



FOR PUBLICATION

DERBYSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

REPORT TO CABINET MEMBER HEALTH AND COMMUNITIES

21 September 2022

Report of the Director - Public Health

Use of Contain Outbreak Management Fund to strengthen emergency energy support in Derbyshire

1. Divisions Affected

1.1 County-wide.

2. Key Decision

2.1 This is not a Key Decision.

3. Purpose

3.1 The Cabinet Member for Health and Communities is asked to:
a) Approve the use of Contain Outbreak Management Funding to strengthen emergency energy support within Derbyshire until 31 March 2023 via a grant of £0.100m to Marches Energy Advice.

4. Information and Analysis

4.1 In 2021 Derbyshire County Council allocated £0.096m of its share of the Local Authority Assistance Grant for Food and Essential Supplies to Marches Energy Advice (MEA), to enhance their work with foodbanks by funding emergency energy costs for people presenting in crisis. Derbyshire County Council provided further funding of £0.064m in December 2021 from the Contain Outbreak Management Funding to ensure continuation of energy support for Derbyshire residents. These

funds were due to be used by September 2022, but due to a high level of need have already been fully spent.

- 4.2 The Contain Outbreak Management Fund is time limited grant funding which enables councils that deliver the public health function to consider additional activity and approaches that help mitigate the ongoing impact of Covid-19 in local communities. The different funding streams below outlined how the use of this funding can continue to support local communities to live safely alongside Covid-19.
- 4.3 As Derbyshire continues to respond to Covid-19, individuals are no longer asked to self-isolate if they test positive for Covid-19. Although they can attend work, they may be too unwell and this could create challenges for individuals in terms of financial hardship, which could have knock on consequences for maintaining warm housing and adequate hot water to prevent onward spread of infection. The funding proposed in this report seeks to proactively ensure that residents can remain at home should they need to.
- 4.4 Evidence suggests that people who present at foodbanks often go without heating or electricity and will be living in extreme financial vulnerability. Rising energy costs are putting additional pressure on vulnerable individuals, with the typical household bill seeing an increase on average of £693 (from £1,277 to £1,971). The increased price cap from October onwards will also have an impact. Pre-payment customers have seen an average increase of £708 (from £1,309 to £2,017). In October, this could rise to over £3000 (MEA, 2022). Switching tariffs is unlikely to save money, as due to the sharp and unprecedented gas price rises this year many utility companies are no longer able to offer good deals. Eon predict that 40% of their customers could be in fuel poverty. In Derbyshire, over 13.5% of households are fuel poor. This is likely to rise when the price cap is increased in October 2022 (MEA, 2022).
- 4.5 This report seeks approval to extend the emergency fuel support project delivered by MEA, by granting a further £0.100m to continue to strengthen work with food banks, to ensure people are also supported with heating costs when in crisis. Work will also support vulnerable people presenting at Derbyshire Discretionary Fund (DDF), via referral pathways.
- 4.6 The following key headline outcomes have been achieved since December 2021:
 - 583 households have received help
 - 274 pre-payment meter vouchers have been issued

- £14,739 of fuel debt has been removed from clients for the whole funding period.
 - Clients have also been supplied with cooking appliances, electric throws to support winter warmth, energy efficient light bulbs and other home energy efficient solutions to keep the cost of future energy bills lower.
- 4.7 Collaborative pathways have been developed between a range of services to strengthen interconnection between services including Foodbanks, 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 appropriate emergency energy support as required. This forms part of Derbyshire's holistic approach to supporting individuals in crisis.
- 4.8 Recent promotional work by Derbyshire County Council has highlighted the support available to residents who are encountering financial difficulties as a result of cost-of-living pressures and help with energy costs is included in this. This promotion has also targeted food banks in Derbyshire, and therefore it is necessary to ensure that there are adequate funds available to support those who will access support as a result of this promotional campaign.
- 4.9 Funding will be allocated as a grant payment to Marches Energy Agency. It is anticipated that the funding proposed in the report will support an additional 650 households struggling with energy costs at the point of crisis, including those presenting at food banks. This represents an average cost per household of £153. Derbyshire food banks are supportive of this approach. Support will take the form of:
- emergency credit meter funding
 - pre-payment meter funding (vouchers)
 - emergency health devices such as oil-filled radiators, heated throws
 - low-cost cooking devices e.g. microwaves, slow cookers
 - low energy LED light-bulbs (3-4 per home)
 - 20 monthly surgery sessions at a selection of foodbanks to give face-to-face support
 - Staff time to facilitate the allocation
 - Full subsequent support through Warmer Derby and Derbyshire.
- 4.10 Marches Energy Agency currently run the 'Warmer Derby and Derbyshire' energy advice and support service which includes an

independent Derbyshire-wide dedicated fuel poverty helpline, and caseworker support for complex billing and energy debt issues.

- 4.11 MEA will monitor and evaluate the project and will sample a small number of users to understand whether the advice/support 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. Consultation

- 5.1 Consultation is not required.

6. Alternative Options Considered

- 6.1 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.
- 6.2 Consider strengthening other providers: Providing funding to other non-specialist providers via a different procurement route carries the risk that individuals living in complex situations who require expert advice and support may not be managed by sufficiently experienced providers.

7. Implications

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

8. Background Papers

- 8.1 [4 February 2021: Final allocation of Derbyshire's Coronavirus \(Covid-19\) Local Authority Emergency Assistance Grant for food and essential supplies \(Report 3\) – Cabinet Member for Health and Communities](#)
- 8.2 [Final allocation of Derbyshire's Coronavirus \(Covid 19\) Local Authority 25 March 2021: Emergency Assistance Grant for food and essential supplies \(Report 4\)](#)

9. Appendices

- 9.1 Appendix 1 – Implications

10. Recommendation(s)

That the Cabinet Member for Health and Communities

- a) Approves the use of Contain Outbreak Management Funding to strengthen emergency energy support within Derbyshire until 31 March 2023 via a grant of £0.100m to Marches Energy Advice.

11. Reasons for Recommendation(s)

- 11.1 Offer longer term capacity to provide emergency energy support that will enable people in Derbyshire to have the confidence or resources to self-isolate effectively.

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

- 12.1 No

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Implications

Financial

- 1.1. Since the start of the pandemic, the Council has received a number of different grants to support the response to Covid-19, one of which is managed by Public Health. For 2022/23, based on allocations carried forward from 2021/22, there is £17.627m available from the Contain Outbreak Management Fund. A sum of £0.100m will be allocated from Contain funding to fund emergency energy support work.

Legal

- 2.1 The Council has power to provide grants under the general power of competence set out in section 1 of the Localism Act 2011.
- 2.2 The Council's Financial Regulations state that grants below £0.100m require Cabinet Member authorisation.
- 2.3 The Council's standard grant agreement shall be used to set out the terms and conditions for which the grant is made. This includes conditions for clawback of funding in certain circumstances

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.

Corporate objectives for change

- 4.1 The recommendations in this paper support delivery of the following priorities for the next year in the Council Plan:
 - Continued to deliver the ongoing Covid-19 response and recovery in relation to health protection, alongside wider partnership action to tackle health inequalities
 - Worked with partners to promote positive mental wellbeing and improve support for local people, with a particular focus on children and young people at both school and in the community

