

ABCD Community Pathfinder Grant Award and UK Shared Prosperity Fund Report: To seek approval from the Director of Adults and Health to award ABCD Community Pathfinder Grants and UKSPF grants for a combined value of £385,000.

Date: 24th January 2024

Report of: Chief Officer, Transformation Innovation, Adults and Health

Report to: Director of Adults and Health Caroline Baria

Will the decision be open for call in? Yes No

Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? Yes No

Brief summary

- Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) is an approach to community development that involves people identifying and mobilising existing assets to make the social, environmental, and economic changes that are important to them. It demonstrates that focussing on the strengths of communities, the local assets of people living in that area, the physical assets of the area and individual strengths are key to building the foundations of sustainable community development and reducing the need for traditional service provision.
- The report is requesting to approve funding for three new ABCD community pathfinder schemes subject to an open grant application process. Third sector organisations are invited to apply from the following areas: Woodhouse, Little London, Gipton, Moor Allerton (Cranmer Bank and Lingfield neighbourhood), Kirkstall (Hawksworth neighbourhood), Bramley and Stanningley. Three will be awarded from the areas listed.
- The report is also requesting to approve funding for the second and third year of delivery of three asset-based UKSPF funded projects: Hey Neighbour, delivered by Leeds Older People's Forum, Neighbourhood matching Scheme delivered by Voluntary Action Leeds, and an ABCD Pathfinder Scheme, delivered by Belle Isle Tenant Management Organisation.

Recommendations

- a) The Director of Adults and Health is recommended to approve grant funding of three new ABCD community pathfinder sites and approve the continuation funding for the second- and third-year delivery of three asset-based approach focused UKSPF funded projects.
- The three ABCD Pathfinder sites will be awarded to organisations that apply through an open grants application process.
 - The three ABCD Pathfinder Grants are 24-month awards of £50,000. The grants shall commence from the 1st of April 2024, with the last grant expiring on the 31st of March 2025.
 - The total grant fund is £150,000. Service Transformation, Adults and Health will be responsible for implementing the ABCD pathfinder scheme.
- b) The Director of Adults and Health is recommended to approve the continuation of the three-asset based UKSPF grants to continue project delivery for 24 months, overall total £235,00. The three grants are:
- One grant award of £60,000 to Hey Neighbour project, delivered by Leeds Older People Forum.
 - One grant award of £125,000 to The Neighbourhood Matching Scheme, delivered by Voluntary Action Leeds.
 - One grant award of £50,000 to Belle Isle Tenant Management Organisation (BITMO)

What is this report about?

1. 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 residents to come together, build connections and friendships over a period.
2. Focusing on the strengths of communities, enabling, and empowering them is not only more cost effective, by reducing the need for traditional service provision, but it delivers real social and economic change. A key quality of ABCD practice is the strong emphasis on building and sustaining meaningful relationships within communities and developing networks of reciprocal exchange, people feeling more connected to where they live, a sense of belonging, local social improvement and economic development, responding to challenges around health inequalities, social isolation, loneliness and health and well-being. With inequalities widening due to the COVID 19 pandemic and cost of living crisis, asset-based approaches will play an increasingly important role in building fairer communities.
3. The aim is to create the conditions that will enable both place and people to flourish, reduce inequalities, improve quality of life that supports communities to thrive and to reduce or delay the need for long term care and support.
4. We know that ABCD takes time to grow, to develop the conversations and the community connectors and as such have agreed a 24-month starting grant (instead of a year). This will give applicants the ability to plan longer term to deliver the scheme and support embedding ABCD as guiding principles within their organisation.
5. Building on the approach taken to developing new pathfinders in 2021, we have considered several factors. We would opt to site an ABCD pathfinder in an area that doesn't currently have one. We have prioritised areas with higher Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) and Leeds City Council priority neighbourhoods. Working with locality Programme Leads and Managers we have prioritised the 12 priority neighbourhoods, scoping out existing provision in those areas to

avoid duplication of delivery. We have worked with our partners in the Third Sector including Neighbourhood Networks to map out potential placed based organisations interested in community development type activity. Work has been undertaken with Local Care Partnerships (LCPs) to understand how the ABCD pathfinders could be aligned to LCPs and complement work to develop community building within LCP footprints. We have worked closely with the Third sector Local Community Anchor Network, mapping out current anchored place-based organisations and identifying gaps of delivery in community development type activity. We have excluded areas participating in the first year of the asset-based approaches UKSPF grant Neighbourhood Matching Scheme project enabling investment in community-led activity in other areas of the city. We have considered work being undertaken by Leeds as part of becoming a Marmot City. Finally, we have sought to ensure that there is a good geographical spread across the city.

6. From the available intelligence we chose two small areas: Moor Allerton (Cranmer Bank and Lingfield estates) and Kirkstall (Hawksworth estate) that have small pockets of deprivation that generally sit in more affluent wards and Gipton and Harehills (Gipton area), Little London and Woodhouse, Bramley and Stanningley with more widespread deprivation. The principles of ABCD are that it starts small at a neighbourhood level, and we would not expect to see organisations trying to cover the whole of the areas identified but to demonstrate where they would concentrate their efforts within smaller communities and neighbourhoods to grow ABCD.
7. In 2022, Adults and Health was approached by City Development to be part of a consortium for a non-competitive bid to the UKSPF, to deliver three asset-based projects with a focus on geographical areas of derivation in the city, that would test new approaches to community development to level up opportunity and improve the prosperity of local communities.
8. We funded three providers: Voluntary Action Leeds (VAL) to deliver an asset-based Neighbourhood Matching Scheme, across the 6 priority ward areas over 3 years. Belle Isle Tenant Management Organisation (BITMO) to proliferate the ABCD model in Belle Isle, a priority neighbourhood area. Leeds Older People's Forum to administer the Hey Neighbour Project, modelled on the ABCD small sparks grants scheme, to kick start community driven ideas in neighbourhoods.
9. Due to the success of this work in instigating community led activity, the projects have reported positive outcomes which they will continue to build on in years two and three of the grant.
 - In year one the Neighbourhood Matching Scheme has demonstrated implementing an asset-based approach to mobilising social capital. People have been involved in developing community plans and leading on the changes they want to see. To date, 92 volunteers have contributed to the first year of project delivery.
 - The Hey Neighbour Scheme has awarded 23 small and micro grants to communities and individuals to deliver a wide range of community led activity that focusses on fostering neighbourliness.
 - BITMO have reported 2 self-reliant groups have been established within the area and are working to strengthen connections between other community centres within the area, facilitating collaboration instead of competition.

What impact will this proposal have?

10. The ABCD community pathfinder model has been very successful and has made positive impacts in the wards we are currently funding. It has demonstrated that focussing on strengths and local assets of communities is key to building the foundations of sustainable community development.

11. We have worked closely with the Localities team, delivered ABCD training to localities officers working within wards where we currently fund to raise awareness and support building relationships between Community Builders and localities officers. We will continue to support and strengthen relationships between localities officers and Community Builders, including the newly funded pathfinder sites to achieve our key priorities as set out in our ABCD plan. We are working closely with the ABCD Pathfinder sites within the priority neighbourhoods and we will include the newly funded pathfinder sites to support and embed asset-based approaches in the implementation of the Priority Ward Partnership Plans in these neighbourhoods and communities.
12. The Neighbourhood Matching Scheme is supporting community inclusion through, for example, the skills sharing project in Beeston, where volunteers are sharing language skills to support with translation to enable participation of volunteers where English is not their first language. Members have reported increased social inclusion and improved mental health, whilst a bulb planting project in Armley has brought together multiple partners to instigate community-led activity and develop new project ideas as well as successfully leveraging in investment from a local business supporting climate positive action in the area. An evaluation framework developed for the Neighbourhood Matching Scheme has highlighted the positive impact of the project in volunteers having ownership and the opportunity to utilise their skills and knowledge for the benefit of the local community.
13. The ABCD programme will continue to support a number of key strategic priorities including: the Best City Ambition, the Better Lives Strategy and Inclusive Growth Strategy. The expansion of the ABCD pathfinder model will build community capacity and resilience. Small sparks funding, a key element of the pathfinder model, has enabled community-led activity by removing financial barriers to activity and the positive impact on improving mental health and community cohesion has been captured through our ABCD pathfinder monitoring. 84 small sparks were given out and 59 self-reliant groups established between 2021 and 2023, demonstrating how people can mobilise to find solutions and create the change they want to see in their communities.
14. In 2019, we commissioned Leeds Beckett University to undertake a two-year evaluation study to build an evidence base for ABCD in Leeds. The findings of the study in 2021 evidenced a range of positive benefits of the current ABCD community pathfinder scheme model including:
 - **People have good friends** - strong evidence that people had better social connections through ABCD and promising evidence that friendships were being made.
 - **Individuals and organisations are better connected** - the evaluation found that ABCD in Leeds has helped people to discover their own talents and skills through connecting them with others socially. Examples of differences in generations bridged and neighbourhoods being more inclusive of people with disabilities.
 - **Neighbourliness increased during the pandemic** - ABCD pathfinders able to quickly bring people together to establish mutual aid and developed innovative ways to keep people connected and active from food sharing schemes to car park discos.
 - There was **strong evidence that ABCD strengthened local groups and new community activities** and that led to new networks and a growth in community spirit.
 - **Community members started to change how they thought and took control of projects and spaces.** Workers no longer tried to deliver everything themselves, so they could use their time and skills to support others to run more groups and projects.
 - **Improved health and wellbeing of residents** as people increased in confidence and interacted more through being involved and accessing services. The project offered ways of keeping people mentally active if they were retired or not working.
 - As part of the ABCD Leeds Evaluation by Leeds Beckett University a trial study found to estimate the social value for one ABCD Pathfinder site. The estimate of SROI is **between £5.43 and £14.02 of social value returned for every £1 invested.**

15. The three Third Sector organisations awarded grants to deliver the ABCD community pathfinders will employ an ABCD Community Builder who will build social connections, working with citizens living in the community (who are unpaid) to identify things that are important to them, focusing on the strengths of communities and the local assets of people living in areas, the physical assets of the area and individual strengths to create citizen led groups/activities, with seed funding (small sparks) to support this led community action and build the foundations of sustainable community development.
16. The ABCD programme contributes to the corporate equality improvement priority focussed on tackling inequalities arising from COVID 19 and the work in relation to communities of interest. This priority will make a difference to communities in our most deprived parts of the city. Links have been developed with the Migrant Access Project which uses an asset-based approach in its work. We have worked with colleagues in Children's services and in Adults and Health commissioning to develop the ABCD Pathfinder for the Roma community. Overall, we have considered areas with higher IMD for this round of grant funding. It will ensure that people are able to develop, and co-produce groups based on what they need and want to change to improve their resilience and health and wellbeing.
17. The premise of Asset Based Community Development is that communities can drive the development process themselves by identifying and mobilizing existing, but often unrecognised assets. Thereby responding to challenges and creating local social improvement and economic development. The ABCD community pathfinder model adds social value and contributes to the long-term wellbeing and resilience of individuals in the communities they live in.

How does this proposal impact the three pillars of the Best City Ambition?

Health and Wellbeing

Inclusive Growth

Zero Carbon

18. Locality working and development of asset-based approaches directly contributes to the 2020/2025 Best Council Plan priorities. ABCD strongly aligns to those related to health and wellbeing pillar of the Best City Ambition, specifically to Age Friendly Leeds, and safe, strong communities.
19. It aligns to the Inclusive Growth pillar helping to tackle poverty and helping everyone benefit from the economy to achieve their full potential.
20. Our ABCD plan has four key priorities that clearly link to the Best City Ambition, which puts an emphasis on working with people in a strength-based way, investing in prevention, using asset-based approaches and building community capacity. This includes having a clear plan for building on the ABCD Pathfinder Model, through developing new pathfinder sites and working with existing pathfinders to embed an organisational ABCD approach and therefore strengthening the sustainability and self-reliance of communities.
21. A key priority of our ABCD plan is the focus on social capital, community building, and neighbourliness is supported by the UKSPF projects through investing in new approaches to community-led activity across the city. Community led projects have supported areas of Zero-Carbon through climate change initiatives, inclusive growth through creating opportunities for volunteers to lead on activity that promotes pride in their local area and health and wellbeing through projects focusing on promoting neighbourliness by tackling social isolation.

Climate Emergency

22. There is interest from communities in strengthening the connections to locally led activity focussed on tackling the climate emergency. Two of our pathfinder sites, New Wortley Community Centre and LS14 Trust, are Leeds Climate Action Hubs.

Community-led activity across our pathfinder sites have included the development of a community garden and green space re-wilding project in Horsforth and litter picking activity in Lincoln green and Beeston.

The Neighbourhood Matching Scheme project in Armley has seen the community lead a project resulting in 2,600 bulbs being planted locally. 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 thus contributing to a reduced carbon footprint.

As noted above, several activities being developed by communities are focussed on improving the environment.

What consultation and engagement has taken place?

Wards affected: Little London and Woodhouse, Gipton and Harehills, Kirkstall, Bramley and Stanningley, Alwoodley

Have ward members been consulted? Yes No

23. We have undertaken the following consultation.
24. The Executive Member for Adult Social Care, Public Health and Active Lifestyles has been briefed on the report.
25. All wards' members have received an 'ABCD in Leeds' information pack as part of our planned approach to member engagement.
26. Executive Member for Adult Social Care, Public Health and Active Lifestyles will be talking to elected members at the Community Committee Review workshop about the impact of ABCD in Leeds on the 17th of January.
27. Consultation has taken place with Localities Managers and senior localities officers to when gathering evidence of potential areas to fund and then on the selection of areas identified.
28. Consultation has taken place with the Third Sector Local Community Anchor Network to identify the underrepresented communities of interest and existing place based third sector organisations within selected ward areas.

What are the resource implications?

29. There is no impact on the 23-24 budget as grant expenditure assumed. Budget provision has been identified for the financial year 2024-2025. Should we need to slip spending into 25-26 financial from 24-25 to complete the programme we will undertake the accounting to reflect this.
30. For 2024/25, there is an identified annual budget of £442,000 which funds both the existing and proposed new ABCD community pathfinder sites, ABCD training provided to organisations working in Leeds and the delivery of the three asset-based approaches UKSPF grants. This budget includes £188,000 from Adults and Health base budget, £144,000 from Public Health and £110,000 from UKSPF fund. Provision has been made in the 2024/25 base budget to allocate £75,000 to fund the three new ABCD pathfinder schemes.

31. A grant agreement will be entered into using the Council's standard grant agreement. All documentation will be registered on YORtender and Contracts Finder.
32. The grant payment will remain at the same level as the current fee of £25,000 p.a. per ABCD community pathfinder scheme.
33. The grant payment for the UKSPF funded projects will be made in line with the payment schedule listed below.
34. 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.

Grant award breakdown	Grant Value to be awarded	Grant period
3 ABCD Pathfinder sites	£50,000 per site	01/04/2024-30/03/2026
UKSPF Hey Neighbour Project	£60,000	01/04/2024-30/03/2026
UKSPF BITMO pathfinder Site	£50,000	01/04/2024-30/03/2026
UKSPF Neighbourhood Matching Scheme	£125,000	01/04/2024-30/03/2026

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

35. A key risk is that applications from the areas highlighted are not received or the applications received do not meet the criteria.
 - We will work with our partners in the Third Sector to ensure that the grant application is widely advertised, and accessible to any third sector organisation applicant. Previous rounds of funding have shown that there is significant interest from third sector in delivering ABCD pathfinders.
 - A grants pack with the application form and guidance will be available online through our partners and also on the ABCD in Leeds website: www.abcdinleeds.com. We will offer information sessions via a webinar or in placed based locations to talk to potential applicants if requested.
 - We will send out an ABCD information pack about the ABCD Programme and a briefing to elected members about the ABCD Pathfinder grant scheme open grants call.
36. It is possible that UKSPF funded projects do not deliver on their agreed outcomes and outputs. Quarterly monitoring meetings and regular contact and support is offered in between monitoring meetings with delivery partners takes place to ensure that projects are on target for delivery and ensure that supporting evidence is submitted in line with the claim's guidance set out by the West Yorkshire Combined Authority.
37. There is a risk that the ABCD pathfinder grants do not deliver the agreed outcomes. Appropriate monitoring mechanisms are in place including a requirement to provide evidence against the ABCD evaluation framework and attend quarterly monitoring meetings.

What are the legal implications?

38. 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.
39. As the Council would be entering into grant arrangements with the organisations in the areas listed at page 2 to deliver asset-based approaches and 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 or spent on matters for which the grant wasn't provided.
40. 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 (which subsequently became the Public Contract Regulations 2015) 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".
41. 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".
42. 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.
43. 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.
44. Subsidy control Act assessments have been completed for all proposed grants. All grant recipients are third sector organisations working within communities. Following the assessment, it has been concluded that the activity for which this grant is awarded is not an enterprise as it is not an entity (that is, any person, or groups of persons under common control) that is engaged in an economic activity (which means offering goods and services on a market). Therefore, under the Subsidy Control Act 2022 these grants are not a subsidy. The Subsidy Control Act assessment for each grant has been retained as a record.
45. There is no overriding legal obstacle preventing the award of the grants and the contents of this report should be noted.
46. 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.

Options, timescales and measuring success.

What other options were considered?

47. Other options would be to not develop the ABCD programme through the funding of pathfinder sites or UKSPF projects or to do that at a lower or no cost. These options were not considered as sufficient provision has been made to support the existing ABCD pathfinder model and the plan to expand Asset Based Community Development across Leeds. The Council recognises the impact it has in communities to develop its strengths and the positive impact that has in the prevention agenda. It links clearly with the Best City Ambition which puts an emphasis on working with people in a different way, investing in prevention, using asset-based approaches, and building community capacity.

How will success be measured?

48. The ABCD Evaluation Framework (attached as a background paper) was created with Leeds Beckett University, Community Builders from current ABCD community pathfinder schemes and Leeds City Council. The Evaluation Framework is a set of outcomes, underpinned by indicators and mechanisms of how to collate evidence to measure success of the ABCD community pathfinder scheme. Each scheme's progress will be monitored by submitting a quarterly report (based on the outcomes of the evaluation framework) 'story so far' examples (case studies) and attending a quarterly monitoring meeting.

The expected outcomes of the ABCD Pathfinder scheme are:

- People have good friends.
- Communities identify and work to bring about the changes they want to see.
- People and communities are better connected and more resilient.
- People live happier, more independent lives for longer.
- Embed ABCD approach across the host organisation, including staff attending training offers.

We will continue to look to refine our approach to success measures and how we can measure host organisations developing their ABCD values and a sustainable way of continuing working in an ABCD way.

49. UKSPF projects will be measured through quarterly monitoring. Partners will submit evidence to demonstrate the achievement of outcomes and outputs agreed with the UKSPF team within City Development, who will report these to The West Yorkshire Combined Authority.

The combined outputs across the projects are:

- Number of organisations receiving grants
- Number of local events and activities supported.
- Number of projects
- Number of volunteering opportunities supported.

The combined outcomes across the projects are:

- Improved engagement numbers
- Volunteering numbers as a result of support

The Hey Neighbour and Neighbourhood Matching Scheme will submit case studies and project evaluations to capture the impact of community-led action. BITMO as an ABCD pathfinder site will be monitored in line with the framework set out in the point above.

What is the timetable and who will be responsible for implementation?

50. We anticipate the 1st of April 2024 as the commenced date for all three ABCD community pathfinder schemes, this may be delayed dependant on time that could be taken to set up the scheme/recruitment of the ABCD community builder.

ABCD community pathfinder scheme opens for applications	26/01/2024
ABCD community pathfinder grant information webinar sessions	31/01/2024
ABCD community pathfinder scheme submission deadline	23/02/2024
Successful organisation notified of outcome of decision.	25/03/2024
Mobilisation of ABCD community pathfinder scheme	01/04/2024

Appendices

- Equality Impact Assessment Screening Form
- **Background papers**
 - ABCD in Leeds Plan on a Page
 - ABCD in Leeds–Evaluation Framework
 - ABCD in Leeds Case Studies
 - Evaluation of the ABCD Leeds Briefing – A Review of Evidence
 - Evaluation of the ABCD Leeds Briefing – Impact of COVID19
 - Evaluation of the ABCD Leeds Briefing – Social Return on Investment
 - Hey Neighbour Evaluation Report

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