



FOR PUBLICATION

DERBYSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

REPORT TO CABINET MEMBER FOR HEALTH AND COMMUNITIES

2 December 2021

Report of the Director - Public Health

**USE OF THE CONTAIN OUTBREAK MANAGEMENT FUND TO PROVIDE
ADDITIONAL FUNDING TO DERBYSHIRE LAW CENTRE AND DERBY
LAW CENTRE FOR SPECIALIST ADVICE**

1. Divisions Affected

1.1 County-wide.

2. Key Decision

2.1 Not a key decision.

3. Purpose

3.1 The purpose of this report is to seek approval from the Cabinet Member for Health and Communities to utilise Contain Outbreak Management Funding to provide three grants as follows:

- a) Strengthen specialist eviction and housing advice work provided by Derbyshire Law Centre (to support residents in High Peak, Chesterfield, North East Derbyshire, Bolsover, and Derbyshire Dales) for an additional 6 months from October 2021 to March 2022 at a cost of £42,000.
- b) Strengthen specialist eviction and housing advice work provided by Derby Law Centre (to support residents in Erewash, Amber Valley and South Derbyshire) for an additional 6 months from October 2021 to March 2022 at a cost of £22,000.

- c) Strengthen specialist employment advice support across the County provided by Derbyshire Law Centre for a period of up to 2 years at a cost of £80,000 from October 2021.

4. Information and Analysis

- 4.1 There is growing evidence that social and economic problems with a legal dimension can exacerbate or create ill health. Cases are becoming very complex before support is accessed, making resolution much more difficult. Covid has increased the number of cases and there are different complexities associated with the impact of Covid, thus there is an unmet need for specialist housing/eviction advice and specialist employment advice support across Derbyshire. This report requests funding to strengthen three different specialist advice services in Derbyshire, that will complement other generalist advisory services in the system. Specialist advisory services often incorporate a legal or court duty dimension into their work.

Specialist eviction advice

- 4.2 In September 2020 (£51,000) and March 2021 (£42,000), Derbyshire County Council allocated £93,000 of its share of the Local Authority Assistance Grant for Food and Essential Supplies to Derbyshire Law Centre, to cover additional court duty/eviction advice service capacity to mitigate against the risk of homelessness once the eviction suspension was lifted. This grant was provided by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) to support people who are struggling to afford essentials due to the impact of Covid-19. Local Authorities had the discretion to identify and support those most in need. Conditions of the grant allowed for supporting people with advice and information to help people in the longer term.
- 4.3 Derbyshire Law Centre was funded to provide specialist eviction advice to residents in High Peak, Chesterfield, North East Derbyshire, Bolsover, and Derbyshire Dales. To ensure parity of service, two further awards from the Local Authority Assistance Grant for Food and Essential Supplies were made in Jan 2021 (£22,000) and March 2021 (£22,000) to Derby Law Centre. This ensured similar specialist eviction advice and additional court duty capacity was provided for people living in the South of the County (South Derbyshire, Erewash and Amber Valley)
- 4.4 As Derbyshire continues to respond to Covid-19, individuals will still be asked to self-isolate if they test positive for Covid-19 or, in certain circumstances, if they have been identified as a close contact of

someone who has tested positive. In some instances, this request to self-isolate will create challenges for individuals in terms of financial hardship, which could have knock on consequences for maintaining secure housing. The funding proposed in this report seeks to proactively prevent eviction and homelessness and ensure that residents can effectively self-isolate in their own homes.

- 4.5 Ongoing cases may also mean working families could be further impacted, for example if parents need to stay at home to look after children, that have tested positive to Covid. This could have financial consequences that may have knock on implication for maintaining housing.
- 4.6 Monitoring of initial of outcomes is still ongoing, but the first allocation of £51,000 in September 2020 enabled Derbyshire Law Centre to deal with 394 housing cases and 1447 housing enquiries, of which 80 cases have been closed and they have prevented 42 cases of homelessness. Derby Law centre have reported 67 outcomes between March 2021 and Sept 2021 and have stated the following “As a result of this advice, beneficiaries will be able to maintain their homes, and to begin to manage multiple economic, social, and financial challenges affecting their lives. Ultimately this will enable them to manage their tenancy/accommodation legally and safely”.
- 4.7 This report proposes that the Council continues to support specialist eviction advice work of both Derbyshire Law Centre, and Derby Law Centre to continue this work, for a further period of 6 months at a cost of £42,000 (Derbyshire Law Centre) and £22,000 (Derby Law Centre) respectively covering the period from October 2021 to March 2022.

Specialist employment advice

- 4.8 This report also seeks approval to grant fund a further £80,000 from the Contain Outbreak Management Fund to support and strengthen specialist employment advice in Derbyshire. Research by Public Health Wales outlined that individuals with high levels of income precarity were significantly more likely to say they had left home during self-isolation to purchase food or medicines. Thus, supporting residents to maintain good quality employment will go some way to ensuring they have the material security to self-isolate should the need arise.
- 4.9 The Just in Time (JiT) employment project was piloted in Chesterfield and provided rapid access to employment-related legal advice to help clients maintain or return to employment. Independent research was conducted by the Sheffield Hallam University/Centre for Regional

Economic and Social Research, to evaluate the project. Key findings included:

- Chesterfield JiT pilot saw 106 clients supported over an 18-month period.
 - The Covid-19 pandemic has changed the nature and severity of presenting needs among clients.
 - Support through JiT often enabled clients to return to work who might not otherwise have been able to do so.
 - Some evidence of positive impacts on health and well-being for clients.
 - There was a widespread consensus among stakeholders of a 'JiT effect' where the project support generated additional outcomes over and above what would have happened otherwise.
- 4.10 The proposed investment outlined in this report will allow the project to extend its reach to provide Countywide coverage for a period of up to 2 years.
- 4.11 Demand data analysts at National Citizens Advice are predicting both an across the board increase in demand for advice, and large spikes between 10-50% in key advice areas such as debt, redundancy and income protection.
- 4.12 Collaborative pathways have been developed between a range of services in the past 6 months to strengthen pathways between services including the Derbyshire Welfare Rights Service, Derbyshire Discretionary Fund, local contact tracing team and Community Response Unit so that staff working in these areas can signpost individuals to the Law Centres (and vice versa) as required. The Law Centres also work collaboratively with other Advisory Service partners in the system such as Citizens Advice. This forms part of Derbyshire's holistic approach to supporting individuals to effectively self-isolate or plan for self-isolation.
- 4.13 It is intended that by providing the advice and support needed to achieve financial stability and secure housing, individuals will be less likely to challenge the rules in the future and this will enable them to self-isolate, work safely and to provide accurate test and trace information as the financial jeopardy of doing so is substantially mitigated.
- 4.14 Funding will be allocated as a grant payment
- 4.15 Derbyshire Law Centre will monitor and evaluate the project and will sample a small number of users to understand whether the advice

provided enabled them to effectively plan for and/or undertake a period of self-isolation. Learning will be shared to inform future local activity in this area.

5. Alternative Options Considered

- 5.1 Do nothing: Risk that demand will outstrip resources, once existing funding runs out, or that staff will leave the organisation as contracts come to an end.
- 5.2 Consider strengthening generalist advice providers. This carries the risk that complex situations requiring legal intervention will not be addressed.

6. Implications

- 6.1 Appendix 1 sets out the relevant implications considered in the preparation of the report.

7. Background Papers

- 7.1 [Cabinet Member Report – 4 September 2020 - Allocation of Derbyshire's Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): Local Authority Emergency Assistance Grant for Food and Essential Supplies](#)
- 7.2 [Cabinet Member Report – 7 January 2021 – Further allocation of Derbyshire's Coronavirus \(Covid-19\) Local Authority Emergency Assistance Grant for food and essential supplies](#)
- 7.3 [Cabinet Member Report – 25 March 2021 – Final allocation of Derbyshire's Coronavirus \(Covid-19\) Local Authority Emergency Assistance Grant for Food and Essential Supplies \(Report 4\).](#)

8. Appendices

- 8.1 Appendix 1- Implications.

9. Recommendation(s)

That the Cabinet Member for Health and Communities approves the usage of Contain Outbreak Management Funding to:

- a) Strengthen specialist eviction and housing advice work provided by Derbyshire Law Centre (to support residents in High Peak, Chesterfield, North East Derbyshire, Bolsover and Derbyshire Dales) for an additional 6 months at a cost of £42,000

- b) Strengthen specialist eviction and housing advice work provided by Derby Law Centre (to support residents in Erewash, Amber Valley and South Derbyshire) for an additional 6 months at a cost of £22,000
- c) Strengthen specialist employment advice across the County provided by Derbyshire Law Centre for a period of up to 2 years at a cost of £80,000

10. Reasons for Recommendation(s)

- 10.1 Offer longer term capacity to specialist advisory services that will support people in Derbyshire to have the confidence or resources to self-isolate effectively.

11. Is it necessary to waive the call in period?

- 11.1 No

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Implications

Financial

- 1.1 For 2020-21 DCC has been allocated a total Contain funding grant of £20.182m of which £19.058 m has been rolled over to 2021-22. A further £3.958m of Contain funding has also been allocated via a grant funding arrangement from the Department of Health and Social Care for 2021-22. Expenditure associated with the delivery of the Local Outbreak Management Plan will utilise the Contain framework grant funding. The grants totalling £144,000 outlined in this report will be funded from this budget.

Legal

- 2.1 Cabinet agreed the overall profile of spend when it met on 4 January 2021 and that delegated authority will be given to the Director of Public Health and Cabinet Member for Health and Communities to develop an implementation plan to co-ordinate the delivery of the different workstreams described in this report. Where appropriate additional approvals from Cabinet Member would be sought in line with the Council's Constitution and Financial Regulations.
- 2.2 The Council's Financial Regulations allow grants of up to £0.100m to organisations to be approved by Cabinet Member. The Council's Constitution allows for Cabinet Members to delegate authority to officers to undertake the powers afforded to them by the Constitution. The Council's standard grant agreement shall be used to set out the terms and conditions for which the grants are made, which provides for clawback of funding in certain circumstances and shall also provide that the Council is not liable for any employment liabilities.

Human Resources

- 3.1 The funding will enable local providers to deliver projects and services. Derbyshire County Council accepts no employment or future redundancy liability, with all employment and related matters to be managed by the providers