

BARNSLEY METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

North Area Council Meeting:
20th July 2020
Agenda Item: 6

Report of North Area Council
Manager

COVID-19 Recovery Supporting Older People in the North Area

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 This report is a proposal to fund a project that will support older people in the COVID-19 Recovery Phase.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1. **The North Area Council should note the background explaining Age UKs contribution in the North Area during COVID-19 Lockdown**
- 2.2. **That members discuss the benefits of Age UK supporting older people in the North Area.**
- 2.3. **Confirm if they wish to fund Age UK Barnsley to provide support for older people in the North Area during the COVID-19 Recovery phase.**

3. Background

- 3.1. On the 11th March 2020 the World Health Organisation declared the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak as a global pandemic. Lockdown in the UK was introduced on the 23rd March 2020 in an attempt to control the spread of the virus. People in at risk groups, the over 70s and people with underlying health conditions were required to 'shield' to reduce the risk of contracting the virus.
- 3.2. Barnsley was quick to set up and establish a Covid-19 Emergency Contact Centre. This dealt with emergency food aid, prescriptions, essential shopping and befriending. The response was coordinated by BMBC officers and largely supported by Community Responder Volunteers.
- 3.3. In the North Area all of the commissioned providers flexed their contract so ensure that those in need were supported. Much of the provision was adapted to online and telephone support. However, the North Area doesn't have a specific commissioned service for older people.
- 3.4. During lockdown the North Area has benefited from the existing relationship that North East, South and Penistone Area Council's currently have with Age UK who is commissioned in these three areas. Age UK have supported over 50 elderly residents in the North Area who do not have support networks in place

during lockdown. This has included telephone befriending, shopping delivery, prescription collection, wellbeing boxes and the delivery of a menu of home-based activities. 8 volunteers have been regularly active on this service. Age UK have reported that only 35% of the people that they are supporting are online.

- 3.5. In the UK approximately 88% of the deaths from Covid-19 has been of people aged over 65. The chances of the older person dying from the virus increase in proportion to their increasing age and many of Age UK's service users are 80+. The risk from the virus is still potentially much more serious for older people and so they are wary of getting back to normal. Some of these people have lost confidence and mobility, compounded by the fact that social norms have changed while people have been shielding.
- 3.6. As lockdown eases BMBC officers are gradually returning to their substantive roles and will not be able to maintain the volunteer coordination role. However, there are many older people in the community who would benefit from ongoing support.
- 3.7. It is therefore suggested that Age UK are funded through the North Area Council to continue to support older residents as lockdown eases and many of the Community Responders return to work.

4. Benefit of having Age UK's ongoing support for older residents of the North Area

- a) Age UK specialise in providing support to over 55s, although a large proportion of their clients are 80years+.
- b) Support is focussed on people who do not have local support networks.
- c) Support with low mood and wellbeing
- d) Age UK have the capacity to form individual plans to help each person get mobile, providing them with encouragement, and exercises to strengthen and prevent falls.
- e) Stimulating activities will be provided to help residents stay engaged and keep their minds active.
- f) Introduce telephone based social groups until community groups can open up again
- g) The support offered by Age UK will help those who have been shielding to reintegrate into all aspects of community life when it is safe for them to do so.
- h) Help to introduce elderly residents to community-based groups/events/ activities when these are reinstated.
- i) The service will aim to ensure that older people will feel valued, 'better' in themselves, more resilient and better able to deal with the restrictions and anxieties they currently face.
- j) Community Responders who have been working with older people and wish to continue to participate, would have an opportunity to continue their volunteering role under the guidance of Age UK.

5. Risks

- 5.1. If the opportunity to work with Age UK is not taken it could mean that older people in the North Area are disadvantaged as lockdown is eased.
- 5.2. Age UK would need to be fully appraised of the work delivered by other North Area Council commissioned services to avoid duplication.

6. Proposed Investment by the North Area Council

- 6.1. Age UK originally approached the North Area Council Manager with a Ward Alliance application, with the intention of submitting the application to the four Ward Alliances.
- 6.2. Given the delay in a start date for the Housing and Cohesion Officer post it would be appropriate to allocate some of the North Area Council budget to ensure that Older People in the North Area are catered for.
- 6.3. Proposal: That the Area Council allocate £10,000 to Age UK to deliver the benefits listed in section 4 for a period of six months.
- 6.4. The members of the North Area Council Health and Wellbeing Priority Working Group and the Area Chair have been consulted on this proposal and have given it their support, prior to this being included in the meeting agenda.

7. Next Steps

- 7.1. Members are asked to confirm if they wish to fund Age UK to support elderly residents in the North Area as lockdown eases.

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