

Third Sector Grants for Transition Activities and Support for people who are Clinically Extremely Vulnerable to Covid-19

Date: 18/8/21 and updated on 24 September 2021

Report of: The Chief Officer – Health Partnerships

Report to: The Director of Adults and Health

Will the decision be open for call in? Yes No

Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? Yes No

What is this report about?

- This report relates to the agreement made by the Multi-Agency Bronze Group on Shielding to put in place small grant funding for community organisations to support the 55,000 people in Leeds who are Clinically Extremely Vulnerable (CEV) to Covid-19 following the pause in shielding from 1st April and step 4 of coming out of lockdown from 19th July 2021.
- It is proposed that 17 grants, ranging from £200 - £55,000, are made to community organisations across the city, with a total value of £270,551. The grants will be taken from a grant made to Leeds City Council by Central Government's Department of Housing, Communities and Local Government to the value of £522,227 for "Clinically Extremely Vulnerable Support" in March 2021.
- These citywide grants will support people who are CEV to access the information and help they need to follow the ongoing advice that applies to them. The grants will also ensure that no service is inundated with requests they cannot handle – and to make sure that people get the right support at the right time in the right way.
- To give more context for decision makers, the report briefly summarises the current situation for people who are CEV and why the activities and support the grants will fund are needed as well as the other activities and support available at locality level which competent the citywide grant. It will also summarise the 17 grants individually, providing details of organisation, activity and value.

Recommendations

The Director of Adults and Health is asked to:

- a) Note the agreement made by the Multi-Agency Bronze Group on Shielding to put in place a small grant funding for community organisations to support them to support people who are CEV following the pause in shielding and step 4 of lifting of lockdown.

- b) Note that the funding for the grants is taken from a grant of £522,227 made to Leeds City Council by Central Government’s Department of Housing, Communities and Local for “Clinically Extremely Vulnerable Support” in March 2021.
- c) Approve that grants to a total value of £270,551 can be made to 17 community organisations from the Health Partnerships budget which is holding the DCLG grant on behalf of LCC.

Why is the proposal being put forward?

1. Over 30,000 Leeds residents have been on the shielding list for over a year, 55,000 people are currently classed as clinically extremely vulnerable (CEV) and at some point in the last 12 months, 71,778 people in Leeds have been advised to shield at home for an extended period.
2. In successive surveys and listening exercises, CEVs have told us how the advice to shield at home has impacted on their physical and mental wellbeing, their finances, their familial relationships, their confidence and their happiness.
3. For many, the 1st April pause in shielding and reaching step 4 of lifting of lockdown restrictions on 19th July may feel like a welcome relaxation of the advice and they will have a job or a lifestyle that enables them to return to living their life in the way they choose, at a pace that they choose. For some – they may feel that these milestones feel like an end to the protection and support that they have needed to avoid a life-threatening illness. For others - the change of advice on 1st April may confront them with the high levels of anxiety, stress of financial hardship that they have coped with or suppressed during periods of shielding at home. For others – the change of advice will bring no change to the actions they are taking to protect themselves – either because their individual medical advice will be that they should continue to shield or that they remain too anxious about the risk the virus poses to them.
4. These grants have been proposed because the ambition of the Multi-Agency Bronze Group on Shielding is that every single person who is clinically extremely vulnerable can access the information, and help they need to the ongoing advice that applies, and is personal, to them. The grants will make sure that people get the right support at the right time in the right way, recognising everyone’s experience of shielding will be unique to them. In line with our existing shielding/CEV support plan, we have prioritised working with people who have a greater likelihood of poor health due to inequalities such as lower income, living in an area of high deprivation, already experiencing poor health or being part of a particular Community of Interest.
5. The grants will also ensure that community organisations are not inundated with requests they cannot handle by providing investment for specific activities and support for people who are CEV.

What impact will this proposal have?

Wards Affected: Citywide impact		
Have ward members been consulted?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

The schedule of grants proposed is as per the below:

6. Outcomes of the decision

In Leeds, our ambition is that every single person – 55,000 – who is clinically extremely vulnerable can access the information and help they need to follow the ongoing advice that applies to them.

The outcomes we anticipate will come from the transition activities and support funding by the proposed grants are that all people who are CEV are able to access the support to:

- regain physical confidence and physical wellbeing
- address the emotional and mental health legacy of shielding
- regain social confidence
- recover financially
- access new wellbeing opportunities

#	Organisation	Activity	Value
1	Armley Primary Care Network (PCN)	CEV transition grant - planting in the edible garden, Armley Medical Practice	£200
2	Groundwork	CEV transition grant - get going with growing project	£7,392
3	Age UK	CEV transition grant - advice and support for CEV older people	£10,000
4	Caring Together in Woodhouse and Little London	CEV transition grant - activities and support for CEV older people	£10,000
5	Bramley Baths	CEV transition grant - access to wellbeing services for 50 CEV people	£10,000
6	Middleton Elderly Aid	CEV transition grant - activities and support for older CEV people	£10,000
7	Richmond Hill Elderly Action	CEV transition grant - activities and support for older CEV people	£10,000
8	Leeds Irish Health and Homes	CEV transition grant - activities and support for the Irish community	£10,000
9	St Vincent's Centre Leeds	CEV transition grant – advice, support and community connections	£10,000
10	Space2	CEV transition grant - safe wellbeing activities in Inner East Leeds and celebration event	£17,704
11	The Conservation Volunteers (TCV)	CEV transition grant - roving activities e.g. litter pick walks and 1:1 support for activity groups	£18,535
12	Carers Leeds	CEV transition grant - support and activities (face-to-face) for Carers who are CEV	£30,000

13	UK Counselling Network	CEV transition grant - up to 250 people who are CEV can access 8 telephone or online sessions for free	£30,000
14	Forum Central	CEV transition grant - infrastructure - to work with community organisations providing support and advice to CEV people, e.g. develop work, shaping offer, coordination of activities across Communities of Interest	£55,000
15	Vanadan Women's Group	CEV transition grant - activities and support to South Asian community in NW Leeds	£3,000
16	Leeds Dads	CEV transition grant – Covid safe social circuits fitness session for dads across Leeds	£3,720
17	Citizens Advice Bureau	CEV transition grant – advice and support for CEV individuals on a 1:1 basis	£35,000
	TOTAL		£270,551

2 *Inequality, diversity, cohesion and integration issues*

- We know that Covid has had a disproportionate impact on people who already face health inequalities and who may have less resilience to cope with and recover from the pandemic.
- The “clinically extremely vulnerable” group are bound only by having vulnerability to Covid-19 – their long terms conditions, physical health, lives and lifestyles are as diverse as the city – therefore their responses to shielding are likely to be similarly diverse. In line with our existing shielding/CEV support plan, we have prioritised working with people who have a greater likelihood of poor health due to inequalities such as lower income, living in an area of high deprivation, already experiencing poor health or being part of a particular Community of Interest. For example, we are proposing grants to organisations which support people from refugee communities, carers and older people living in more deprived parts of the city.

3. What consultation and engagement has taken place?

- 3.1 There has been a significant amount of consultation and engagement with people who are CEV throughout the pandemic. In successive surveys and listening exercises, CEVs have told us how the advice to shield at home has impacted on their physical and mental wellbeing, their finances, their familial relationships, their confidence and their happiness. As shielding was paused and as we move out of lockdown, people are telling us they are anxious about a return to ‘normal’ away from the security of Covid restrictions. These grants have been proposed in direct response to this, to offer activities which will take place in a safe, welcoming and Covid secure space.
- 3.2 The Multi-Agency Bronze Group for Shielding, chaired by the Chief Officer for Health Partnerships and with representatives from LCC, the NHS and the Third Sector, collectively agreed to the transitions grant proposal and considered which organisations to support.

- 3.3 Forum Central, the Health and Care Third Sector infrastructure organisation, has had a key role in engaging with individual community organisations to share the funding opportunity and to shape the funding applications. In term, community organisations work closely with their members and the wider local community to propose transition activities and support based on and based on relevant needs and interests.
- 3.4 Partners from the Bronze Group and the wider Communities of Interest Network (led by Forum Central) will have a key role in sharing information about the transition activities and support to ensure people who are CEV know what is available.

4. What are the resource implications?

- 4.1 It is proposed a total of £270,551 (17 grants, ranging from £200 - £55,000 as per the table at section 5) to be spent on citywide transition activities and support for people who are CEV.
- 4.2 The £270,551 will come from a grant £522,227 made to Leeds City Council in March 2021 by Central Government's Department of Housing, Communities and Local Government to for "Clinically Extremely Vulnerable Support". As such, the CEV Transition grants will not increase pressure on LCC's current budgetary pressure.
- 4.3 The DCLG grant is held by the Health Partnerships Team on behalf of Leeds City Council and so payments to CEV transition grant recipients will come from the HPT's cost centre.

5. What are the legal implications?

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.

We will work with Procurement to formalise Grants Agreements for the 17 grant organisations. These can be signed off by Chief Officer, Health Partnerships, through the Delegated Decision schedule as the 17 individual grants are all under £100k.

As the Council would be entering into grant arrangements with the 17 organisations listed in the above table to deliver CEV Transition Support 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 or spent on matters for which the grant wasn't provided.

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). Although no longer directly applicable due to the UK's departure from the European Union, the preamble to EU Procurement Directive 2014/24/EU (from which the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 were transposed into English law) is still persuasive and the directive 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".

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”.

Grants may be in breach of subsidy control, but it is unlikely that the grant payments proposed will fall foul of the subsidy control rules.

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.

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.

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 Adults and Health should be satisfied that the approved course of action represents best value for the council

6. What are the key risks and how are they being managed?

RISK: Low awareness and take-up of activities resulting in people who are CEV not meeting outcomes from the transition phase.

MITIGATION: we will work with the 17 organisations who will be awarded grants to make sure the offer is publicised as far and as wide as possible. This includes sending a directory of support to everyone who is CEV which will also be available online, using extensive networks through the Bronze Group and Forum Central and pushing out the offer on social media.

7. Does this proposal support the council’s 3 Key Pillars?

Inclusive Growth

Health and Wellbeing

Climate Emergency

The key outcome of this proposal is supporting the emotional, mental and physical wellbeing of people who are Clinically Extremely Vulnerable. Targeting support and activities to people who are most at risk of health inequalities supports the ambition of the Leeds Health and Wellbeing Strategy: to improve the health of the poorest, the fastest.

Options, timescales and measuring success

a) What other options were considered?

- 4 There has been a grants application process. Only grants that could demonstrate how they would support meeting the outcomes of the transition phase of Leeds's CEV support plan through their proposed activities, and would target people most at risk of ill health, have been put forward to this funding proposal.
- 5 The citywide transition activities and support set out in this paper are complemented by activities and support for people living in particular localities. These are offered by the Community Hubs, set up at the start of the pandemic

b) How will success be measured?

Organisations will collect both quantitative and qualitative feedback on transition activities and supports in a way that is relevant to their project. For example, organisations will record numbers of people signing up to sessions, number of people accessing 1:1 advice, self-reported wellbeing as well as case studies, photos, quotes from people taking part in activities.

This data will be collated across all the grants and combined with feedback directly from people who are CEV to the Bronze group to provide a picture of whether the transition outcomes whilst focusing on the outcomes of: regaining physical confidence and physical wellbeing; addressing the emotional and mental health legacy of shielding; regaining social confidence; recovering financially, and accessing new wellbeing opportunities have been met.

c) What is the timetable for implementation?

- 6 Activities will begin in August 2021, running until March 2022. There may be a further number of grants over the winter if/when CEV support needs change if new national guidance is put in place. Procurement colleagues will be engaged at an early stage and a further report to DDP will be submitted in this regard if needed.

Appendices

Equality Screening Assessment

Background papers

- 7 None