



Reading
Borough Council
Working better with you

DECISION BOOK

Issue: 619 Date: 5 JANUARY 2021

Decisions set out in the book have been made under delegated powers by the Chief Executive, Executive Directors or the Chief Finance Officer and Monitoring Officer, in consultation either with the relevant committee or Lead Councillor.

The Decision Book process has been altered to suspend the current Councillors' call-in arrangements within the 10-day period after its publication and replace it with the ability during that period for three Councillors to request a retrospective review of the decision in writing to the Head of Legal and Democratic Services.

The decision book can be accessed on the Council's website - <https://democracy.reading.gov.uk/mgListOfficerDecisions.aspx?bcr=1&BAM=0>

The officer reports accompanying the decisions are attached.

Contact:	Richard Woodford	Committee Services
Tel:		0118 937 2332
e-mail:		richard.woodford@reading.gov.uk

DECISION BOOK - ISSUE 619 - 5 JANUARY 2021

1. ONE READING COMMUNITY HUB - VCS FUNDING

<u>DECISION</u>	<u>LEAD COUNCILLOR(S)</u>	<u>WARDS AFFECTED</u>	<u>PAGE NO.</u>
1. ONE READING COMMUNITY HUB - VCS FUNDING	COUNCILLOR BROCK	BOROUGHWIDE	1

This report sets out the decision to award grant funding to the attached list of Voluntary and Community sector organisations from the new funding allocation for local Authorities supporting the Clinically Extremely Vulnerable (CEV) individuals.

It is the decision of the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, to award grant funding to the attached list of 12 organisations totalling £39,000.

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT BY CHIEF EXECUTIVE

LEAD COUNCILLOR:	JASON BROCK, LEADER OF THE COUNCIL		
DATE:	5 JANUARY 2021		
TITLE:	ONE READING COMMUNITY HUB - VCS FUNDING		
SERVICE:	ALL	WARDS:	BOROUGHWIDE
AUTHOR:	ISABEL EDGAR BRIANCON	TEL:	
JOB TITLE:	ASSISTANT DIRECTOR FOR CORPORATE IMPROVEMENT AND CUSTOMER SERVICES	E-MAIL:	isabel.edgarbriancon@reading.gov.uk

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report sets out the decision to award grant funding to the attached list of Voluntary and Community sector organisations from the new funding allocation for local Authorities supporting the Clinically Extremely Vulnerable (CEV) individuals.
- 1.2 On the 2 November 2020 MHCLG confirmed they would provide councils with funding equivalent to £14.60 per CEV individual on the Shielded Patient List (SPL) for the 28-day period that the new lockdown restrictions are in force. The indicative allocation of this funding to Reading Borough Council is £68,000.
- 1.3 The new lockdown restrictions have made specific requirements of Local Authorities to support their CEV residents during the 28 lockdown Period. As with the previous lockdown Period, the council has worked closely with its VCS partners to deliver support and advice through referrals from the One Reading Community Hub, which forms a core part of the Council's response to supporting vulnerable residents during the Covid-19 pandemic.
- 1.4 There have been two previous rounds of funding to the VCS totalling around £100k since March 2020. Given the shorter time period for the 'lockdown' restrictions GOLD command approved funding to be allocated in a timely way to our partners against six priority areas of support.
- 1.5 The allocations have been made to address these needs highlighted through the Covid-19 pandemic, as set out in 3.3, below.

2. DECISION

- 2.1 It is the decision of the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, to award grant funding to the attached list of 12 organisations totalling £39,000.

3. BACKGROUND AND WORK TO DATE

- 3.1 On 31st October 2020 the Prime Minister announcement a new set of Covid19 restrictions would come into effect on 5th November 2020.
- 3.2 Since lifting Covid 19 restrictions in July 2020, and specifically reducing the restrictions placed on people that had been identified as needed to ‘Shield’ the One Reading Community Hub (ORCH) has remained operational, although demand for the service had decreased significantly.
- 3.3 On 5th November ORCH was relaunched and VCS partner meetings were stood back up. Feedback from our VCS partners has identified some key issues and concerns that have manifested throughout the previous lockdown and continue to place demand on our partners. These included:
- Loneliness / isolation / mental health
 - Food poverty / food banks
 - Debt and financial advice
 - Children at risk
 - Physical health
 - Wellbeing of carers and those delivering voluntary support to vulnerable people.
- 3.4 In line with the Council’s post Covid-19 Recovery Plan, we stated the desire to focus on protecting the most vulnerable and address emerging issues specific to our communities.
- 3.5 The funding allocation is aimed at community groups based in Reading borough and while there is no requirement for applications to be submitted, our VCS are required to use funding to address issues identified in 3.3.
- 3.6 A requirement of the funding is for VCS partners to provide a precis (with supporting data) of the activity undertaken during this new period of Covid 19 Restrictions.

4. RECOMMENDATION

- 4.1 Funding is allocated to partners as set out in Appendix 1

5. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC AIMS

- 5.1 The Council’s three broad priorities within the Pandemic Strategic Framework are consistent with the Council’s strategic aims.

5.2 None of these can be achieved unless the entire Borough comes together to address this emergency and emerges strongly on the other side. Although we have taken the step of closing some of our buildings to protect staff and service users, in line with government guidance on social-distancing, we are still meeting the needs of our customers.

5.3 We are working in partnership with key partners, the business community and our vibrant voluntary and community sector to mobilise to address both the immediate and longer-term needs of the Borough.

6. ENVIRONMENTAL AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS

6.1 The Council declared a Climate Emergency at its meeting on 26 February 2019 (Minute 48 refers). We will not lose sight of this imperative and if progress reports are not immediately evident during the heightened activity to respond to the virus, members should be assured that work will continue nonetheless.

7. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND INFORMATION

7.1 Section 138 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 places a duty on local authorities to involve local representatives when carrying out "any of its functions" by providing information, consulting or "involving in another way". We continue to consult with the voluntary sector and businesses community on how we should respond to the emergency and assist the community with recovery and future resilience.

8. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

8.1 Under the Equality Act 2010, Section 149, a public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to—

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
- advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

8.2 It is imperative, that in responding to this emergency we look to protect the most vulnerable and marginalised in our society. Our revised priorities facilitate this. We will continually review our progress to ensure that we do not leave behind any section of our community.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

9.1 The Chief Executive has authority to take decisions on behalf of the Council as necessary to respond to emergencies where it is not practicable to obtain the necessary urgency approvals from the Council or its committees. The Chief Executive also has delegated authority in times of emergency to take such action as he considers necessary to protect the interests of the Council, having consulted with the Leader of the Council, and Lead Councillors where appropriate. These provisions are set out in the Council's Delegations Register.

- 9.2 The Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, took a decision to amend temporarily the Decision Book process to enable decisions to be taken more flexibly during the current Covid-19 pandemic, which will enable Executive Directors and Statutory Officers, in consultation with the relevant Lead Councillor(s) to take decisions on an urgent basis to protect the Council's interests.
- 9.3 The Coronavirus Act 2020 received Royal Assent on 25 March 2020 and contained provision for the Secretary of State to make Regulations in relation to the arrangements for holding local authority meetings (Section 78), during the current pandemic.
- 9.4 The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020, came into effect on 4 April 2020. The Council has reviewed its decision-making processes, including holding online meetings where appropriate and possible.

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 On the 2nd November MHCLG announced funding allocations for support to CEV individuals during the new lock down period. The council has been awarded an indicative amount of £68,000. A core part of this funding has been allocated to our VCS partners to deliver services as part of the One Reading Community Hub response. The proposed VCS allocation is for £39,000 leaving £29,000 in the CEV fund.

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS

11. None

APPENDIX 1

Organisation	Money to be awarded	Mental Health and Wellbeing
Mustard Tree (Engage Befriending)	£4,000	Offering a range of befriending services for older people and more recently expanding the offer to address isolation and wellbeing for all age groups.
ACRE	£4,000	Suicide Prevention Training for ACRE volunteers specifically focussing on harder to reach BAME communities
Berkshire West Your Way	£4,000	One to one support for people with mental health problems.
Number 5	£4,000	Counselling and support and guidance for Children and younger people (11- 25yrs)
Caribbean Association	£300	Providing outreach support for 30 isolated and vulnerable individuals on Christmas day.
Organisation	Money to be awarded	Financial Support
Communicare	£4,000	Providing information, advice and support on financial issues and employment advice
Organisation	Money to be awarded	Physical Health
Get Berkshire Active (working in conjunction with Reading Sport and Leisure)	£4,700	Facilitate specialist support to frail older people, to improve mobility and confidence in their own homes. 1:1 (covid safe).
Age UK Berkshire	£4,000	Reaching and referring frail isolated older people, offering befriending support for the 1:1 specialist support
Age UK Reading	£1000	Chiropody services and shopping services
Organisation	Money to be awarded	Other core support required via ORCH
Reading Refugee Support Group	£2,000	Provide funding towards a caseworker role to support asylum seekers in accessing health, education, social services, mental health services.
Readifood	£2,000	Urgent food provision and direct delivery of food to CEV individuals
RVA	£1,000	Supermarket support/Online support and general coordination of VCS activity
EAP Fund	£4,000	Support for our partners volunteers around wellbeing

Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)

For advice on this document please contact Clare Muir on 72119 or email Claire.Muir@reading.gov.uk.

Please contact the Project Management Office at pmo@reading.gov.uk for advice and/or support to complete this form from a project perspective.

Name of proposal/activity/policy to be assessed: Winter Support Grant
 Directorate: BfC
 Service:

Name: Vicky Rhodes
 Job Title: Director of Early Help - Brighter Futures for Children
 Date of assessment: 15.12.2020

Version History

Version	Reason	Author	Date	Approved By

Scope your proposal

- What is the aim of your policy or new service/what changes are you proposing?

-
- 1.1 In response to the Coronavirus, COVID-19 pandemic, the Government announced that a £170 million COVID Winter Grant Scheme will be made available in early December 2020 to support those most in need across England with the cost of food, energy (heating, cooking, lighting), water bills (including sewerage) and other essentials.
 - 1.2 The aim is to give vulnerable households peace of mind in the run up to Christmas and over the Winter months during the pandemic by helping those who need it to have food on the table and other essentials, so every child will be warm and well-fed this winter.
 - 1.3 The scheme starts on 01 December 2020, and local authorities are expected to have arrangements in place to administer the scheme by early December. The scheme will last until 31 March 2021.
 - 1.4 The £170 million for the scheme is a fixed four-month envelope that will not be topped up. Reading's share of the £170 million is £464,497.68
 - 1.5 The Government have set some broad national criteria for the funds but are allowing local authorities to determine their own local award schemes.
-
-

- Who will benefit from this proposal and how?

Children eligible for pupil premium free school meals will benefit from food voucher support over the school holidays

Vulnerable families who may not meet the above, but present to the One Reading Community Hub or local organisations over the scheme period in need of food support

Priority vulnerable families identified in data or presenting for support will receive assistance with fuel/utilities bills.

-
- What outcomes does the change aim to achieve and for whom?

The scheme seeks to ensure no child goes cold or hungry over the winter months. The targeted nature of the scheme removes the need for families/professionals to make an application for support. The use of the FSM cohort ensure food vouchers are received by those assessed as requiring additional support.

Additional grant support to local VCS organisations ensures no family slips through the net over the Xmas period.

The funding does not enable fuel support to all the above cohort. Data will be cross referenced with RBCs Council Tax support scheme to ensure those families who need it most receive support. The fuel support is likely to be supplied via a 3rd party as opposed to BACs payments to tenants to mitigate the risk of financial support being offset by existing debt.

-
- Who are the main stakeholders and what do they want?

Families with children who attend Reading schools and other vulnerable households who require additional support to avoid additional debt/stress over the winter period. Support will ensure children are fed and utilities are not disconnected. The lead in time from receipt of the grant/DWP advice has not enabled a consultation period.

Schools. Head Teachers want to ensure support reaches families. Schools are providing email contacts for eligible families to fast track voucher support in advance of school holidays.

Local Community Groups : Want to ensure sufficient capacity and resources to reach local families who maybe experiencing hardship.

Assess whether an EqIA is Relevant

How does your proposal relate to eliminating discrimination; advancing equality of opportunity; promoting good community relations?

- Do you have evidence or reason to believe that some (racial, disability, sex, gender, sexuality, age and religious belief) groups may be affected differently than others? Make reference to the known demographic profile of the service user group, your monitoring information, research, national data/reports etc.

No The scheme includes a targeted element to ensure it reaches those most in need. School census data ensures families previously means tested are reached.

- Is there already public concern about potentially discriminatory practices/impact or could there be? Make reference to your complaints, consultation, feedback, media reports locally/nationally.

No

If the answer is Yes to any of the above, you need to do an Equality Impact Assessment.

If No you **MUST** complete this statement.

An Equality Impact Assessment is not relevant because:

The scheme is targeted, using data to evidence families who require support. Robust mechanisms in place via One Reading Community Hub and Brighter Futures for Children for any families who require support but do not meet pupil premium threshold.

X

Completing Officer

X

Lead Officer

Assess the Impact of the Proposal

Your assessment must include:

- Consultation
- Collection and Assessment of Data
- Judgement about whether the impact is negative or positive

Think about who does and doesn't use the service? Is the take up representative of the community? What do different minority groups think? (You might think your policy, project or service is accessible and addressing the needs of these groups, but asking them might give you a totally different view). Does it really meet their varied needs? Are some groups less likely to get a good service?

How do your proposals relate to other services - will your proposals have knock on effects on other services elsewhere? Are there proposals being made for other services that relate to yours and could lead to a cumulative impact?

Example: A local authority takes separate decisions to limit the eligibility criteria for community care services; increase charges for respite services; scale back its accessible housing programme; and cut concessionary travel.

Each separate decision may have a significant effect on the lives of disabled residents, and the cumulative impact of these decisions may be considerable.

This combined impact would not be apparent if decisions are considered in isolation.

Consultation

How have you consulted with or do you plan to consult with relevant groups and experts. If you haven't already completed a Consultation form do it now. The checklist helps you make sure you follow good consultation practice.

[Consultation manager form - Reading Borough Council Dash](#)

Relevant groups/experts	How were/will the views of these groups be obtained	Date when contacted

Collect and Assess your Data

Using information from Census, residents survey data, service monitoring data, satisfaction or complaints, feedback, consultation, research, your knowledge and the knowledge of people in your team, staff groups etc. describe how the proposal could impact on each group. Include both positive and negative impacts.

(Please delete relevant ticks)

- Describe how this proposal could impact on racial groups
 - Is there a negative impact? Yes / No / Not sure
-

- Describe how this proposal could impact on Sex and Gender identity (include pregnancy and maternity, marriage, gender re-assignment)
 - Is there a negative impact? Yes / No / Not sure
-

- Describe how this proposal could impact on Disability
 - Is there a negative impact? Yes / No / Not sure
-

- Describe how this proposal could impact on Sexual orientation (cover civil partnership)
 - Is there a negative impact? Yes / No / Not sure
-
-

- Describe how this proposal could impact on age
 - Is there a negative impact? Yes / No / Not sure
-
-

- Describe how this proposal could impact on Religious belief
 - Is there a negative impact? Yes / No / Not sure
-
-

Make a Decision

If the impact is negative then you must consider whether you can legally justify it. If not you must set out how you will reduce or eliminate the impact. If you are not sure what the impact will be you **MUST** assume that there could be a negative impact. You may have to do further consultation or test out your proposal and monitor the impact before full implementation.

(Delete numbers below which don't apply)

1. No negative impact identified - Go to sign off
2. Negative impact identified but there is a justifiable reason

You must give due regard or weight but this does not necessarily mean that the equality duty overrides other clearly conflicting statutory duties that you must comply with.

3. Negative impact identified or uncertain

What action will you take to eliminate or reduce the impact? Set out your actions and timescale

- How will you monitor for adverse impact in the future?
-
-

X

X

Completing Officer

Lead Officer