

Report to: Cath Roth

Date: 19th November 2020

Subject: To seek approval from the Director of Adults and Health to award grants for the continued delivery of the ABCD Pathfinder sites for a combined value of £125,000.

Are specific electoral wards affected? If yes, name(s) of ward(s):	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Has consultation been carried out?	<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
Will the decision be open for call-in?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" 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

1. Main issues

- This report seeks approval to award grant funding to five organisations to deliver five Asset Based Community Development Pathfinder sites in Leeds. The one year awards are subject to successful grant applications. The named providers will enter into new grant agreements with varying commencement dates, starting from 1st March 2021. All five grants will cease by 31st May 2022. The total grant fund is £125,000
- The five ABCD pathfinder sites referred to in this report that are: LS14 Trust, Older Peoples Action in Localities (Opal), HFT, Community First Yorkshire, and Better Action for Families. Each organisation covers a different geographical area, some have a specific focus on a particular community including carers and adults with Learning Disabilities.
- These organisations are currently in receipt of grant funding with multiple ending dates from February 2021 to May 2022. This funding will enable the pathfinders to continue activity during the Covid 19 pandemic.

2. Best Council Plan implications (see the [latest version of the Best Council Plan](#))

- As ABCD has become more embedded, the programme is meeting a broader range of outcomes that support the Best Council Plan and related strategies, such as the Health and Wellbeing Strategy. Specifically, the ABCD programme is supporting the Best Council Plan priorities Health and Wellbeing, Age-Friendly City and Safe, Strong Communities and most directly the outcomes related to 'be safe and feel safe', 'enjoy happy, healthy, active lives' and 'live with dignity and stay independent for as long as possible.' The development of asset based approaches across different directorates, for example the community approach to improve physical activity in Active Leeds, the tenant involvement work in Housing, activity to improve literacy, the use of asset based approaches in culture etc., has increased the impact on the Best Council Plan.

3. Resource implications

- For 2020/21 there is an identified budget of £432,000 which funds 12 ABCD sites, ABCD training provided to organisations working in Leeds and a dedicated ABCD development post in Adults and Health. This budget includes £233,000 from Adults and Health base budget, £144,000 from Public Health, £25,000 from Children and Families and £25,000 from Communities and Environment. Two of the Pathfinder sites start date commences after this financial year, as this is existing core funding provision has been made in the 2021/2022 base budget submission. There are implications for staff time for monitoring of the grant, this is built into project management resource.

Recommendations

- a) The Director of Adults and Health is recommended to approve grant funding to the following organisations to deliver Asset Based Community Development in Leeds: LS14 Trust, Older Peoples Action in Localities (Opal), HFT, Community First Yorkshire, and Better Action for Families. The one year awards of £25,000 per organisation are subject to successful grant applications. The grants shall start on varying dates commencing from the 1st March 2021 with the last grant expiring on the 31st May 2022. The total cost is £125,000.

1. Purpose of this report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek approval to award grant funding to five pathfinder sites to continue Asset Based Community Development activity in Leeds for a one year period from March 2021 to May 2022.

2. Background information

- 2.1 Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) is an approach to community development that involves local people identifying and mobilising existing assets to make the social, environmental and economic changes that are important to them. The aim is to create the conditions that will enable both place and people to flourish, reduce inequalities, and improve quality of life that supports communities to thrive and to reduce or delay the need for long term care and support. ABCD activity is supported by a growing body of evidence showing it be an effective, sustainable and value for

money approach to achieving thriving communities. The ABCD programme was developed as part of the Adults and Health Directorate's approach to prevention and early intervention which recognises that the communities we live in and the relationships we have are the primary source of our physical and mental wellbeing. The approach to prevention and early intervention has been shaped by the outcomes identified in Health and Wellbeing Strategy (2016-21): people will live longer and have healthier lives; people will live full, active and independent lives and people will live in healthy, safe and sustainable communities. ABCD was also developed to support the delivery of the revised Better Lives Strategy, which aims to ensure that people with care and support needs are able to have a fulfilling life through its three key themes of: better lives through better conversations; better lives through better living and better lives through better connections.

- 2.2 Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) and asset based approaches begin by finding out what the people living in a community care enough about to work on together to change, develop and/or sustain. It enables the citizens to change the things that they believe need changing in their community and recognise that they do this better than anyone else. ABCD recognises and celebrates the uniqueness of neighbourhoods and the interdependencies of communities. The use of ABCD fundamentally and positively changes the relationship between the Local Authority, citizens and communities, focussing on 'what's strong – not what's wrong'. This approach moves us from looking to service based solutions, to one where we nurture local residents to come together, build connections and friendships.
- 2.3 We currently fund 12 pathfinder sites (Third Sector Organisations) across Leeds who deliver ABCD in locality areas that involves a Community Builder working with local people identifying and mobilising existing assets to make the social, environmental and economic changes that are important to them. Community Builders employed through the third sector organisations aim is to create the conditions that will enable both place and people to flourish, reduce inequalities, and improve quality of life that supports communities to thrive and to reduce or delay the need for long term care and support. The partnership with Leeds's strong, vibrant and diverse Third Sector, many of whom have a strong track record in using asset based approaches, has been key to the success of ABCD.
- 2.4 Learning from the ABCD pathfinder sites will inform Adults and Health's understanding of the potential of this way of working. Longer term it will raise the profile and evidence the benefits of strength based ways of working to other directorates in the council and inform other areas of work such as the Leeds Health and Wellbeing strategy, Leeds Health and Care Plan and Leeds Inclusive Growth Strategy.

3. Main issues

- 3.1 This report seeks approval to grant fund five pathfinder sites to continue Asset Based Community Development through a direct award process. The grant is for the purpose of delivering Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) in Leeds for one year, the grants have varying commencement dates starting from 1st March 2021, all grant will cease by 31st May 2022. The total grant fund is £125,000.
- 3.2 The five pathfinder sites referred to in this report are: LS14 Trust, Older Peoples Action in Localities (Opal), HFT, Community First Yorkshire, and Better Action for Families. Each organisation covers a different geographical area or has a specific focus on a particular community including carers and adults with Learning Disabilities.

3.3 These organisations are currently in receipt of grant funding with multiple ending dates from February 2021 to May 2022.

3.4 Financial provision has been approved, the identified budget to support ABCD activity is £432,000. This budget includes £233,000 from Adults and Health base budget, £144,000 from Public Health, £25,000 from Children and Families and £25,000 from Communities and Environment of which £125,000 will be allocated to the five ABCD pathfinder organisations in Leeds. This funding will enable the Pathfinders to continue activity. Two of the Pathfinder sites start date commences after this financial year, as this is existing core funding provision has been made in the 2021/2022 base budget submission.

3.5 All external third party organisations listed in paragraph 3.6 are a very well established long standing third sector organisations with a combined experience of over 127 years' working with communities across West Yorkshire. All have tried and test experience of proliferating ABCD and embedding asset based approaches across the organisation. All are capable of undertaking the required provision under a grant agreement. All organisations have been contacted to ascertain their willingness to continue. If approval is award granted a grant agreement will be entered into using the council's standard grant agreement. All documentation will be registered on YORtender and Contracts Finder.

3.6 The grant payment will remain at the same level as the current fee of £25,000 p.a. per pathfinder.

3.7 There are implications for Adults and Health officer's time for monitoring of the grants but this has already been built into the Project Management resource.

Name of ABCD Pathfinder site	Grant Value to be awarded	Grant period
LS14 Trust	£25,000	01/03/2021 - 28/02/2022
Older Peoples Action in Localities (Opal)	£25,000	26/02/2021 - 25/02/2022
HFT	£25,000	01/06/2021 - 31/05/2022
Community First Yorkshire	£25,000	01/05/2021 - 30/04/2022
Better Action for Families	£25,000	18/03/2021 - 17/03/2022

4. Corporate considerations

4.1 Consultation and engagement

4.1.1 The Executive Member for Health, Wellbeing and Adults has been briefed on the report.

4.1.2 By its nature, ABCD is community driven. This takes it beyond consultation to citizen and community led. Each ABCD Pathfinder site also engages actively with local people to ensure people are aware of the work, particularly through using local, community led, asset mapping.

- 4.1.3 The development of ABCD has also been the subject of numerous community and engagement events in the city over the last few years.
- 4.1.4 All five pathfinder organisations were approached to explore and identify challenges and strengths to the work they were delivering as part of the grants' anticipated outcomes. Valuable learning and insight into the strength based approaches taken by the organisation during the pandemic has been evidenced in monitoring reports and all five organisations are keen to obtain further funding to enable them to continue for a further year.

4.2 Equality and diversity / cohesion and integration

- 4.2.1 Ensuring ABCD and strength based social care works for all communities and protected characteristics is a directorate and council priority. As such officers have worked with Community Builders to ensure a strong focus on supporting work with an equality focus and to encourage community connectors to come forward from diverse groups and communities.
- 4.2.2 Two of the pathfinders have been funded to strengthen the involvement of people with learning disabilities and carers. There has also been great synchronicity between the development of ABCD in Leeds and the work of the Migrant Access Project which takes a strong asset based approach.
- 4.2.3 The ABCD programme has been closely connected to the work on tackling inequalities arising from Covid 19 and the work developing in relation to communities of interest.

4.3 Council policies and the Best Council Plan

- 4.3.1 The development of Asset Based Community Development contributes to the Best Council Plan 2020/25 Leeds Best Council Ambition and the eight 'Best City' Priorities.
- 4.3.2 Asset Based Community Development directly contributes to Health and Wellbeing, Age Friendly Leeds and Safe, Strong Communities. It supports the Best Council Plan outcomes, most directly the outcomes related to 'be safe and feel safe', 'enjoy happy, healthy, active lives' and 'live with dignity and stay independent for as long as possible.' The development of asset based approaches across different directorates, for example the community approach to improve physical activity in Active Leeds, the tenant involvement work in Housing, activity to improve literacy, the use of asset based approaches in culture etc., has increased the impact on the Best Council Plan.
- 4.3.3 A key quality of ABCD practice is the strong emphasis on building and sustaining meaningful relationships within communities and developing networks of reciprocal exchange and support. With inequalities widening and set to become significantly worse as a result of Covid, asset based approaches and Asset Based Community Development will play an increasingly important role in building fairer communities mid to long term.

Climate Emergency

- 4.3.4 There is interest from communities in strengthening the connections to locally led activity focussed on tackling the climate emergency. Work is being developed with 'Our Future Leeds' and the Climate Commission, particularly around the potential to jointly develop Community Builders across Leeds with a focus on citizen/community led activities that help tackle climate change.
- 4.3.5 There is minimal expected impact. The pathfinder organisations are based within the communities, travel for the community builders within the area is minimal and either taken by public transport and/or walking distance thus contributing to a reduced carbon footprint. As noted above, a number of the activities being developed by communities are focussed on improving the environment.

4.4 Resources, procurement and value for money

- 4.4.1 A key element of the ABCD approach is increasing human connection in order to address issues of importance to local people. Until the pandemic hit, the Pathfinder sites were building trusted relationships with citizens but their approach and practice had to be adapted in the light of restrictions that were imposed across the country. As the pathfinders are still adapting to new ways of working it is prudent to continue funding these organisations to develop effective ways of connecting rather than award the grants through an open grants process which could result in organisations with no experience of this approach being awarded funding.
- 4.4.2 Building relationships take time therefore it is good value for money to continue funding the Pathfinders that have developed trusted relationships in these areas. The value of ABCD and asset based approaches have been highlighted in the city's response to Covid 19. Areas with ABCD sites have been able to get support to where it is needed quickly. The strong community connections that have developed enabled people to effectively support each other with less demand for statutory services or formal volunteers.
- 4.4.3 Financial provision exists within current budgets for the financial year 2020-2021 to deliver the programme. Two of the Pathfinder sites start date commences after this financial year, as this is existing core funding provision has been made in the 2021/2022 base budget submission.

4.5 Legal implications, access to information, and call-in

- 4.5.1 As the overall value of this decision does not exceed £500,000 this is a Significant Operational Decision and is not subject to call in. There are no grounds for keeping the contents of this report confidential under the Access to Information Rules.
- 4.5.2 As the Council would be entering into grant arrangements with the organisations listed at paragraph 3.2 to deliver Asset Based Community Development in Leeds, the Council will have no contractual control over enforcement of the terms. The

only sanction available with grant payments is for the Council to claw-back grant monies unspent.

- 4.5.3 There is a risk of challenge that a grant payment is not a grant. Legally there is some confusion about when a grant can and cannot be used as there is a fine line between a grant (which is not caught by the procurement rules) and a contract for services (which is caught by the procurement rules). The preamble to EU Procurement Directive 2014/24/EU makes it clear at paragraph (4) that “the mere financing, in particular through grants, of an activity, which is frequently linked to the obligation to reimburse the amounts received where they are not used for the purposes intended, does not usually fall within the scope of the public procurement rules”.
- 4.5.4 As such, unconditional grants are unlikely to meet the definition of a contract set out in the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 (PCR 2015). However, where grants are used with strict qualification criteria and an obligation to pay back money if certain targets are not reached, the position is less straightforward and it is possible that an arrangement referred to as a grant could actually meet the definition of a contract set out in the PCR 2015 and, if it does, the PCR 2015 may apply. It is therefore extremely important to ensure that, if providing grants, the process followed does not fall within the definition of a “public contract” as set out in PCR 2015 which states –“contracts for pecuniary interest concluded in writing between one or more economic operators and one or more contracting authorities and having as their object the execution of works, the supply of products or the provision of services”.
- 4.5.5 Grants may be in breach of state aid but it is unlikely that the grant payments proposed will fall foul of the state aid rules.
- 4.5.6 Funding from which any grant payment is made must be designated as “grant” money. If the Council wish to make a grant, the money must be in the “grant” block. If it is not, it can normally be moved from other blocks in the Council budget into the grant block.
- 4.5.7 In making their final decision, the Director of Adults and Health should be satisfied that the approved course of action represents best value for the council.

4.6 Risk management

- 4.6.1 Reporting has shown ABCD pathfinder model as a cost effective way of reducing the need for traditional service provision, delivering social and economic change.
- 4.6.2 The risk of not awarding funding to the five Pathfinder sites during the pandemic could result in loss of connections, increase in socially isolated individuals and communities.

5. Conclusions

- 5.1 ABCD activity is supported by a growing body of evidence showing it be an effective, sustainable and value for money approach to achieving thriving communities. ABCD Pathfinder sites has shown the impact on building strong and resilient communities that’s have improved health and well-being outcomes, supported active lifestyles and reduced loneliness and social isolation. ABCD pathfinder sites have evidenced the

transformative potential of people making connections, changing things for themselves and contributing to where they live.

6. Recommendations

6.1 The Director of Adults and Health is recommended to grant fund five ABCD Pathfinder organisations: LS14 Trust, Older Peoples Action in Localities (Opal), HFT, Community First Yorkshire, and Better Action for Families, to deliver ABCD Pathfinder programme in the sum of £25,000 per organisation at a total cost of £125,000. The grants shall start on varying dates commencing from the 1st March 2022 with the last grant expiring on the 31st May 2022.

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.