

Report of Commissioning and Market Management team

Report to Director of Children and Families

Date: 18th January 2018

Subject: Leeds Youth Pathways grant arrangements for 2018-19



Are specific electoral Wards affected? If relevant, name(s) of Ward(s):	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for Call-In?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? If relevant, Access to Information Procedure Rule number: Appendix number:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

Summary of main issues

1. The purpose of this report is to seek approval to spend up to £310,000 in 2018/19 in order to extend grant arrangements with a number of providers for delivery of Leeds Youth Pathways grants projects.
2. The Youth Pathways grants programme is designed to help reduce the number of young people who are NEET in Leeds by using assertive engagement based on good quality youth work to improve the work readiness capabilities of NEET young people. Reducing the number of young people who are NEET is one of the Children and Young People's Plan priorities and this is therefore a key investment.
3. This programme was established in 2017/18 and current grant agreements are due to end on 31st March 2018.
4. Delivery in 2017/18 has fallen short of expectations and the overall target for number of young people supported to increase their work readiness capabilities will not be met. However, it is recognised that this is a new grants programme and there have been challenges for all partners. The preferred option is to extend arrangements with those providers who have evidenced sufficient levels of performance according to a set of agreed criteria.
5. Given the value of this decision, it will be subject to call-in and has been published on the forward plan.

Recommendations

- 1 The Director of Children and Families is recommended to approve the spending of up to £310k through extended grant arrangements with a number of providers from 1st April 2018 for a period of 12 months.

1 Purpose of this report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek approval to spend up to £310,000 in 2018/19 in order to extend grant arrangements with a number of providers for delivery of Leeds Youth Pathways grants projects.

2 Background information

- 2.1 In 2017/18, Leeds City Council has made £310,000 available to the Leeds Youth Pathways Grant Fund to support vulnerable young people who are Not in Employment, Education or Training (NEET). The available funds were previously invested in the Leeds Guarantee grant process and some low value targeted youth work projects.

- 2.2 The aim of the grants is to build on good youth work with young people by utilising the outreach skills and local knowledge of youth work organisations to create a wider range of assertive engagement which can be more effective in guiding young people to EET destinations.

- 2.3 In making these funds available, Leeds City Council is seeking to add value to the range of existing and potential support packages available to this group rather than duplicate activity. The city is set to benefit from a number of employability programmes funded through the European Structural and Investment Funds, namely NEET and Back To Work. It is important that activity funded through these grants is aligned with this delivery and genuinely adds value.

- 2.4 The fund primarily aims to support vulnerable target groups or individuals predominantly aged 16 and 17 who are currently NEET (3 months or longer), namely:

- Young people known to the Youth Offending Service
- Children Looked After /Care Leavers (up to 21)
- Teenage Parents (mums and dads)
- Year 11 leavers who have a record of offsite education (11-19 offsite learning provision, Area Inclusion Partnerships, Home Educated) and who do not have an EET destination
- Young Learning Disabled Children without an Education Health and Care Plan, as identified by learning providers (up to 25)

- 2.5 The overall purpose of the grant is to improve the work readiness capabilities of vulnerable young people. Providers are asked to evidence impact through development of young people's capabilities which include:

- Self-awareness; a realistic view of the world of work, their career options, responsibility for their own learning and development; develop aspirations in line with their own attributes
- Willingness to learn and develop
- Positive attitude with regard to self and their future
- Confidence, self-esteem and independence in life and work
- Development of resilience and longer term goals

- Broadening of horizons through experience of volunteering or work placement

- 2.6 10 providers were allocated funding following a competitive grant process. Grant agreements were awarded for the period 1st April 2017 to 31st March 2018 to BARCA, GIPSIL, Shantona, CFYDC, The Cardigan Centre, St Giles, Learning Partnerships, Leeds Rhinos, Hamara and Health for All. Just under £310k in total was allocated.
- 2.7 A competitive grant process was considered the most appropriate way to identify and fund projects and maximise impact for the use of the funding. A grant in contrast to a tendered contract allows flexibility in the arrangements put in place as the project group were able to negotiate with providers on the size of projects and funding allocations after proposals were submitted.
- 2.8 Current grant agreements are due to end on 31st March 2018 and a decision to spend up to £310k in 2018-19 through extending these arrangements has been published on the forward plan.

3 Main issues

- 3.1 The target for total number of young people to be supported during 2017-18 is approximately 500. Having reviewed performance at the end of quarter three, it is clear that the programme will fall short of meeting this target. This is due in part to it being a new programme and delays in awarding grant agreements, which impacted on mobilisation. Providers have also struggled to make the transition to working to the targeted delivery model and significant support from Pathways Support, Commissioning and Learning for Life teams has been required to enable providers to begin to target the right young people.
- 3.2 The Youth Pathways grants programme is designed to help reduce the number of young people who are NEET in Leeds by using assertive engagement based on good quality youth work to improve the work readiness capabilities of NEET young people. Reducing the number of young people who are NEET is one of the Children and Young People's Plan priorities and this is therefore a key investment.
- 3.3 The mixed economy of delivery for youth work, with both in-house and 3rd sector providers is very positive and reflects the approach to partnership working and collaborative working between the 3rd sector and the Council. The 3rd sector can bring many benefits to local communities and the Council through use of volunteers, local knowledge and networks and ability to be creative and responsive. The grants funding model was adopted in order to exploit the local knowledge and expertise of smaller, community based organisations. Although challenging to develop and manage initially, this funding model has the potential to be very successful once embedded.
- 3.4 A joint provider workshop was held in September 2017 to work through the issues, facilitated by Young Lives Leeds. Following the workshop and receipt of quarter two monitoring in October, an evaluation of each of the 10 projects was undertaken, including to verify the eligibility of young people engaged. This

evaluation found that all projects had evidenced very low levels of engagement and some had not complied fully with monitoring requirements. However, many providers had shown some improvement and demonstrated they were willing to engage in the programme. A number of recommendations were made for improvement in Q3.

- 3.5 Following receipt of quarter three monitoring returns, the performance of each project will again be evaluated using a set of agreed criteria, including progress against application (e.g. number of young people engaged, number of young people successfully completed programme by end of Q3 and number of young people likely to successfully complete the programme by end of Q4 as percentage of target) and level of engagement (e.g. delivery against project brief and application, timeliness & quality of monitoring returns, timeliness and quality of inputting on the IO system, level and effectiveness of communication with contract managers and operational links). This criteria has been shared with providers.
- 3.6 The evaluation will be undertaken by officers from Children and Families Commissioning and Learning for Life Service. Recommendations for extending arrangements will be approved by the Youth Work Review project team before discussions with individual providers will take place.
- 3.7 New grant agreements will be created and providers to be funded will be asked to complete new delivery proposals, ensuring realistic targets are agreed and the level of funding is revised to maximise value for money.
- 3.8 Joint meetings with both front-line staff and managers will be arranged for February/March 2018 in partnership with Young Lives Leeds to help ensure all partners are clear about priorities for 2018/19.
- 3.9 Wider communication with the sector will be undertaken to clarify the reasons for extending arrangements and there will be a commitment to share lessons learned with the wider market. The review of youth work provision has not yet been completed and there are insufficient findings on which to base any decision to change, end or replace the grants programme. However, the current intention is to open up the grants programme to competition for 2019-20, using learning from the first two years to inform the model and priorities.

4 Corporate Considerations

4.1 Consultation and Engagement

- 4.1.1 A small project group was formed to plan and evaluate the original competitive process for 2017-18 grants. This included representatives from Sufficiency & Participation Team, Virtual School, Employment and Skills Service, Youth Offer Team and Commissioning Team. The evaluation team also included a representative from Young Lives Leeds (Voluntary Action Leeds).
- 4.1.2 The progress of the pathways grants programme has been overseen by the Youth Work Review project team, which includes representatives from the Learning for Life service, Commissioning, Communities and Environment and Young Lives Leeds. The evaluation of performance at quarter three 2017/18 will be undertaken

by officers within Learning for Life and Commissioning. These recommendations will be approved by the Youth Work Review project team.

4.1.3 The Executive Member for Children, Young People and Families has been consulted regularly throughout the first year of delivery and will be consulted on the proposed grant extensions.

4.1.4 All providers have been informed of plans to extend arrangements and the evaluation criteria, which will be used to inform funding for 2018-19. Individual negotiations will be undertaken with providers once the evaluation is complete to determine delivery.

4.2 Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration

4.2.1 An equality impact screening form has been completed and is attached as appendix 1. This shows that this decision will have a beneficial impact on vulnerable groups of young people.

4.3 Council policies and Best Council Plan

4.3.1 The Leeds Youth Pathways grants programme supports one of the Children & Young People's Plan's (CYPP) obsessions: "Reduce the percentage of young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET). It will also contribute to achieving the outcome: "All children and young people do well at all levels of learning and have the skills for life".

4.4 Resources and value for money

4.4.1 The grant process would cover one year of delivery, with a maximum combined grant total of £310,000.

4.4.2 The Leeds Youth Pathways budget for 2018/19 is in place. This budget is the responsibility of the Head of Service – Learning for Life.

4.4.3 Delivery in 2017/18 has fallen short of expectations and the overall target for number of young people supported to increase their work readiness capabilities will not be met. However, it is recognised that this is a new grants programme and there have been challenges for all partners. The preferred option is to extend arrangements with those providers who have evidenced sufficient levels of performance according to a set of agreed criteria. The performance evaluation process, new grant agreements with new delivery proposals and continued robust monitoring arrangements will help ensure value for money is achieved in 2018/19. Learning from the first two years of the programme will be shared with the wider sector and used to inform new commissioning for 2019/20 onwards.

4.5 Legal Implications, Access to Information and Call In

4.5.1 Given the value of this decision, it will be subject to call-in and has been published on the forward plan.

4.6 Risk Management

- 4.6.1 Not subjecting the grants to competition in 2018-19 would open the Council up to challenge from other providers who may be waiting for the opportunity to bid, in particular those who were unsuccessful last time. However, the risk of challenge will be mitigated by having clear communication with the market about this being a learning process and a commitment that learning will be shared to ensure there is no disadvantage to other providers in any future competitive process.
- 4.6.2 Not going out to competition means we are not able to test the market to ensure best value for money. However, this year has shown that all partners have struggled to implement the new programme and any new competitive process at this stage would not guarantee a better outcome. The preferred option is to extend arrangements where appropriate in order to properly test and develop the model. It would allow us to gather enough data on which to base future commissioning and the opportunity for providers to build on learning so far. Although challenging to develop and manage initially, this funding model has the potential to be very successful once embedded.
- 4.6.3 The total value is below the threshold for EU procurement regulations to apply.
- 4.6.4 Support will continue to be made available by officers within Learning for Life and Commissioning in partnership with Young Lives Leeds to assist all providers to deliver their projects successfully.
- 4.6.5 The risk of outcomes expected not being achieved through the grants will be mitigated by utilising contract management resources to ensure providers are appropriately monitored on use of the funding. Realistic targets will be agreed, with funding reviewed accordingly.

5 Conclusions

- 5.1 Reducing the number of young people who are NEET is one of the Children and Young People's Plan priorities and this is therefore a key investment.
- 5.2 Although challenging to develop and manage initially, this funding model has the potential to be very successful once embedded. The preferred option is to extend arrangements where appropriate in order to properly test and develop the model.

6 Recommendations

- 6.1 The Director of Children and Families is recommended to approve the spending of up to £310k through extended grant arrangements with a number of providers from 1st April 2018 for a period of 12 months.

7 Background documents¹

7.1 None.

¹ The background documents listed in this section are available to download from the Council's website, unless they contain confidential or exempt information. The list of background documents does not include published works.