

BARNSELY METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

North Area Council Meeting:
20th July 2021

Agenda Item: 5

Report of North Area Council
Manager

Health and Wellbeing Priority Loneliness and Isolation Workshop Feedback and New Grant Recommendation

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The North Area Councils Health and Wellbeing Priority Working Group met with specialist officers on the 25th June to participate in discussions. This report highlights some of the key points raised.
- 1.2 Following the workshop the Area Manager has produced a draft grant guidance document for the Area Council's consideration and comment.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1. **Members to note that procurement progress to date.**
- 2.2. **Members are required to decide if they wish for the proposed 'Connecting Communities Grant' to be advertised for an Autumn 2021 start.**
- 2.3. **Members are required to confirm the cohort for funding.**
- 2.4. **Members are asked to confirm if they wish to increase the budget for this grant to £100,000 p.a. for two years.**
- 2.5. **Members are required to agree who the representative would be from each ward on the Grant Panel.**

3. Background

- 3.0 Between the 1st September 2018 until 2021 DIAL have delivered a social isolation and cold home project entitled 'Warm Connections'. Part of the contract included the delivery of Home Energy Assessments, an energy switching service and advice regarding the modification of behaviours in relation to efficient use of household resources. This provided the organisation with valuable experience and evidence to help secure the Energy Redress funding. As a result, Barnsley Residents will benefit from an additional £265,441.45 of service provision (this is more than the Area Councils original investment in this project).
- 3.1 In early 2021 the North Area Council reviewed its commissioned services commitments and made the decision to cease the funding to the Warm

Connections contract in favour of a project that was tailored to help support the recovery from Covid-19.

4. Developing new provision

- 4.1. On 23rd April 2021 representatives of the North Area Council met for a workshop to receive information from service specialists from Business Intelligence, Housing and Energy and Public Health. Councillors in attendance included: Cllrs Leech (Area Chair); Hunt, Lofts, Newing and Platts. Supporting Officers included: Jen McPhail, Donna West, Emma Robinson, Lucy Butcher, Katy Ashworth and James Farrimond.
- 4.2. Information received included demographics, health and causes of mortality, deprivation, fuel poverty and excess winter deaths. The group also considered the factors contributing to fuel poverty, cold homes and the groups most at risk of fuel poverty, excess winter deaths and social isolation.
- 4.3. The group also considered the provision that already exists to help address the issues listed above and officers talked through examples of best practise.
- 4.4. Councillors consider the examples of case work they are currently undertaking and reflected on the impact of Covid-19 over the past 12 months and how the community have been affected. It was felt that now there is a Roadmap to Recovery and the vaccination programme is well underway that the Area Council could have a greater impact on social isolation than it could on fuel poverty and Excess Winter Deaths at this time.
- 4.5. During the workshop there was an emphasis on physical and emotional wellbeing and a need to help people re-establish their own personal sense of purpose within communities.
- 4.6. As the discussions concluded the group agreed on the following points in section 7 that would help to define the specification.

5. Workshop (23rd April 2021) Outcomes:

Beneficiaries

The councillors in attendance wanted funding to support demographic groups that had been disproportionately adversely affected by Covid-19. Based on their work in the community, the attendees identified three groups that they thought would benefit most from the funds available:

- Men struggling with low mood (suicide prevention)
- Younger people who have been furloughed
- Older people who have been isolating

Aims and Objectives

- Reduce loneliness and isolation
- Increase the confidence of individuals
- Improve the physical and mental wellbeing of individuals
- Re-connect communities

Suggested Outcomes

- Reduction in feelings of loneliness and isolation within the community
- Support individuals to take pride in the skills that they possess and actively participate in new learning opportunities
- Increased confidence, sense of purpose and pride of individuals
- Enable individuals to feel more connected with their communities
- Highlight the health and wellbeing of individuals as a 'whole community issue'.
- Enable socially isolated and vulnerable people to have greater involvement in designing services and actively participating in improving their lives and the wider Barnsley community
- Inclusion and support of Volunteers in the service / project delivery, providing opportunities to use their skills, knowledge and expertise to help others to live their best life
- Individuals are supported to improve their health and wellbeing
- Community capacity building is imbedded in the project

Project Outputs (not exhaustive)

- No. Individual Needs Assessments
- No. of isolated people supported to access local amenities and community provision
- No. of isolated people learning new skills
- No. of new community groups established
- No. Volunteers Recruited
- No. of volunteers trained in a community capacity building role
- Number of people supported to make healthy lifestyle choices
- Number of referrals to Area Council Funded provision
- Number of referrals to services providing advice and guidance

Additional Considerations

- Workshop attendees specified that any additional provision should be community based.
- Improved mental wellbeing
- Improved physical wellbeing
- The Area Manager advised that an outcome monitoring tool would be beneficial to measure the soft outcomes being identified.

Resourcing / Area Council Input

- Duration – 2 years minimum (2 years + 1 year)
- Financial contribution, up to £85,000 p.a.
- Price / Quality Split (for full tender evaluation purposes) – 20/80

6. Further research and discussions with specialists:

- 6.1. Following a recommendation from Lucy Butcher at the April workshop. During the May Area Council meeting it was agreed that the Area Manager, Emma Robinson and the Area Chair would meet with Ben Brannan who is involved in the Mental Health Partnership meeting and Stuart Rogers who is leading on Sport, Physical Activity and Mental Health.
- 6.2. The Area Council agreed in May 2021 to focus on:
 - Young people (18-35) who had suffered effects on career prospects and employment opportunities
 - Older people 55 years plus (particularly people who had been required to self-isolate for long periods of time)
- 6.3. From this meeting it was clear that there were opportunities for the North Area to compliment the work of the Mental Health Partnership and the Sport Physical Activity and Mental Health Group. The link between physical activity and mental wellbeing was discussed and Stuart Rogers highlighted research that has identified that not only do people benefit from the endorphin release from participation in physical exercise but that the dopamine release from attending a group activity was extremely important. This highlights the importance of social connectedness for emotional wellbeing.
- 6.4. It was recommended to include a link to the Barnsley 'What's Your Move' Campaign to encourage resident to be more physically active.

7. Refining Requirements Workshop 2 – 25th June 2021

- 7.1. A further workshop was held on the 25th June 2021. This workshop was attended by Cllr Platts, Cllr Hunt and Cllr T Cave. Officers included, Tom Smith, Emma Robinson, Emma white, Lucy Butcher, Tim Whittam, Katy Ashworth and the Area Manager.
- 7.2. A discussion about young people and employment and training opportunities took place at the beginning of the meeting. Tom Smith advise that young people have been disproportionality affected by the pandemic in terms of skills and employment. This is well recognised and there is a huge effort already underway to support this group. BMBC and the Department of Work and Pensions are just about to launch a Youth Employment Hub with significant resources. As a result, it was agreed that the North Area Council should concentrate funding on older people at this time.
- 7.3. Emma Robinson provided detailed statistics regarding mental health and wellbeing:
- 7.4. Older People Information:

Social isolation is a significant consequence of COVID-19. A general population survey (Ipsos MORI, 2020) revealed widespread concerns about the effects of social isolation and distancing, **including increased anxiety and depression.**

 - One in three (34%) older people agree that their anxiety is now worse or much worse than before the start of the pandemic
 - Some older people told us that they are feeling down, have lost pleasure and purpose in their lives, and feel as if every day is the same. We were sometimes told that there is nothing for them to look forward to and sadly a proportion even questioned whether their life is worth living.

7.5. Younger People / Working Ages

- Public Health England's Wider Impacts of Covid on Health (WICH) Tool identified Age group with largest increase in anxiety levels (England) is 25-34 year-olds (+15.2% increase)
- Age groups with largest increase in low happiness score (nationally) are 25-34 year-olds (8.7% increase) and 35-44 year-olds (+5.9%)

7.6. WICH Tool – Loneliness Data April 2020-April 2021

- It is the younger age groups (16-34) who have consistently had higher percentages of respondents who report that they are 'often lonely'.
- Lower income groups also tended to report higher levels of loneliness between April 2020 and April 2021.

7.7. Workshop 2 - Summary

At the end of the workshop it was concluded that the Councillors in attendance wished to:

- Offer a grant opportunity for up to 2 years initially
- Focus on supporting Over 50s
- Re-engage people in group activity
- Build confidence in self
- Address physical decline (identified that this can prevent community participation)
- Increase physical strength and mobility – prevent falls
- Support the link between physical activity and mental wellbeing
- Ensure that physical activities have a social side – 'cuppa and a chat'
- Councillors in attendance (Cllr Platts, Cllr Hunt and Cllr T Cave) requested to represent their wards on the grant panel.
- It was suggested that the grant be called 'Connecting Communities'.

8. Financial Commitment

- 8.1. It is recommended that the Area Council utilise the £85,000.00 per annum that was committed to this priority area for a period of 2 years.
- 8.2. It is also recommended that the £20,000 funding allocated for Stronger Communities Grant 2022/23 is combined into this grant fund.
- 8.3. The Area Manager has secured additional social isolation funds that can be incorporated into this priority and ensure that a total grant budget of £100,000 can be committed to this priority per annum for two years.

9. Procurement Process

- 9.1. The working group have agreed that they wish this opportunity to be advertised as a competitive grant.
- 9.2. Suggested value is £10,000 up to £40,000 per project per annum. This would ensure at least 3 quality projects.
- 9.3. It is recommended that the grant process is supported by the BMBC Procurement Team and is advertised on YORtender.
- 9.4. A Councillor Grant Panel would need to be formed.
- 9.5. The Area manager has drafted a guidance document to address the loneliness and social isolation priority. Please refer to appendix 1.

10. Next Steps

10.1. Refer to the recommendations 2.1-2.5. and reach decisions on reach one.

10.2. Enable the Area Manager to make preparations with the Procurement Team to advertise the opportunity and arrange the Grant Panel.

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Date:
5th July 2021

Appendix 1.

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What is the North Area Council Connecting Communities Grant Fund?

The North Area Council Connecting Communities Grant Fund has been established by the North Area Council to address the need for an overall co-ordinated Social Isolation and Loneliness Programme for the North Area delivering over the next 12-24 months. The Grant is intended to help individuals and communities to recover from the longer-term impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The North Connecting Communities Fund is primarily aimed at community groups, charities and social enterprises, and could help such organisations develop their capacity to bid for future procurement opportunities.

The Fund is available for a 24-month delivery period only (November 2021 – October 2023). Projects should be delivered within the North Council area and all beneficiaries/participants should live within the North Council area. The 4 wards are: Darton East, Darton West, Old Town and St Helen's.

Social isolation and loneliness are complex issues that cannot be dealt with in silos. The following summarises the issues across the North Area;

- Loneliness and isolation is an issue across the lifespan and is having a significant impact on people's wellbeing.
- Feeling of loneliness and isolation has been evidenced to have a long-term detrimental impact on long term mental and physical wellbeing.
- Many support groups exist throughout the North Area and Barnsley borough, but they are disparate, unconnected and do not systematically share learning with each other.
- Information about local groups is available on the Live Well Barnsley website but many people don't know where to look and rely on word of mouth.
- Engaging participants is difficult, and it can take many months or years for a group to become vibrant.
- 'Group Leaders' are often without support and as such sustainability and succession planning is an issue.
- Access to appropriate spaces and funding can be problematic.
- Befriending schemes are successful for very isolated people with complex needs when the community is involved, and sufficient local volunteering capacity is available.
- Older people who have been shielding throughout the pandemic have reported an increase in depression, deterioration in mental health and experienced physical decline.
- There are groups of people, such as middle-aged men who do not engage with traditional solutions.
- People with long term health conditions and their carers are more susceptible to social isolation and have been without access to support and respite during the pandemic.

Target Group

The service will be aimed at lonely and/or isolated people and potentially where social isolation and loneliness has been exacerbated as a result of Covid-19. It is anticipated that a significant proportion of the clients accessing grant funded provision will be older people over 50 years and adults living with long term health conditions.

We are looking to fund a programme within the North Area, enabling an integrated approach that will assist local people to be more mentally and physical active. We welcome applications that support the following principles:

- The right to citizenship, responsibilities and opportunities.
- Valued relationships and personal networks.
- Access to relevant, timely and accessible information to inform decision making.
- Recognising and nurturing individual, family and community gifts and assets.
- Recognising the natural expertise and leadership of people/families labelled as vulnerable.
- The right to plan, choose and control supports/resources.
- The value and complementary nature of formal services as a backup to natural supports.

In order to achieve the goal of combatting social isolation and loneliness across the wards that make up the North Council Area, strategic and coordinated transformational change is required.

Aims and Objectives of the Connecting Communities Grant Fund:

- Reduce loneliness and isolation
- Increase the confidence of individuals
- Improve the physical and mental wellbeing of individuals
- Re-connect communities

2 Who can apply to the North Connecting Communities Grant Fund?

Who can apply?

- Any voluntary or community group which is locally led and run
- Registered Charities
- Social Enterprises & not for profit organisations
- Any group or organisation applying must have a good knowledge and understanding of the demographics and local needs of the 4 wards that make up the North Council area.
- Any group or organisation applying should have a written constitution and independent bank account

3 What is the Application Process? – DATES TO BE CONFIRMED

The application process for this programme are as follows:

- Application packs live on YORtender: - dependant on Procurement teams availability – ideally August 2021
- Deadline for proposals: 12 Noon, 15th September 2021
- Project proposals submitted and evaluated by the North Team against grant requirement criteria: September 2021

- Organisations that meet the criteria may be invited to present their proposal to a grants panel in October 2021. The presentation will be considered alongside the application form.
- Grants to be awarded: October 2021
- Social isolation programme delivery to start: 1st November 2021

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How much can be applied for? – TO BE CONFIRMED

- A total of £100k per annum is available for the Connecting Communities Grant Panel to allocate, ensuring that the successful proposals provide coverage and a spread of provision across the four wards that make up the North Council area.
- Applications will be accepted to fund projects between £10k - £40k *per year* for a maximum of 2 years, subject to annual review.

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Please ensure that you consider the following points and include details in your application to help the Grant Panel fully understand your proposal:

1. Applications must demonstrate how services will be delivered
2. Applications must provide clarity about when and over what period of time your proposal will be delivered.
3. Applications must explain who will be delivering the provision and what experience the individuals have in this area of expertise
4. Proposals should provide coverage and a spread of provision across the four wards. This may well be a mix of different projects;
5. Provide clarity about the specific wards/areas/neighbourhoods to be targeted by your proposal.
6. Proposals should not duplicate but complement existing provision, should add value and aim to link with other services procured by the North Area Council and the wider council and health partners;
7. Delivery locations should respond to local knowledge and intelligence, including information from local Councillors and other key stakeholders.
8. Enable socially isolated and vulnerable people to have greater involvement in designing services and actively participating in improving their lives and the wider Barnsley community
9. Ongoing consultation and co-production conversations should take place to ensure that ongoing delivery reflects their views
10. Demonstrate your ability to develop, implement and effectively manage your project, including financial management.
11. Providers are encouraged to join forces and match skills and experience i.e. proven skills and experience around outreach matched with a provider with a track record in delivery and outreach;
12. Where possible, work experience placements, apprenticeships and the use of local labour.
13. Consideration given as to how the project might continue after this funding comes to an end.

Innovative solutions are being sought to improve the health and wellbeing of adults living in the North Council area by reducing loneliness and isolation. The Connecting Communities Grant Panel is interested in applications that will achieve the following outcomes:

1. Proposals should be for activities / projects providing appropriate opportunities and interventions to reduce social isolation
2. Support individuals to take pride in the skills that they possess and actively participate in new learning opportunities
3. Increased confidence, sense of purpose and pride of individuals
4. Enable individuals to feel more connected with their communities
5. Highlight the health and wellbeing of individuals as a 'whole community issue'.
6. Improve the mental wellbeing of participants
7. Improve the physical wellbeing of participants. Contributing to the Barnsley 'What's Your Move Campaign'
8. Support the North Area to be an increasing 'Age Friendly' community
9. Where possible interventions will have an evidence-based rationale for reducing isolation and loneliness within communities
10. Creative solutions are sought to encourage new and different people to participate in the activities provided as part of the programme i.e. those who are most hard to reach
11. Provide information about how you will encourage people who need it most to access your project/sessions. Providing opportunities for people to use their skills, knowledge and expertise to help others to live their best life
12. Promoting social action, volunteering and addressing sustainability should be an integral part of any proposals

In addition, sustainability, community support, self-reliance, resilience and reciprocity should, therefore, be built into the service design and delivery.

We are keen to see the involvement of local people, groups and social enterprises in this service, not only through volunteering and stakeholder engagement, but also through partnership arrangements at a local level, where appropriate.

All projects must benefit older and/or vulnerable residents in the North Area and meet the requirements of the framework outlined above.

Groups applying should preferably be based within one of the four wards that make up the North Council area or within the Borough.

The proposed service / project will also contribute to building the social capital agenda by:

- Supporting people to take part in the local community, having social contact and experiencing friendships, which is critical to a good quality of life, health and wellbeing.
- Motivating and incentivising volunteers to 'give something back' and becoming valued contributors by providing opportunities to use their skills, knowledge and expertise to help others live independently.
- Promoting a positive image of vulnerable and older people.
- Working with other service providers in an integrated way to tackle some of the key issues which prevent people at risk of social isolation and loneliness from living healthy, active lives.

Project delivery should take place between 1st November 2021 and 31st March 2023.

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Capacity Building - SECTION TO BE CLARIFIED

We understand that VCSE groups are so busy doing their day to day work and supporting their service users that they don't always have the time or the money to spend on outcomes measurement.

For this reason, the North Area Council, in collaboration with Public Health colleagues, would like to offer extra resources to successful applicants by funding access, training and support to use the Outcomes Star (Community Star) tool in order to measure the difference that their interventions are making.

<http://www.outcomesstar.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Community-Star-Scales-Preview.pdf>
<http://www.outcomesstar.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Community-Star-Guidance-Preview.pdf>

We would like organisations to be able to measure and report on the success of their project against the following key areas of distance travelled. Each of the key areas above are underpinned by a five-stage Journey of Change. We are (of course) happy for organisations to use any existing distance travelled tools:

1. Feeling safe
2. Getting to know people
3. Making a difference
4. Building a healthy lifestyle
5. Making greener choices
6. Confidence and learning

Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council (BMBC) Council Plan 2021-2024

Healthy Barnsley Priorities:

- People are safe and feel safe
- People live independently with good physical and mental health for as long as possible
- We have reduced inequalities in health and income across the borough

North Area Council Priorities

- Health and Wellbeing
- Anti-Poverty
- Children and Young People
- Creating a cleaner, greener environment in partnership with local people
- Resilient Communities

The grant fund will also contribute significantly to the #Keep Barnsley Moving, Covid-19 Recovery and Renewal Strategy which includes 5 key themes:

- Health and wellbeing
- Business economy
- Community resilience
- Education and skills
- Infrastructure and the environment