlined in 3.1 above. We are happy to consider proposals with revisions to the research questions and objectives outlined above, if the applicant considers that these would better achieve the research aim.

What is in and out of scope?

- Family in its broadest definition is in scope, including extended family and kinship networks.
- We are interested in all families, irrespective of whether the household drinks alcohol.
- We are interested in no and low alcohol drinks as products below 1.2% ABV that look and/or taste like alcoholic drinks and are generally marketed as alcohol substitutes. There are some grey areas in the market, such as 'adult soft drinks'. For the purposes of this project, we are interested in products that are created to look and/or taste like alcoholic drinks, such as beers, wines, ciders and spirits below 1.2% ABV.
- Data will be ideally UK-wide, but if that makes the data collection too challenging, we could work with it being England-and-Wales only, or if necessary England only.

- We are interested in attitudes and practices related to the consumption of no and low alcohol drinks by young people under-18, and also interested in exploring patterns in consumption among young people aged 16-25, who are more likely to consume alcohol than their younger counterparts.

3.4 Project outputs

The output of the project shall be:

- A full report describing the findings from the research, in a suitable electronic format (to be agreed), of a suitable standard for Alcohol Change UK to publish on our website and to share widely with stakeholders and the public. Draft reports shall be provided for review and comment by Alcohol Change UK before final versions are submitted.
- Participation by at least one member of the research team in a non-written summary of the headline findings, such as a short video interview for Alcohol Change UK to use online.

3.5 Costs

A budget of up to £50,000 (plus any VAT) is available for the work.

Please present in your tender a clear breakdown of research costs and overheads, stating any assumptions made. Please state whether VAT applies.

Payment schedule

Payments to the successful applicant will be made as follows: 60% at project commencement, 20% in April 2025 and 20% on project completion, dependent on satisfactory completion of project milestones.

4. Instructions to tenderers

4.1. How to tender

Applicants will need to demonstrate that they:

- Are qualified to carry out this project, demonstrating experience in undertaking quantitative research
- Have the capacity to do so to the timescales below
- Can bring to the project the necessary insight and experience that will allow for the robust interpretation of findings

Please include in your application (maximum 10 A4 pages):

- a proposed project design
- a budget detailing all expenditure (including staff hours) as outlined above
- Any additional value you think you can bring to this project
- rationale for preferred provider, or description of procurement process, for any subcontracted fieldwork

You are also welcome to include a section entitled 'Amendments and suggestions'. This is a non-compulsory section in which you may set out any ideas for amending the scope or focus of the research.

4.2. Tendering process and timetable

Deadline for questions and clarifications	16 September 2024 by 09:00am
Response to questions and clarifications (provided to all agencies who have expressed interest)	By 19 September 2024
Submission of tenders	By Thursday 26 September 2024 9am to contact@alcoholchange.org.uk (subject header Tender: Family no/low drinking practices)
Possible follow-up questions from the assessment team to projects	26 September – 2 October
Award of project	Earliest date: 3 October 2024 Latest date: 7 October 2024
Contracting period	3-7 October 2024 – 15 October 2025
Virtual project initiation meeting with ACUK staff to discuss and agree methodology and scope	w/c 7 October 2024
Telephone/virtual progress meetings	Informal progress meetings will be scheduled between Alcohol Change UK staff and the contractor approximately every three months.
Draft interim report	19 February 2025
Draft final report	Wednesday 17 September 2025 (If this deadline is not feasible for you, please include this in the 'Amendments and suggestions' section of your application)
Final report	No later than Wednesday 15 October 2025
Project completion	No later than Wednesday 15 October 2025

4.3. Selection criteria

Proposals will be assessed according to the following criteria:

- Has the applicant demonstrated a clear understanding of the project brief?
- Has the applicant demonstrated the expertise necessary to carry out the research and report the findings?
- Is the methodology clearly stated and appropriate?
- Has the applicant demonstrated capacity to complete the project within budget and within the stated timeframe?
- Does the bid include appropriate project oversight and scrutiny?
- Does the bid demonstrate value for money?
- Does the bid demonstrate creativity or innovative ideas?

4.4. Award of contract

Alcohol Change UK will decide to whom the contract shall be awarded based on the selection

criteria outlined above. Alcohol Change UK does not bind itself to accept the lowest of any tender/quotation.

4.5. Conflicts of interests

Alcohol Change UK is an independent charity. We do not accept funds from the alcohol industry. <https://alcoholchange.org.uk/about-us/how-our-work-is-funded>
In your application, please declare any potential conflicts of interest.

Contact for more information, questions, and submission of bids

Dr Laura Harvey
Policy and Research Manager
Alcohol Change UK
27 Swinton Street
London WC1X 9NW

laura.harvey@alcoholchange.org.uk