



FOR PUBLICATION

DERBYSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

IMPROVEMENT AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - PEOPLE

WEDNESDAY 30TH OCTOBER 2024

Report of the Executive Director – Adult Social Care & Health

Consultation on Proposals for the Cessation of Discretionary Grant Funding

1. Purpose

- 1.1 Two reports were presented to Cabinet on 29 April 2024 which sought approval to launch a 12-week consultation on the cessation of Discretionary Grant Funding provided by ASCH and CST departments. Following Cabinet approval, the consultation took place between 28 May and 20 August 2024.
- 1.2 The purpose of this report is to inform the Scrutiny Committee of information regarding the public consultation and provide an opportunity for the Scrutiny Committee to submit comments to Cabinet for consideration in making its decision.

2. Information and Analysis

- 2.1 Like all councils across the country, Derbyshire is facing increasing financial pressures that are outside its control including inflation and an increase in demand for services, particularly for older people and people with a disability.
- 2.2 In order to set a balanced budget, as it is legally obliged to do, the Council has implemented a series of financial controls, including tight control over non-essential spend. This position has significantly changed the context

within which the Council allocates its budget and it is anticipated that there will be further budget challenges in future years. All areas of the Council are required to deliver in year financial savings and propose further areas for budget savings in future years.

- 2.3 The current financial position and requirement to make additional efficiencies and budget savings means that activity which directly contributes to the delivery of the Council's statutory duties must now be prioritised.
- 2.4 The Council does not have a specific statutory duty to offer grant funding to the organisations related to this report, therefore this spend had been identified as discretionary. A list of these grants and their value is provided as an appendix to this report. The proposal that was consulted upon was that the grant funding provided to all seven organisations cease and if approved by Cabinet, they would not receive any funding beyond 31 March 2025.
- 2.5 The Council has a wide range of services through commissioned and directly provided approaches which actively promote well-being and independence. The funding relating to this report is only a small proportion of all services which is collectively delivered by voluntary and community sector organisations and is otherwise funded by the Council.

The Consultation

- 2.6 Cabinet agreed to consult on the cessation of discretionary grant funding to a range of organisations.
- 2.7 The purpose of the consultation was to:
 - Gain an understanding of the impact of ceasing discretionary grant funding from relevant stakeholders.
 - Enable stakeholders to outline how the proposals will impact residents.
 - Enable stakeholders to offer viable alternatives within the parameters of the current position for how impact can be mitigated.
 - Enable the public to give a view on proposals via online questionnaire and public events.
- 2.8 The formal public consultation ran for a 12-week period between, 28 May 2024, and 20 August 2024 and used quantitative and qualitative approaches to gather people's views about the proposal, through;

- Drop-in public sessions in libraries across the county (12 Sessions)
- Online questionnaire – standard and easy read versions
- Paper-based versions in both formats available on request to organisations and individuals
- BSL Video produced promoting the Consultation sessions to Deaf residents
- Telephone support from the ASCH Stakeholder Engagement Team and CST Policy Team to ensure people were supported to share their views in the easiest way possible
- Service specific face-to-face or virtual meetings with all infrastructure providers impacted by the proposals
- Meetings with the DDIA and JUCD VCSE Alliance
- Listening events held for the different grant recipients to attend and give feedback

2.9 A detailed consultation report has been produced that outlines the full methodology and provides an analysis of all responses in more detail, which will be included in the Cabinet Report.

2.10 In total, we received 1374 responses to the online and postal survey and over 120 people attended face to face listening events and individual engagement meetings.

2.11 Formal written responses were also received from:

- JUCD VCSE Alliance
- NHS Derby and Derbyshire ICB
- Derbyshire Dales CVS
- Derbyshire Recovery and Peer Support
- Futures Housing Group
- Healthwatch Derbyshire
- NHS Northeast Derbyshire PCN
- South Derbyshire District Council
- High Peak Borough Council
- Tideswell Community Managed Library
- South Derbyshire CVS
- Amber Valley CVS

- Age UK Derby & Derbyshire
- Derbyshire Law Centre
- Buxton befriending Connex
- Links CVS/BME forum
- Age Concern
- Derbyshire Befriending Network
- DDiA
- DVA
- Connex

2.12 There were three distinct approaches to the analysis of the qualitative material from the public consultation:

- a. Information gathered during face to face and virtual meetings.
- b. Information gathered from letters, emails, and telephone calls.
- c. Qualitative information contained in the online and paper questionnaires, both the standard and easy read versions. This gave us an opportunity to widen our understanding of the views about the proposals and indicate some of the reasons behind those opinions. It also allowed people to expand and give examples as to the potential impact of the proposed changes.

2.13 CST & ASC officers analysed responses received from the consultation, theming them under broad categories. Cross tabulation methods were used to further understand any nuances in response data at a service specific level. Qualitative themes identified from overall responses from the online and postal survey included the following. An initial Council response is made against each theme ahead of Cabinet Paper where all such matters will be considered and included within a comprehensive and robust Equality Impact Assessment which will be incorporated within the future cabinet report, which will be presented in due course.

Medium to Long term impact

Respondents demonstrated a strong feeling that the Council's proposals were 'shortsighted' and would lead to increased costs for Adult Care and the NHS in terms of people requiring more care and support if unable to access the preventative services on offer.

We have taken this feedback into account when making the recommendations and are committed to working with health partners to reduce the impact on residents. We also continue to work with health to prevent readmissions and facilitate hospital discharges for people returning home and into placements where appropriate. We have

considered the impact across ASCH and feedback from partner organisations when putting the recommendations together.

Mental Health and Wellbeing

Many respondents were concerned that should services be reduced/closed, Derbyshire residents would become isolated and lonely, and this could have a critical impact on more “vulnerable” people’s mental health and wellbeing.

We recognise the importance of social networks amongst the population and have taken this feedback into consideration when making recommendations. We understand the impact on people who use services and their families and are committed to working together with people to explore alternatives and minimise the impact.

Voluntary and Community Sector

Many respondents highlighted that withdrawal of funding from the VCS will have a sector wide destabilising effect and lead to uncertainty about the future of organisations, services, facilities, and community activity. Providers also raised concerns that cessation of discretionary grants will impact on the number of volunteers available and the growth of the sector, with very few younger people interested in careers. Some indicated this would impact on the council’s relationship with the sector and potential for future collaboration.

We are committed to working with the voluntary and community sector and will continue to engage with and commission services to best meet the needs of Derbyshire residents. We recognise the difficulties both the public and voluntary sector face under the current financial climate, and this has been reflected the Consultation Report.

Local Communities

Many raised concerns that delivery of services will vary depending on locality, with some respondents concerned that those who live in rural areas will face greater impact due to a reduction in the transport network.

We acknowledge that services are not always consistent and recognise the importance of delivering bespoke services to meet the demographic needs of each locality. These comments will be considered when making recommendations. Adult Social Care and Public Health commission a wide range of other preventative services through commissioned and directly provided approaches, some of which are delivered by voluntary and community sector organisations.

Agreement with the proposals

A small number of respondents recognised the financial difficulties the council is currently facing and agree Derbyshire's most vulnerable residents should be prioritised.

Impact on individuals

Many respondents highlighted concerns for people living with disabilities and/ or ill health conditions, older people/ elderly and the BME communities.

All residents are able to request an assessment of need from Adult Social Care and there are a number of organisations who provide support that are not funded by the council. We note the comments made, and continue to work with all our communities, to ensure they are heard and valued.

Befriending listening event

26 June 2024 at Post Mill Centre, South Normanton:

Below is a summary of what people told us at the event:

- Whilst the council's financial position was understood, it was felt that the negative impact on VCS and people who draw on care and support would likely cost the council more in the medium to long term.
- Providers were anxious that due to the council's consultation timescales, they would have little time to action any decisions.
- Some partners informed that without the grant, they would cease to host a befriending service which would create disparity amongst Derbyshire postcodes.
- Other partners implied that relationships between VCS and the council will likely be damaged, putting future collaboration at risk.
- Providers informed that the monetary impact would affect more than the befriending services.
- It was indicated that the loss of befriending services, would heavily impact on health outcomes due to increased isolation/ loneliness and decreasing services to support independence which would result in an increased demand for statutory social care and health services.
- Providers informed that there will be a loss of skills, and volunteers thus limiting the council and provider's ability to reintroduce befriending later.

We have considered this feedback when making the recommendations and are committed to working with our partners to minimise the impact on residents. Adult Social Care and Public Health commission a wide range of other preventative services through commissioned and directly provided approaches, some of which are delivered by voluntary and

community sector organisations. These are generally available across the whole of the county and are designed to prevent, reduce and delay the need for more formal support.

BME Forum Grants listening event 25 July 2024 on MS teams

Below is a summary of what people told us at the event

- Members reported that the Forum promotes equality, diversity, and inclusion.
- BME groups indicated that they value and rely on the Forum as a useful source of information and advice and learn about DCC services.
- Members suggested that service users rely on groups supported through the Forum for culturally appropriate support, and that DCC funding is very important in supporting core activity.
- Groups questioned the amount of savings that would be achieved through the proposal and were concerned about what support would be available in future.
- Some attendees suggested groups could close because of the proposal.
- Groups reported that their members could be left without support and described current activity as a 'lifeline' to some vulnerable residents.

We are committed to understanding all our diverse communities and use that understanding to shape organisational policy and practice. The BME community is a key consultee and having a mechanism to engage with BME residents will be part of our corporate approach to consultation and engagement with resident's voice and EDI.

Bolsover Woodlands Enterprise (BWE) listening event 25 June 2024 in Carr Vale, Bolsover:

Below is a summary of what people told us at the event

- People who draw on care and support and their carers, were anxious as to what process to follow to check eligibility/ obtain funding to ensure continuity of care. It was highlighted that the cost will not be saved as people will receive direct payments instead.
- Carers were concerned that without BWE, they and their dependents would face isolation/ loneliness and with the increase in need and lack of respite, dependents would then begin to rely on statutory services.

- People were anxious that due to the council's consultation timescales, they would have little time to action any decisions.
- It was felt that BWE has a positive impact on the community and surrounding environments due to their work.
- People felt that there was not a suitable/ appropriate alternative.

We understand that changes to services cause disruption and concern for people attending and their families and will work together with people to minimise the impact of any change, as much as we can. We will take account of the financial, emotional, and practical impact identified in feedback, through careful and detailed planning with people and their families. We recognise the importance of ensuring that families and friends can continue to maintain contact and that friendship groups remain connected.

Luncheon clubs listening event 3 July 2024 at Post Mill Centre, South Normanton

Below is a summary of what people told us at the event

- Participants felt luncheon clubs offered social capital to residents, which prevents loneliness and isolation.
- It was highlighted that the club's primary funding is from subscriptions, along with fundraisers. However, as residents often pay for travel as well it will be too expensive for them should subscription charges increase thus some clubs may fold.
- Providers felt the services were very cost effective and at a low cost to the council.
- Providers told us that Derbyshire County Council has elevated expectations of luncheon clubs i.e., food safety, manual handling but does little to support them.

We recognise the importance of luncheon clubs as 'grass roots' organisations who support the wider communities and are committed to eliminating social isolation and loneliness of residents. We have considered this feedback, and comments are included in the Consultation Report.

Our Vision Our Future (OVOF) listening event 22 July 2024 at OVOF site, Chesterfield,

Below is a summary of what people told us at the event

- People informed us that there is no suitable alternative provision for attendees, which may affect people's wellbeing and the opportunities for carer respite, causing demand for statutory services to increase.

- It was felt that OVOF offered social value, and enabled people who draw on care and support to gain employment whilst being cost effective.
- People told us that additional engagement opportunities with other services (e.g., Live Life Better) are significant and, if OVOF were to close, those opportunities will be lost.

We are continually working to identify areas of development and commission provision to meet demand.

Social Activity Grants listening event 3 July 2024 at Post Mill Centre, South Normanton

Below is a summary of what people told us at the event

- Providers were anxious that due to the council's consultation timescales, they would have little time to action any decisions, and the impact may affect residents during winter when they are most vulnerable.
- Social activity grants form part of DCC's preventative offer which reduces demand on statutory services.
- Health provisions will become increasingly difficult to access by vulnerable people in rural areas or with mobility needs due to limited transport resources particularly in High Peak, Derbyshire Dales, and South Derbyshire.
- Providers were concerned for the VCS'S long term sustainability due to consistent financial pressures as well as the loss of volunteers, skills, and capacity, emphasising that this would also increase the strain on statutory services.
- There could be an impact on those who cannot access information online.
- Whilst the council's financial position was understood, it was felt that the negative impact on VCS and people who draw on care and support would likely cost the council more in the medium to long term.

We have taken this feedback into account when making the recommendations and are committed to working with our partners to minimise the impact on residents. Since the consultation in 2022, providers have been aware that grants would cease with a move to commissioning and there were no guarantees that current grant recipients would receive council funding. The Council also funds locality health and wellbeing partnerships via annual grants. Health and wellbeing partnerships may use their allocated funding to support local groups and initiatives. The Council also commissions other social activities in local communities and there are a range of activities available that the Council does not fund that people will be able to access.

Advice Services engagement meetings

Corporate Services met with the Derbyshire Law Centre (DLC) independently to discuss the impact on their organisation and community. Citizen's Advice Mid Mercia were also offered a meeting but declined.

Below is a summary of what they told us:

- Loss of funding will reduce DLC's capacity to level in additional funding from other sources, with every £1 of core-funding helping DLC attract an additional £7.22 in funding from other sources.
- Further pressure will be placed on DLC's ability to operate legal aid contracts across Derbyshire for the benefit of those on low and unstable incomes.
- Capacity will be reduced through redundancy and retention implications. Expertise and experience will be lost in an already niche sector.
- It was suggested that DLC is the only Derbyshire-based legal charity to operate legal aid in the county.
- Funding enables the subsidy of three legal aid contracts across Derbyshire. All private legal firms in Chesterfield have pulled out of administering legal aid in social welfare law, save for Family law.
- Funding pays for a telephone assessment service which is crucial in delivering specialist legal advice in social welfare law, supporting families with accommodation, employees can enforce their right in work, residents can manage with debt, migrants and refugees have the right to stay, and discrimination is averted and prevented.
- Withdrawal of funding could lead to dramatic changes to services to guard against long-term deficits in core expenditure.

We have considered this feedback when making the recommendations and are committed to working with our partners to minimize the impact on residents. Since the consultation in 2022, providers have been aware that grants would cease with a move to commissioning and there were no guarantees that current grant recipients would receive council funding.

BME Groups engagement meetings

Corporate Services and Transformation met with two BME grant recipients independently to discuss the impact on their organisation and community. All funded groups were offered individual meetings, however Chesterfield Muslim Association and Derbyshire Chinese Welfare Association opted to participate in the BME Forum listening event instead, and the Muslim Welfare Association did not participate in any events.

Below is a summary of what they told us:

- Groups indicated that they have received funding for many years and have built activity and support over time in response to the changing needs of communities.
- Current funding contributes to core costs such as premises.
- Loss of funding could impact community activity, ability to support BME residents and in some cases could result in the closure of groups.
- The ability of groups to secure additional funding could be impacted by the loss of stable recurring funding.
- A potential loss of preventative activity with BME residents, translation services and signposting including assistance to access statutory services could have a negative impact on public sector organisations.
- Groups suggested it was likely that there would be significant impacts on older BME residents resulting in a decline in mental and physical health.
- It would become increasingly difficult for groups to plan effectively without stable funding.
- Current support is well used and demand from communities is growing.

We are committed to treating people fairly, advancing equality and dealing with discrimination and harassment. The Council wants to ensure that all our communities have a voice, ensuring we listen and engage, shape, and respond to enable an inclusive culture.

VCS Infrastructure engagement meetings

Adult Care and/ or Corporate Services met with the individual VCS infrastructure grant recipients to discuss the impact on their organisation and the community. A total of 14 individual face to face or virtual meetings took place between 26 June and 31 July 2024.

Below is a summary of what they told us Providers were concerned for the VCS's long-term sustainability due to consistent financial pressures as well as the loss of volunteers, skills, and capacity, emphasizing that this would also increase the strain on statutory services and could not be easily rebuilt.

- The impact on smaller community organisations would be significant, with many relying on specialist advice, support, and community grants from local infrastructure organisations.
- People who draw on care and support could be impacted as soon as Winter 2024 when they are most vulnerable.

- The demographics and characteristics of residents vary in each area, thus centralised services are not suitable for all.
- Growing populations and increased risk of deprivation/crime in communities has already impacted VCS, and it is predicted that demand will continue to increase.
- Providers were anxious about the consultation timescales, with concerns that time to implement decisions would be limited.
- Most providers acknowledge that infrastructure support requires a review and encourage innovative approaches, but this would not be possible if funding ceases.

We have taken this feedback into account when making the recommendations and whilst the Council would no longer be funding discretionary grants for infrastructure, Officers in ASCH would continue to support Joined Up Care Derbyshire (JUCCD) Integrated Care Board conversations to consider the future need for infrastructure, what this should look like and how it should be funded.

Public drop-in sessions

The Stakeholder Engagement and Consultation Team hosted public drop-in sessions in 12 libraries across the County. Below is a summary of what people told us at the events:

- People were concerned as to how financially resilient VCS organisations are and how it could impact them negatively going forward.
- Some people felt they lacked the information they needed to make an informed decision i.e., most recent council accounts not available online.
- People were concerned how disadvantaged people would be impacted by the proposals.

We have considered this feedback when making the recommendations and are committed to working with our partners to minimize the impact on residents.

- 2.14 During the consultation it was also identified that there would be an opportunity for ASC and Public Health to work together on the review of Time Swap taking into consideration its alignment with befriending activity.
- 2.15 The next steps are for Cabinet to consider the responses from the public consultation and Equality Impact Analysis to decide on future delivery.

This is an opportunity for the Scrutiny Committee to make comments for the Cabinet to consider.

3. Alternative Options Considered

3.1 N/A

4. Implications and Mitigations

4.1 N/A

5. Consultation

5.1 N/A

6. Background Papers

6.1 N/A

7. Appendices

7.1 Appendix 1 – Report to Cabinet – Proposal to consult on the cessation of ASCH Discretionary grants 29 April 2024

8. Recommendation(s)

That the Committee:

- a) notes the responses to the public consultation
- b) notes that all such matters will be considered and included within a comprehensive and robust Equality Impact Analysis which will be incorporated within the future cabinet report, which will be presented in due course.
- c) further notes that Cabinet will consider the Equalities Impact Assessments as part of its decision making.
- d) considers responses to the public consultation and provides comments to Cabinet and the Equalities Impact Assessments for consideration when making its decision.

9. Reasons for Recommendation(s)

9.1 The Equality Impact Assessments are being prepared to reflect the issues raised during the consultation process, which will incorporate comments from the Scrutiny Committee.

9.2 The Cabinet will need to consider the comments from Scrutiny thereof in any decision-making.