



Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire Authority

Meeting and date: Fire Authority, 12 October 2022

Report title: Safety Centre Funding Agreement

Lead Member: Councillor Simon Rouse (Chairman)

Report sponsor: Area Commander Simon Tuffley – Head of Prevention, Response and Resilience

Author and contact: Joanne Cook - Community Safety & Safeguarding Manager
jcook@bucksfire.gov.uk

Action: Decision

Recommendations:

A funding agreement with the Safety Centre of £25,000 a year for a three-year term commencing on 1 October 2022 on the terms set out in this report be approved.

Executive summary:

Following the decision made at Business Transformation Board on 10 February 2022, any further decision on the continuation of the Safety Centre funding agreement was deferred until the Autumn to enable the Safety Centre to evidence one full year of delivery following its reopening, after the national lockdowns and response to Covid-19.

The purpose of this report is to gain the Authority's approval for a staged, three-year funding agreement with the Milton Keynes Safety Centre (Hazard Alley) Limited (Safety Centre), comprising a £25,000 per annum restricted grant, subject to agreement of the revised Heads of Terms outlined in Appendix 4 of this report.

Successive agreements with the Safety Centre have been in place since 2011, which have comprised a grant of £25,000 per annum, with an additional commitment of up to £2,000 per annum contribution towards travel costs. The above recommendation ceases the £2,000 travel cost contribution.

At the Fire Authority meeting held on 13 February 2019, it was agreed to continue to support the Safety Centre with a funding agreement for a further three years, which expired on 31 March 2022.

Several significant events impacted upon the Safety Centre during the period of this funding agreement, including:

- enforced closure from 23 March 2020 to 30 September 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic

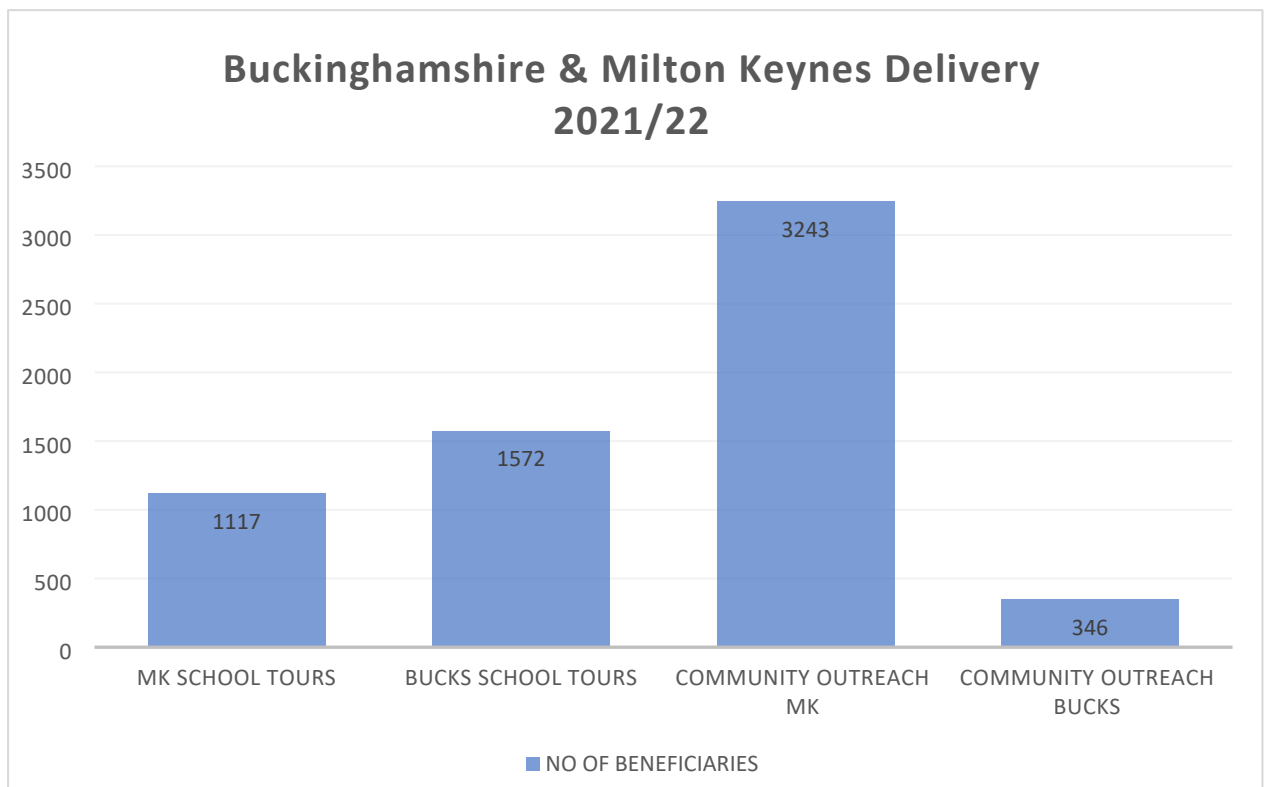
- the majority of staff on full/flexible furlough from March 2020 to August 2021
- a change in Chief Executive Officer from 16 November 2020
- essential major works completed on the fixed-point electric supply intake

Despite these events, the Safety Centre has attained many of the elements identified in Schedule 1 (Appendix 1) of the existing funding agreement, apart from educating 4,000 children or young people from within Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes during the enforced closure through the Covid 19 pandemic, and the delivery of a new mobile phone, emergency call scenario.

Following the decision to defer the evaluation of the effectiveness and value of the Safety Centre until August 2022, to allow a full school year of admissions to be factored in, this extended period has enabled the Safety Centre to demonstrate that it was operating at full booking capacity during the academic year, Sept 2021 – July 2022.

Following the appointment of a new CEO, the delivery model of the Safety Centre was enhanced to include a community outreach program, reflecting the difficulties schools and other educational settings faced in booking off-site visits in a post-pandemic climate.

The blended approach of children physically attending the Safety Centre and staff from the Safety Centre visiting school and educational settings to deliver community outreach, differs from the delivery model identified in the schedule agreed in 2019. However, it demonstrates a willingness on the Safety Centre’s behalf to be flexible to maximise engagement with children and young people from across Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes, to ultimately achieve the same goal.



Through educating 6,278 (2021/22 academic year) children and young people from Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes, the Safety Centre has demonstrated increased reach in delivering educational messages to 56% more children than the 4,000 target defined in schedule one of the current funding agreement. However as detailed above this has been through a modernised approach as schools and education settings recovered confidence post-Covid-19; an element not anticipated when the schedule was written in 2019.

52% of children and young people educated by the Safety Centre are from Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes, with new partnerships being established with The Thames Valley Police and Crime Commissioner, Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service and the Police and Crime Commissioner for Northamptonshire.

72% of the education input delivered by the Safety Centre to all attendees in 2020/21 contained an explicit fire and rescue message (fire, water, or road safety), and the remaining 28% of education contains safety messaging linked to the requirements placed on the Service by the Crime and Disorder Act (1998).

The activities carried out by the Safety Centre on behalf of the Authority align to strategic objective one of the Corporate Plan; to prevent incidents that cause harm from happening. More specifically, Strategic Objective 1.2, Promote and evaluate the effectiveness and value of the Safety Centre against the requirements set out in the three-yearly funding agreement.

The charity's new three-year strategy came into effect in October 2021 and has the following key strategic priorities:

- Provide immersive and interactive education to an increased number of children, young people, and adults
- Enhance our education programme ensuring it is relevant and connected to the changing needs of our community
- Increase our community engagement and profile by working closer with schools, partners, organisations, and the wider community
- Develop innovative safety solutions to diversify our safety offer
- Create a sustainable financial model safeguarding the future of the charity

Options to terminate or reduce the funding which the Authority commits to the Safety Centre for the delivery of safety education have been considered, however for the Authority to provide safety education to an equivalent number of children would cost circa £45k in the first year, reducing to £40k thereafter, based upon an increase to headcount of a dedicated education engagement officer on Scale F salary, vehicle lease, ICT equipment and initial resource purchase. Pursuing that option would also create an education route with no resilience in staffing. Therefore, this option is discounted.

Options to increase funding to the Safety Centre have also been considered and discounted at this time. The Authority is a founding stakeholder of the Safety Centre,

with a long-lasting commitment to fund the expenses incurred to deliver fire safety messages on behalf of the Authority. At this time, any further funding initiatives would only be considered to directly target further specific initiatives, aligned to the Authority's Prevention strategy, where appropriate.

The revised delivery approach presents an opportunity to enhance the offering from the Safety Centre and increase the education target to circa 6000 children and young people per annum.

A further breakdown on the Safety Centre's delivery is contained in Appendix 2 of this report.

Financial implications:

It is proposed that funding continues at the rate of £25,000 per annum for three years commencing on 1 October 2022, a total expenditure of £75,000 over the agreement period.

This option discontinues the £2,000 travel grant available to the Safety Centre to draw down from. The rationale behind this is that due to changes in the Safety Centre's arrangements for its staff to utilise vehicles, this grant has not been utilised during the lifetime of the current funding agreement.

The Safety Centre's expenditure against the requirements of Schedule One of the last funding agreement is contained within their [published audited accounts](#), noting that in the last funding agreement period, the Safety Centre agreed a "sale and leaseback arrangement, completed in February 2021 to release capital and help ensure the financial stability of the charity". The published accounts highlight how the net restricted income (including the Authority's £25K contribution) is consistently utilised in full each year.

Due to grant funding largely being tied to the daily operation of the charity, no new grants were secured in the fiscal year 2020-2021 when the Safety Centre was forced to close its physical centre due to the Covid pandemic.

In April 2020, Milton Keynes Community Foundation awarded the Safety Centre £1,690 to purchase two laptops for staff use during closure enforced by Covid.

Expenditure in many areas identified in the Schedule exceeded the Authority's contribution with the remainder made up from other revenue (Appendix 3).

The action of moving to leaseback on the Safety Centre's premises, has reduced the risks placed on the Safety Centre by the maintenance costs linked to an undeniably ageing building, which are now incumbent on the landlord to complete. This includes the ongoing repairs and maintenance of the flat roof, external pathway disturbance from tree roots and major works completed to the fixed-point electrics, enabling the Safety Centre to focus on developing its educational offering

and creating a more sustainable operating model.

Whilst the Authority has been the largest single financial supporter of the Safety Centre for a considerable period, the Safety Centre utilises grant funding streams to secure additional funding, most notably of £40,000 from Milton Keynes Council towards the amendment of the BP garage scenario to a three-façade street scene related to addressing knife crime. This funding will be reflected in the Safety Centre's 2021/22 audited accounts which are not yet available.

Restrictions are placed on funds as a condition of some grants. This can include a restriction on applying for further funds until an allocation is fully spent.

Funding grants have historically enabled the Safety Centre to subsidise the entrance costs for schools to an affordable level of £7.50 per child with the actual per child cost of the Safety Centre providing a visit being £17.25.

Although this subsidy model is embedded, the Safety Centre recognises this is not sustainable to continue and is being reviewed by the new CEO with options including amending the model of group delivery and an increase in admission price.

The Safety Centre secures the remainder of its annual turnover from commercial enterprise, sponsorship and donations via community initiatives, which has been increased since the change in CEO.

Risk management:

There is a risk that grant funding allocated by the Authority to any third sector company is not appropriately utilised for the purposes in which intended, if not appropriately monitored.

If approved, the Authority will review annually the Safety Centre's progress against the revised Schedule 1 of the Funding Agreement, and if it considers the Safety Centre has not made satisfactory progress, payments may be withheld or suspended in line with Section 12.1 of the Funding Agreement.

In addition to the Authority's power to withhold or suspend payment under the Funding Agreement, in 2019 it was revised from including a rolling break clause exercisable by the Authority, for any reason, on three months' notice, to being terminable by the Authority for any reason on the first or second anniversary on one months' notice.

The Safety Centre (Hazard Alley) Limited is a registered charity (1019093) required to submit accounts and annual returns to the Charity Commission for England and Wales. The annual review of the Schedule will also consider the independent auditor's report and published accounts to ensure the grant funding is being utilised appropriately.

The annual return, accounts, and Trustees Annual Report for the reporting year up to 30 September 2021 were received by the Charity Commission on time and

charity reporting is currently up to date. The independent auditors report for the year ended period 30 September 2021 gave an opinion that “the financial statements give a true and fair view of the state of the charitable company’s affairs as at 30 September 2021 and of its incoming resources and application of resources, including its income and expenditure, for the year then ended, have been properly prepared in accordance with United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice; and have been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006”.

Further, the Authority will continue to support the Board of Trustees by allowing the release of a senior officer where appropriate as a Trustee responsible for controlling the work, management and administration of the charity on behalf of its beneficiaries.

Legal implications:

The grant period under the previous funding agreement, approved by the Authority at its meeting on 13 February 2019, was for three 3 years commencing 1 April 2019, with the grant of £75,000 payable in 6 equal instalments subject to the right to withhold or suspend payments if certain targets are not achieved or other obligations not met. The sixth and final instalment was paid on 1 October 2021. The Safety Centre remains bound by the obligations to comply with the Authority’s requirements under the funding agreement beyond 31 March 2022 for so long as the grant monies received from the Authority remain unspent.

The funding arrangement supports the Authority’s obligation to promote fire safety and is permitted under Section 5A of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004.

Privacy and security implications:

The Safety Centre is the data controller for information regarding individuals. Clear terms regarding information release related to the authority are written into funding agreements with the Safety Centre.

Duty to collaborate:

Delivery of safety education by the Safety Centre is aligned to the requirement of the Policing and Crime Act 2017 for the Authority to consider opportunities for collaboration with the Police and Ambulance services.

The Safety Centre supports collaboration through providing specific services in addition to its safety education programs. These include:

- Small group sessions for individuals in response to Youth Justice requests.
- An education program for refugee groups delivered to Syrian and Afghan refugees placed in Buckinghamshire or Milton Keynes.

- Knife crime workshops commissioned in response to increased issues with specific age groups and localities. This area also links to the Serious Violence Duty.

Health and safety implications:

None arising directly from this report.

Environmental implications:

None arising directly from this report

Equality, diversity, and inclusion implications:

As required in the last funding agreement, the Safety Centre has improved the lighting within the building, improving accessibility for people with vision loss and has ensured its website meets Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG2.1 or subsequent).

Additionally, the Safety Centre has fitted an induction loop for those who are deaf or have hearing loss and trained staff in adjusting scenarios to ensure they are suitable for those with neurodiversity (autistic spectrum disorder, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder etc.).

Consultation and communication:

These proposals have been discussed with the current Chief Executive Officer of the Safety Centre and circulated to the relevant directorate and department leads for consultation.

Business Transformation Board – 8 September 2022

Background papers:

[Fire Authority 13 February 2019](#) (Item 10)

[Business Transformation Board 10 February 2022](#)

Appendix	Title	Protective Marking
1	Summary of performance against Schedule 1 of the existing Funding Agreement	
2	Visit delivery	
3	Income Comparison	
4	Heads of Terms	
5	Safety Centre CEO update – July 2022	