



**FOR PUBLICATION**

**DERBYSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL**

**REPORT TO CABINET MEMBER FOR ADULT CARE**

**7 December 2023**

**Report of the Executive Director - Adult Social Care and Health**

**Interim Grant for Befriending Services**  
(Cabinet Member for Adult Care)

**1. Divisions Affected**

Countywide.

**2. Key Decision**

- 2.1 This is not a Key Decision as the impact is not significant in more than one electoral division.

**Purpose**

- 2.2 To request Cabinet Member approval to provide grant funds to the nine organisations that currently provide eleven befriending services for a period of up to 1 year from 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025 as set out in this report. The total sum being funded through these grants is £160,652.

**3. Information and Analysis**

- 3.1 Adult Care have been paying nine organisations an annual grant for several years, over which time we have seen many changes which have led to an inequitable allocation of grant funding across the County. Every locality has different models of delivery, and each locality has differing needs for its population. There are also many more

organisations which claim to deliver a befriending service, that do not receive any funding from the Derbyshire County Council.

As part of the Voluntary Sector Grants Review, these nine organisations have been deemed as delivering a similar service to facilitate a coherent review of current provision and future requirements.

- 3.3 According to the 2021 Census, 22% of the Derbyshire population is 65 years old and over which equates to around 175,000 individuals. This is higher than the England average of 18.6%. Amber Valley has the largest over 65+ population (28,647), followed by Erewash (23,483) and Chesterfield (22,274). However, Derbyshire Dales locality has the largest % of residents over 65+ (27%) when comparing its overall population.
- 3.4 Social isolation has been highlighted as a cause of ill health and more so since the Covid 19 pandemic, with several publications, including the Local Government Association *Must Know: Loneliness - Is your council actively tackling loneliness* (2021) evidencing the need. 'One of the highest risk factors for experiencing loneliness is age. Around half of people aged 75 or over live alone; 17 per cent are in contact with family, friends and neighbours less than once a week, and for 11 per cent it is less than once a month. Associated risk factors in old age are low income, poor physical or mental health, and living alone in isolated rural areas or in deprived urban communities.'
- The Local Government Association in partnership with National Association of Local Councils, has published *Reaching Out* (2019), where the provision of befriending is highlighted as one of the services that helps positively tackle social isolation.
- 3.5 Befriending is considered prevention activity, decreasing social isolation by visiting and telephoning individuals on a one-to-one basis, for a chat. This supports people to live independently, improves their wellbeing and reduces dependency on health and social care services.
- 3.6 A review and re-modelling of the Derbyshire approach to befriending is now required to align with other key prevention services and ensure more equity of provision. Following the 2021 census, there have been populations changes within the Derbyshire districts, and the cost of living is also an emerging factor contributing to loneliness. Extending the current befriending grant for another year would allow time for a strategic review of the future requirement for befriending in Derbyshire.

- 3.7 The [Derbyshire Befriending Network](#) are currently being supported by consultants to become a 'Community Benefit Society' which will mean that they will be in a much stronger position. They will be able to hold contracts and apply for other external grants and funding as an entity, whilst keeping their individual organisational identities.

#### **4. Consultation**

- 4.1 Formal consultation is not required at this stage as there are no proposed changes to current service provision.

#### **5. Alternative Options Considered**

- 5.1 The Council could do nothing and allow the current grant to end on 31 March 2024. This would severely impact those organisations currently delivering befriending activity and potentially leave many vulnerable people without support. By making an interim fixed term grant agreement this would ensure continuity of service whilst a review of future requirements is carried out.

#### **6. Implications**

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

#### **7. Background Papers**

- 7.1 Report to Cabinet - Voluntary and Community Sector Review 30 July 2020
- 7.2 Report to Cabinet – Voluntary and Community Sector Review 29 July 2021
- 7.3 Report to Cabinet – Voluntary and Community Sector Review 6 December 2021
- 7.4 Report to Cabinet – Voluntary and Community Sector Review 28 July 2022
- 7.5 Cabinet Member Report – Interim Grant for Befriending Services 23 January 2023

#### **8. Appendices**

- 8.1 Appendix 1 - Implications

#### **9. Recommendation(s)**

That the Cabinet Member approves:

- a) the provision of grants totalling £160,652 to the nine organisations that currently provide befriending services for a period of up to 1 year from 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025 as set out in this report.

## **10. Reasons for Recommendation(s)**

- 10.1 There is insufficient time to complete a strategic review by 1 April 2024. The interim grants proposed in this report will allow time for a comprehensive review of future requirements for befriending support.

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

- 11.1 No

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**Implications****Financial**

1.1 The Adult Care revenue budget for 2024/25 covers the annual grant funding set out in the Table below at Paragraph 1.2. It is noted that a review is planned to be undertaken in the near future to ensure best value is achieved for Derbyshire residents.

## 1.2 Grant funding table

<b>Telephone and 1-1 Befriending Activity</b>	<b>12 months</b>
Age Concern (Chesterfield, NED, Bolsover)	10,741
Age UK Derby & Derbyshire (Erewash)	4,500
Age UK Derby & Derbyshire (High Peak and Dales)	48,099
Amber Valley CVS	6,457
Connex Community Support (High Peak and Dales)	3,000
Derbyshire Dales Careline	2,010
Erewash Voluntary Action CVS	3,000
Erewash Voluntary Action CVS (extended service)	31,711
New Mills Volunteer Centre (High Peak)	250
South Derbyshire CVS	33,848
The Volunteer Centre (Chesterfield)	17,036
<b>Total funds</b>	<b>160,652</b>

**Legal**

- 2.1 The Council has power to provide grants to voluntary and community sector organisations under the general power of competence set out in section 1 of the Localism Act 2011.
- 2.2 Appendix 1 F (e) (iv) of the Council's Constitution authorises Cabinet Members to make decisions on grants administered by the Council. Annex 5 of 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 and states that the Council is not liable for any employment liabilities.

### **3. Human Resources**

- 3.1 The voluntary and community sector organisations currently funded by the Council as part of this report are independent of the County Council and therefore there are no human resources considerations for the Council.

As funding is redesigned or withdrawn, then there could be a specific HR impact on the individual organisations which were fully ascertained through the review process. There may also be structural and resourcing implications for internal services which will be fully scoped as commissioning plans progress.

If we were to cease funding at the end of the current grant arrangement (31 March 2024), then there would be a significant impact on employees working within the current befriending services.

### **4 Information Technology**

- 4.1 There are no Information Technology considerations associated with this report.

### **5 Equalities Impact**

- 5.1 An EIA has previously been completed following formal consultation feedback.

The analysis indicates that the majority of grants under review are within the Adult Social Care department, and therefore, are related to activities which involve older people or those with a disability.

Funding relates to this protected characteristic in three different ways:

- Funding provides activities specifically to fulfil duties regarding this protected characteristic
- Funding provides activities which target older people or those with a disability
- Funding provides activities which appeal to a particular age group or those with a disability.

With any review and proposed changes that might come about, it is anticipated that regardless of the outcome, there will be a level of anxiety. This is especially as some of these groups have been long standing and provide activities to vulnerable groups. The Council will work very closely with affected organisations to ensure that plans and timeframes are clear and any transitions can be managed as effectively as possible.

## **6 Corporate objectives and priorities for change**

- 6.1 By making an interim grant this will assist those organisations to retain the many volunteers supporting service delivery as well as staff, who otherwise may begin to look for alternative employment. This would ensure continuity of service for those people supported which in turn would reduce dependency on other services. As it is expected to have longer term funding arrangements in place in the new process, this will assist with staff retention for those successful providers.

## **7 Other (for example, Health and Safety, Environmental Sustainability, Property and Asset Management, Risk Management and Safeguarding)**

- 7.1 In preparing this report the relevance of the following factors has been considered: human resources, health, environmental, transport, and crime and disorder considerations.