

Report of: Commissioning and Market Management

Report to: Director of Children and Families

Date: 26th April 2021

Subject: European and National Lottery funded Building Better Opportunities - approval of the Leeds and Bradford Stronger Families Programme extension

Are specific electoral wards affected? If yes, 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input 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

1. Main issues

- The Stronger Families programme was established in June 2017 following a successful two stage Building Better Opportunities (BBO) Fund bid. The programme is match funded by both the European Structural and Investment Fund (ESIF) and National Lottery Community Fund.
- Stronger Families is a partnership, across Leeds & Bradford, working with 17 partner organisations from the third sector. The aim of the project is to reach those families who do not yet meet the threshold for more intensive services, such as the Supporting Families Programme known in Leeds as Families First. Work is with the whole family with outcomes focused on routes in to employment and training.
- The funders monitor the programme against the following 4 key measures
 - The number of participants who start the programme,
 - The number of participants who move into education or training,
 - The number of participants who move into employment,
 - The number of economically inactive participants who start job searching

- The programme has been incredibly successful with targets exceeded. In early 2019 the success of the programme was acknowledged and Stronger Families was awarded further funding (£3.5m) to extend the programme until September 2021.
- The programme has continued to deliver, and exceed, the targets set by the funders. In March 2021 confirmation was received from BBO that Stronger Families had been awarded a further extension and will receive additional funding of £2,414,658.
- The maximum delivery period awarded by the National Lottery Community Fund is until the end of June 2023. However with the programme's current staffing levels it is anticipated that the programme will finish by the end March 2023; with all partner activity ending by the end of January 2023.
- Funding is awarded to partners as grants and a partnership agreement with each partner is in place which includes relevant terms and conditions and sets out the roles, responsibilities & targets of each delivery partner as required by BBO. The partnership agreements with existing partners will be extended up to January 2023 for key work & hub providers and up to December 2022 for all specialist providers.
- One partner has notified that they do not wish to continue being a part of the programme when their current grant period expires on 30th September 2021. The partner is a key work provider and employs one worker as part of the Stronger Families programme. It is proposed that existing partners are invited to apply to take on the activity previously undertaken by this partner via a competitive grant process. If the grant process is successful it is likely that TUPE may apply to the member of staff affected. Advice has been sought from legal around this and support will be provided to ensure a smooth transition.
- In planning for the extension a surplus within the overall budget has been identified. Options have been considered for how to make best use of the surplus: 1) to continue with the peer mentoring (currently delivered by The Bridge Project alongside their key work provision) 2) or to recruit an additional key worker or 3) a blend of the two during the life of the extension. If the decision is made to recruit an additional key worker it is proposed that this opportunity will be advertised to all partners via a competitive grant process.

2. Best Council Plan Implications

- The Stronger Families Programme supports the Best Council Plan 2020-2025 outcomes & priorities of:
 - Supporting families to give children the best start in life
 - Do well at all levels of learning and have the skills they need for life
 - Earn enough to support themselves and their families
 - Helping people out of financial hardship

3. Resource Implications

- The value of the extension from BBO is £2,414,658. The value of the grants with partners is £2,368,779.
- Leeds City Council is the lead partner for the Stronger Families programme. This means LCC hold and manage the funding on behalf of the partnership and are the main link to the funders.
- The value of the grant opportunities for key work provision via a competitive grant process will be under £100k.

Recommendations

The Director of Children & Families is asked:

1. To approve receipt of the grant funding from European Structural and Investment Fund (ESIF) and National Lottery Community Fund and to approve expenditure by the Council as Lead Partner for the Stronger Families Programme totalling £2,414,658 for the maximum extended period 1st October 2021 to June 2023.
2. To agree to extend the existing partnership agreements with partner organisations listed in appendix 1 funds totalling approximately £2,368,779 on a grants basis to deliver the programme. This may include the peer mentoring provision with The Bridge Project. Approval is also sought to vary the partnership agreements to reflect the new targets and commitments in line with the proposed extension requirements of the funders.
3. To provide approval to undertake a competitive grant process with existing partners for two grants and award as a result of the competitive exercise. Both grants will be for key work provision:
 - a) One grant will be to continue the provision currently delivered by a partner who does not wish to continue with the extension (as detailed in section 3.1.6). The value of this will be £29,878.
 - b) If needed one grant will be for a partner to employ an additional key worker to help the programme achieve the targets imposed by the funders. The value of this may be up to £51,500.
4. To note that the Head of Commissioning and Market Management is responsible for the implementation of these decisions within the timescales proposed by the National Lottery Community Fund.

European and National Lottery funded Building Better Opportunities - approval of the Leeds and Bradford Stronger Families Programme extension

1. Purpose of this report

1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek approval to:

1.1.1 Approve receipt of the grant and subsequent expenditure by the Council as Lead Partner for the Stronger Families Programme totalling £2,414,658.

1.1.2 Agree to extend the existing partnership agreements with partner organisations, and to vary the partnership agreements to reflect the new targets and commitments in line with the proposed extension requirements of the funders.

1.1.3 Undertake a competitive grant process for two grants and award as a result of the competitive exercise. Both grants will be for key work provision:

a) One grant will be to continue the provision currently delivered by a partner who does not wish to continue with the extension (as detailed in section 3.1.6). The value of this will be £29,878.

b) If needed: one grant will be for a partner to employ an additional key worker to help the programme achieve the targets imposed by the funders. The value of this may be up to £51,500.

2. Background information

2.1 The Stronger Families programme was established in June 2017 following a successful two stage Building Better Opportunities (BBO) Fund bid. The programme is match funded by both the European Structural and Investment Fund (ESIF) and National Lottery Community Fund.

2.2 Stronger Families is a partnership, across Leeds & Bradford, working with 17 partner organisations from the third sector. The aim of the project is to reach those families who do not yet meet the threshold for more intensive services, such as the Supporting Families Programme known in Leeds as Families First. Work is with the whole family with outcomes focused on routes in to employment and training.

2.3 The funders monitor the programme against the following 4 key measures:

- The number of participants who start the programme,
- The number of participants who move into education or training,
- The number of participants who move into employment,
- The number of economically inactive participants who start job searching

2.4 All participants on the project must be unemployed or economically inactive with a particular focus on those who are most at risk of social exclusion. The project is aimed at families who require early intervention and preventative support to remove or reduce barriers to employment and progress their journey towards the job market. Barriers can include but are not limited to parents and children involved in anti-social behaviour or criminal activity, children who do not attend school regularly and parents and children with mental health issues.

2.5 The programme has been incredibly successful with all initial targets exceeded. In early 2019 the success of the programme was acknowledged and Stronger Families was awarded further funding (£3.5m) to extend the programme until September 2021.

3. Main issues

3.1 Summary of main issues:

- 3.1.1 The programme has continued to deliver, and exceed, the targets set by the funders. In March 2021 confirmation was received from BBO that Stronger Families had been awarded a further extension and will receive additional funding of £2,414,658.
- 3.1.2 The maximum delivery period awarded by the National Lottery Community Fund is until the end of June 2023. However with the programme's current staffing levels it is anticipated that the programme will finish by the end March 2023; with all partner activity ending by the end of January 2023.
- 3.1.3 The extension from BBO has been awarded based on the success of the existing partnership and the expectation is that the programme continues with all existing partners. Any change to the partnership could pose a potential risk to the programme's ability to meet the targets/requirements of the extension. The proposal is therefore to continue with existing partners rather than go out to competition to invite new partners to the programme. We feel the benefits of continuing with existing arrangements/partners far outweigh the risks from potential new partners who may challenge this approach.
- 3.1.4 Advice has been sought from LCC Procurement & Legal Services who have confirmed that as the arrangement with partners are grants and not contracts we can lawfully proceed with extending the agreements as the decision falls outside of contract procedure rules. There is a risk that other providers may challenge the decision. However we feel the risk is very low. The programme was extended in 2019 and no challenges were raised.
- 3.1.5 Funding is awarded to partners as grants and a partnership agreement with each partner is in place which includes relevant terms and conditions and sets out the roles, responsibilities & targets of each delivery partner as required by BBO. The partnership agreements with existing key work & hub partners will be extended up to January 2023 and up to December 2022 for all specialist providers. The rationale to end specialist providers one month earlier is that the final month of the programme will be concentrated on key workers doing exit work with families and therefore there will be no requirement for any of the specialist activity in January 2023. If the option to extend the peer mentoring (delivered by The Bridge Project) is pursued; the maximum extension for this element of their grant will be up to January 2023.
- 3.1.6 One partner has notified that they do not wish to continue being a part of the programme. The partner is a key work provider and employs one worker as part of the Stronger Families programme. It is proposed that existing partners are invited to apply to take on the activity previously undertaken by this partner via a competitive grant process. If the grant process is successful it is likely that TUPE may apply to

the member of staff affected. Advice has been sought from legal around this and support will be provided to ensure a smooth transition.

3.1.7 In planning for the extension a surplus within the overall budget has been identified. Options have been considered for how to make best use of the surplus: 1) to continue with the peer mentoring (currently delivered by The Bridge Project alongside their key work provision) 2) or to recruit an additional key worker or 3) a blend of the two during the life of the extension. If the decision is made to recruit an additional key worker it is proposed that this opportunity will be advertised to all partners via a competitive grant process.

3.1.8

3.2 Stronger Families partnership:

3.2.1 The Stronger Families partnership currently consists of Leeds City Council, City of Bradford Metropolitan District Council, 17 third sector delivery partners (keyworker and specialist) and 3 strategic partners who do not deliver but support the partnership.

3.2.3 The delivery model includes a range of key worker providers who support participants through their journey to work, a peer mentoring scheme (delivered by one of the key work partners) and a range of specialist interventions which are drawn upon as and when needed. These specialist interventions are varied but are broken down into the three broad categories of health and wellbeing (including mental health), financial inclusion and employability support.

3.2.4 In addition to key working and specialist intervention services two key worker organisations lead operational hubs, one in Leeds and one in Bradford. The operational hub helps co-ordinate referrals into each locality, supports the interface between key working and specialist intervention and helps share and implement good practice across both Leeds and Bradford.

3.2.5 In order to effectively manage this programme of work the bid included provision of a central team including a project manager, contract management resource, quality and evaluation, finance and audit, administrative support and a parent support worker. The services of this central team have been reviewed and will be extended in line with the proposed extension.

3.3 Delivery Partners

3.3.1 The bid, and subsequent delivery programme, is very much delivered as a partnership which is being led by Leeds City Council. Prior to the bid submission a competitive exercise was undertaken with support from procurement to identify organisations who demonstrated the skills, knowledge and experience required to support a bid of this kind.

3.3.2 This exercise led to the identification of the current delivery partners and the issuing of partnership agreements in respect of the grant awarded to them for their element of the programme. The Partnership Agreement includes relevant terms and conditions and sets out the roles and responsibilities of each delivery partner as required by the funders.

- 3.3.5 There are 17 delivery partners. One partner has notified that they do not wish to continue with the extension (see 3.1.6). The remaining 16 partners will receive a formal extension and variation to their partnership agreement so that they can extend their staff contracts in order to continue delivery of the programme for an extended period.
- 3.3.7 The maximum delivery period awarded by the National Lottery Community Fund is until the end of June 2023. However with the programme's current staffing levels it is anticipated that the programme will finish by the end March 2023; with all partner activity ending by the end of January 2023.

3.4 Competitive Grant Process:

3.4.1 Opportunity to take on activity currently delivered by an existing partner:

- 3.4.1.1 As noted in section 3.1.6; one partner has notified that they do not wish to continue with the extension and will cease to deliver when their current grant ends on 30th September 2021.
- 3.4.1.2 The partner delivers key work provision in Bradford and employs one key worker.
- 3.4.1.3 Options have been considered for this element of the programme. It is considered that the best option, in order for the programme to achieve the targets imposed by the funders, is to seek a solution to enable this key work provision to continue.
- 3.4.1.4 In order to do this; the preferred option is to put the opportunity out to existing partners to take on this element of key work provision via a competitive grant process. It is proposed that the grant process is undertaken via Yortender. BBO have been consulted on this proposal and are supportive of this approach.
- 3.4.1.5 If the grant process is successful TUPE may apply to the member of staff currently employed by the existing partner.

3.4.2 Opportunity to take on an additional key worker:

- 3.4.2.1 As noted in section 3.1.7: the programme has identified a possible need to recruit an additional key worker for the programme.
- 3.4.2.2 The opportunity, if pursued, will be advertised to all existing partners via Yortender and will run alongside the opportunity noted in section 3.4.1.

3.4 Next Steps

- 3.4.1 Once approval to spend has been obtained all partners will be formally notified so they can begin the process of extending staff contracts.
- 3.4.2 Partnership Agreement variation letters will be drafted with support from legal services, detailing revised funding values and targets.
- 3.4.3 The competitive grant process will be advertised to all partners via Yortender. It is hoped the opportunity will be advertised in June with the grant award taking place in

July; following a full evaluation of received bids. If successful; the grant award will be issued to commence on 1st October 2021.

4 Corporate considerations

4.1 Consultation and engagement

- 4.1.1 In order to inform the initial bid, significant consultation took place with a range of stakeholders including Housing Services, food banks, clusters and mental health professionals. Consultation was also undertaken directly with vulnerable families through an exercise managed by Voluntary Action Leeds who are one of the strategic partners on the bid
- 4.1.2 Discussions took place throughout the bidding process with organisations who are leading on other bids across the Leeds City Region and with colleagues within Leeds City Council who have experience of delivering European funded projects. These discussions have continued throughout the delivery phase to share best practice.
- 4.1.4 Key stakeholders have been consulted throughout the programme, including about the extension, via the Stronger Families Project Board.
- 4.1.5 The Exec Member for Children & Families has been consulted on the proposal to extend the Stronger Families Programme.

4.2 Equality and diversity / cohesion and integration

- 4.2.1 The original bid was required to clearly outline our approach to equalities in how the project is managed and run. There are specific targets within the programme as to the number of participants from ethnic minorities we are expected to work with over the delivery period.
- 4.2.2 An equality impact screening was completed in February 2017. This document has been reviewed (appendix 2) as part of the extension preparation and to support this decision. This assessment confirmed that due consideration had been given to all equality groups. This will continue to be monitored throughout the extended delivery period through ongoing contract management, quality assurance and the sharing of best practice across the partnership. In addition many of our delivery partners are community based organisations who work within diverse local communities.

4.3 Council policies and best council plan

- 4.3.1 The Stronger Families Programme supports the Best Council Plan 2020-2025 outcomes & priorities of:
- Supporting families to give children the best start in life
 - Do well at all levels of learning and have the skills they need for life
 - Earn enough to support themselves and their families
 - Helping people out of financial hardship
- 4.3.2 The Stronger Families Programme supports the Leeds Children and Young People's Plan 2018-2023 priorities of:
- Help children and parents to live in safe, supportive and loving families

- Ensure that the most vulnerable are protected
- Support families to give children the best start in life

4.4 Resources, procurement and value for money

- 4.4.1 In the current financial climate of reduced resources to deliver key priorities the funding from European Structural and Investment Fund (ESIF) and National Lottery Community Fund is a significant source of external funding which is supporting the authorities early help offer.
- 4.4.2 By utilising a whole family approach and focus on early intervention and prevention the service will continue to support families to address issues before they require more intensive and costly intervention.
- 4.4.3 The programme funding profile includes dedicated finance, contract management and quality assurance resource to ensure outcomes and expenditure are monitored throughout the life of the project to ensure value for money.
- 4.4.4 Due to the funding arrangements imposed by BBO and the manner in which funding must be drawn down the exact amounts to be paid to each partner are subject to an element of change, however the figure within this report represents the estimated total amount to be paid to delivery partners.
- 4.4.5 As noted at 3.1.5: the maximum delivery period awarded by the National Lottery Community Fund is until the end of June 2023. However with the programme's current staffing levels it is anticipated that the programme will finish by the end March 2023; with all partner activity ending by the end of January 2023. The partnership agreements with existing key work & hub partners will be extended up to January 2023 and up to December 2022 for all specialist providers. The rationale to end specialist providers one month earlier is that the final month of the programme will be concentrated on key workers doing exit work with families and therefore there will be no requirement for any of the specialist activity in January 2023. If the option to extend the peer mentoring (delivered by The Bridge Project) is pursued; the maximum extension for this element of their grant will be up to January 2023.

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

- 4.5.1 This is a key decision as the overall value of this decision £2,414,658 and as such it is 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 recipients listed in this report, 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 Awarding the grants to the named organisation in this way could leave the Council open to a potential claim from other providers, to whom this grant could be of interest, that it has not been wholly transparent. However the risk of this would appear to be low as detailed in section 3.1.4.

- 4.5.4 As this is a grant it is not subject to the council's Contracts Procedure Rules or within the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 but good practice and transparency will be observed throughout.
- 4.5.5 There is no overriding legal obstacle preventing the award of the grants and the contents of this report should be noted. In making their final decision, the Director of Children and Families should be satisfied that the course of action chosen represents best value for the Council.

4.6 Risk management

- 4.6.1 A number of risks identified at the start of this programme still apply, specifically for the Council as the Lead Partner. These being potential reputational and contractual risks. As the Lead Partner we are required to meet the funding requirements which are complex and resource intensive. However, these risks are partially mitigated for the extended period as the partnership now has four years' experience in delivering the programme and meeting the funding requirements. Close contact has been maintained with other organisations leading bids across the Leeds City Region and colleagues within the authority who are delivering European funding to share experiences and best practice. Support is also available from a National Lottery Community Fund funding advisor when required.
- 4.6.2 Evidence based claims must be made to draw down funding from the National Lottery Community Fund on a quarterly basis, therefore it is important that the Project Manager and those functions providing project support including contract management and finance are able to clearly monitor performance and progress against targets on a regular basis. This is reported to the project board, which includes delivery partners and key stakeholders.
- 4.6.4 Advice is being sought from LCC Procurement & Legal Services to ensure that the Partnership Agreement extensions and variations and any other contractual documentation are appropriately drafted to ensure any risks are minimised.

5 Conclusions

- 5.1 The Council has ambitious plans to promote sustainable economic growth and improve the wellbeing of local residents, which includes helping more people into work and reduce reliance on benefits. The Council is also committed to working restoratively with whole families to ensure children and young people live in safe family environments wherever possible and to improve outcomes for all children and families. The Building Better Opportunities Programme jointly funded by the European Structural & Investment Fund and the National Lottery Community Fund created an opportunity for Leeds to deliver against local priorities at a much faster rate in the current financial climate, which can be maximised even further through the programme extension period
- 5.2 A key feature of this delivery model is the number of providers forming the partnership who have a range of experience, skills and specialist expertise. This has allowed us to address a wide range of barriers to employment in a flexible and responsive manner. The range of third sector providers across the two cities including national, regional and local providers re-enforces the strength of the partnership and providers have clearly stated an ongoing commitment to sharing

best practice across the partnership, which will further enhance the support offer to children and families across Leeds and Bradford.

6 Recommendations

The Director of Children & Families is asked:

- 6.1 To approve receipt of the grant funding from European Structural and Investment Fund (ESIF) and National Lottery Community Fund and to approve expenditure by the Council as Lead Partner for the Stronger Families Programme totalling £2,414,658 for the maximum extended period 1st October 2021 to June 2023.
- 6.2 To agree to extend the existing partnership agreements with partner organisations listed in appendix 1 funds totalling approximately £2,368,779 on a grants basis to deliver the programme. This may include the peer mentoring provision with The Bridge Project. Approval is also sought to vary the partnership agreements to reflect the new targets and commitments in line with the proposed extension requirements of the funders.
- 6.3 To provide approval to undertake a competitive grant process with existing partners for two grants and award as a result of the competitive exercise. Both grants will be for key work provision:
 - a) One grant will be to continue the provision currently delivered by a partner who does not wish to continue with the extension (as detailed in section 3.1.6). The value of this will be £29,878.
 - b) If needed one grant will be for a partner to employ an additional key worker to help the programme achieve the targets imposed by the funders. The value of this may be up to £51,500.
- 6.4 To note that the Head of Commissioning and Market Management is responsible for the implementation of these decisions within the timescales proposed by the National Lottery Community Fund.

7 Background documents¹

- 7.1 None

8 Attachments

- 8.1 Appendix 1 – Partner budget allocation
- 8.2 Appendix 2 – Equality, diversity, cohesion & integration – screening form

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.

European and National Lottery funded Building Better Opportunities - approval of the Leeds and Bradford Stronger Families Programme extension

Appendix 1 - Stronger Families Extension Partner Budget Allocation

	Total	Extension to:
Better Leeds Communities	47,401	December 2022
Community Links	112,698	December 2022
EASA	84,712	December 2022
Home - Start Bradford	26,945	December 2022
Karmand Community Centre	48,434	December 2022
Touchstone	77,569	December 2022
BARCA HUB	281,038	January 2023
Barnardos HUB	199,745	January 2023
BARCA Leeds (KW)	196,812	January 2023
Barnardos Bradford (KW)	88,687	January 2023
Barnardos Leeds (KW)	86,330	January 2023
Brathay Trust	129,137	January 2023
Humankind	187,747	January 2023
Health 4 All	141,330	January 2023
HIMMAT Project	129,589	January 2023
JAMES	138,258	January 2023
Learning Partnerships	204,324	January 2023
The Bridge Project	106,643	January 2023
Grant A (see section 3.4.1)	29,877	N/A
Peer mentoring (The Bridge Project) or Grant B (see section 3.4.2)	51,500	January 2023 – for peer mentoring
	2,368,779	

The Council shall pay the funding to the organisation as a payment every quarter based on the correct financial monitoring, expenses and defrayal evidence being submitted at the end of every month. If the actual costs are lower than the forecasted costs, the Council will reduce the value of the next payment to reflect the difference between the forecast and the actually spend. All the finance expense evidence will be scrutinised by the Council's Finance Manager. The Council will also apply other adjustments where costs are found to be ineligible.