

Report for:	Shadow Executive
Meeting Date:	31 March 2020

Title of Report:	Prevention Grants
Shadow Portfolio Holder	Councillor Angela Macpherson Councillor Gareth Williams
Responsible Officer	Gillian Quinton
Report Author Officer Contact:	Marie Mickiewicz, Specialist Commissioning Manager, Integrated Commissioning Service mmickiewicz@buckscc.gov.uk
Recommendations:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Agree the award of Prevention Grants in line with the report and as detailed in Appendix 1. 2. Agree the award of contracts against two successful befriending service lots (Mental Health & General over 18). 3. Agree to utilise funding allocated to the unsuccessful dementia befriending commission (£35k) to support broader awards to Prevention Grant applicants for 2020/21. This would be to mitigate potential impacts identified through the EqIA.
Corporate Implications:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Supports the embedding of the aims of the VCS Strategy for Buckinghamshire 2. Potential reputational damage due to the impact of the outcome of certain awards
Options: (If any)	<p>The following alternative options are set out in section 8 and are not recommended.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do not award any of the befriending service contracts. Revert to grant award for providers who received Prevention Grant in 2019/20 based on their 2020/21 submissions. • Award befriending service contracts where possible. Revert to grant award to providers who received Prevention Grant in 2019/20 based on their 2020/21 submissions.
Reason:	<p>The recommended option:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moves befriending to a commissioned model where possible, whilst retaining support for those with dementia within the community • Allows for the award of Prevention Grants for 2020-21 whilst mitigating potential impacts on those from protected groups identified through the Equalities Impact Assessment. • Maintains MTP savings trajectory for this workstream

1. Purpose of Report

1.1 The purpose of this paper is to:

- Provide an overview of the approach that has been taken in relation to Befriending services and the Community Prevention Grant programme in Buckinghamshire.
- Provide an update on the current position including highlighting risks and suggested mitigations.
- Agree next steps.

2. Executive Summary

2.1 The Prevention Grant Scheme has been in place to support the availability of community provision, to promote social inclusion and prevent increased dependency of vulnerable older people. Schemes previously funded include day centres, information and advice provision, social groups for particular communities and befriending provision.

2.2 With the move to unitary in April 2020, the Council will be deferring decisions on those grant programmes moving from the districts, as articulated in the paper before Shadow Executive on 18 February 2020, "Grant commitments to voluntary and community sector organisations (VCSOs)". A review of those programmes will be brought to the Executive in September 2020, with a refreshed VCSO strategy. However due to commissioning cycles the decision on the preventions grants and commissioning of befriending services within this paper needs to be taken sooner and the approach taken aligns with the wider Council position.

2.3 The Council's strategic position supports a shift away from grant funding towards commissioned models. In line with this we are taking a phased approach to developing the Prevention Grant Scheme. This approach is aligned with the developing VCSO Strategy and the proposed development of Community Boards within the new Unitary Authority. The phased approach takes account of the fact that some organisations have been receiving funding for a number of years and we want to ensure these organisations are supported to manage this change.

- **2018/19** – Application process put in place for existing prevention grant recipients and support to bid offered (for 2019/20 funding)
- **2019/20** – Application process opened out for wider VCSO base (more competitive process) and support offered to apply (for 2020/21 funding)
- **2020/21** – A portion of the resource previously available for grant funding invested in a commissioned model for befriending services, reducing the overall investment in grant funded activity
- **2021/22 and 2022/23** – Continue to develop approach to grant funding in line with the future Community Boards, Integrated Commissioning's review of approach to prevention services and the wider Council approach to VCSOs.

2.4 There have been some challenges in implementing the changes for 2020/21:

- While two areas of befriending support have had suitable providers identified and, following agreement, can be awarded, one remains unsecured. In addition, there

is a likely impact on a current grant funded provider of befriending support. This is covered in more detail within the confidential appendix 2.

- Grant applications were received and evaluated resulting in the recommended award in Confidential Appendix 1. The Equalities Impact Assessment (Confidential Appendix 3) shows that if awards are made for 2020/21 based on evaluation alone there would be an impact on some protected groups. More information on this impact is also included within Confidential Appendix 2.
- Additionally, some organisations who have received grant funding historically will not receive funding and there is a risk that this will impact on their ability to continue delivering services.

2.5 This report recommends next steps that seek to mitigate the key areas of risk. Specifically:

- To award contracts for the over 18 and mental health befriending services
- Given that the market has been unable to respond, not to progress with any further procurement activity for the dementia befriending service
- For the next 12 months, to re-invest the resource available for the dementia befriending service (£35k) to mitigate some of the identified risks and impacts relating to the prevention grant awards.

3. Background

3.1 Community Prevention Grants have been issued by Buckinghamshire County Council since 2014. The Grants have been awarded to support community provision that promotes social inclusion and helps prevent increased dependency of vulnerable older people. This provision enables people to actively participate in constructive and interesting activities, and provides them with opportunities to contribute to and socialise in community settings.

3.2 Historically, payments have been made to the same organisations on a rolling annual basis. Grants have been issued to a range of VCS providers delivering a variety of different projects including, music therapy, lunch clubs, information and advice and befriending. Due to the historic nature in which the grants have been issued, there is a lack of equity, reach and diversity across the county as well as duplication of provision. The amount of funding awarded has also varied between organisations with a lack of continuity between similar provisions.

3.3 To address some of these issues, and in line with the Council's strategic direction, in 2018 a new bid process for Prevention Grant Funding was implemented for the 2019/20 financial year to:

- Ensure that grant allocations support the Council's *Better Lives Strategy* by providing funding to organisations that aim to promote independence, prevent social isolation and delay or prevent the need for more intensive health and / or social care interventions
- Support the VCS to provide services without having to solely rely on grant funding
- Maintain services and protect community assets whilst a strategy is developed to procure services more efficiently
- Deliver efficiency savings

3.4 For the 2019/20 financial year, only previously grant funded organisations were invited to submit a funding application. Guidance notes were issued to providers advising that the grants were not intended to be used as a long term or recurrent funding stream,



and providers were encouraged to seek ways in which to secure other revenue to fund the delivery of their projects on a longer term sustainable basis.

- 3.5 This bid process for 2019/20 grant funding did not address the inequity in access to this funding across the wider VCS base in Buckinghamshire. In 2019, to continue to support the VCS and address key priorities across the county, agreement was given to retain the Community Prevention Grant fund with the application process being opened up to the wider community for 2020/21.
- 3.6 Furthermore, it was agreed in 2018 to develop a strategy for procuring services more efficiently by moving from a grant process towards a commissioned model for Befriending Services as a first phase towards moving grant provision towards a commissioned model.
- 3.7 A total of five organisations have been receiving funding via the Community Prevention Grant fund towards delivery of befriending services across the county since 2014. All five services have different objectives and delivery models but with the common overarching aim of supporting individuals to remain independent for as long as possible within their communities through the provision of regular one-to-one support.
- 3.8 It was identified that there were issues around duplication of effort (where multiple services are offering befriending to the same individuals), lack of collaboration between providers in relation to sharing of resources and best practice; additionally there was an inability to effectively monitor and evaluate the impact of these services due to their grant status.
- 3.9 In order to effectively address these issues, sign off (final sign off by Cabinet Member at briefing on 14 August 2019) was obtained to commission befriending services on a 1+1 contract term with contract values remaining similar to current grant funding.
- 3.10 The agreed approach was to commission three individual contracts for befriending, with specific specialist foci for a 1st April 2020 start:
- General befriending 18+ (incorporating autism, Learning Disability and Physical and Sensory Disability)
 - Dementia
 - Mental Health

4. Interdependencies with other Council work-streams

- 4.1 **Unitary Implementation:** As part of the implementation of the unitary authority from April 2020, there has been consultation on the implementation of Community Boards which will undertake a role in providing grant funding to VCS organisations in line with local area priorities. These are due to start awarding funding from June 2020 which would leave a gap of three months were Prevention Grants rolled into this pot from 2020/21. Following discussion with lead officers, it was agreed that the Prevention Grants would be kept separate for 2020/21 on the understanding that this would be revisited once the implementation of the Community Boards was complete. This would allow for continuity of funding availability for VCS organisations subject to successful application for funding in line with the *Better Lives Strategy*.
- 4.2 **Integrated Commissioning review of prevention services:** The *Better Lives Strategy* sets out an ambition to support people to live independently, regain their independence following a crisis and for those who require ongoing support, to ensure

that wherever possible, people are supported to remain at home. The Council currently commissions a range of services that could be termed as ‘preventative’ across different contracts. The Integrated Commissioning Service has identified an opportunity to review whether these services could be commissioned differently to improve the outcomes we are achieving for service users, ensure coordinated service delivery that is well aligned to the ambition of the *Better Lives Strategy* and maximise value for money. It is anticipated that in line with the Council’s overall direction of travel, this would result in more of the current grant funding resource being used for commissioned services, as well as potential changes to current arrangements for commissioned services. Given the lack of market response to invites to quote for a commissioned dementia befriending service, we would also need to undertake further work with the market to ensure it can respond to our needs.

- 4.3 **VCSO Strategy Development:** A VCSO strategy is currently being developed for the new Buckinghamshire Council along with a review of those grant programmes coming into the new Buckinghamshire Council from the districts. Following joint work with the relevant officers, there is good alignment between the future proposals for the Befriending Service and prevention grants and the ambition of the emerging VCSO Strategy.
- 4.4 Across the next two years it is proposed that our approach to Prevention Grant Funding is further developed in line with the above areas of work.

5. Funding – Prevention Grants & Befriending Services

- 5.1 The below table provides an overview of funding arrangements. This has been subject to MTP savings over the period. It also shows how resource has started to shift towards a commissioned model for befriending for the 2020/21 financial year.

Year	Prevention Grants	Befriending	Comments
2018/19	£391,000 (grant awards – included some befriending)	£68,672 (mental health only, grant award)	For 2020/21 resource shifted from prevention grants and grant funded mental health befriending to commissioned befriending model in 3 lots: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General over 18 (£90k) • Mental Health (£89k) • Dementia (35k)
2019/20	£279,000 (grant awards – included some befriending)	£68,672 (mental health only, grant award)	
2020/21	£140,845 (grant awards)	£145,155 + £68,672 = £213,872 for commissioned befriending services	

- 5.2 The above details that for 2020/21, there will be £140,845 for Prevention Grants and £213, 872 available for the commissioned befriending services.
- 5.3 Appendix 1 sets out in detail the recommendation for awarding prevention grants for 2020/21.

6. Stakeholder Engagement

6.1 To inform and prepare the market for the proposed changes to our approach, key stakeholders were engaged with in the following ways:

- Proposed changes to the Community Prevention Grant fund highlighted at the Prevention Market Position Statement provider event on 21st May 2019.
- Met individually with five current grant funded Befriending providers to explain the proposed approach and understand any issues or concerns. None raised.
- Befriending event held on 9th July to engage current and potential befriending providers to develop and shape the services. Attended by approx. 20 individuals across 11 organisations/providers.
- Three x Prevention Grant workshops held in September and October on different days and times in Aston Clinton, Wycombe and Amersham, in conjunction with the VCS infrastructure provider (Community Impact Bucks), to explain the new process, timeframes and offer advice around submitting a successful application.
- Met with or discussed other telephone with other 18 current grant funded organisations to explain proposed approach, discuss progress on plans to be sustainable, understand any issues or concerns and offer advice/support.
- Tasked infrastructure provider to support organisations with completion of applications and provide capacity building information and advice.
- Developed a communication strategy with colleagues from the Council's Communications Team to inform of and promote the Community Prevention Grant fund via e-mails, social media, infrastructure provider and partner communications.

7. Current Position

7.1 To implement the agreed approaches, a robust and fair process has been followed involving colleagues from Procurement, Finance and Legal. Key stakeholders have been engaged with in a timely and thorough manner to provide opportunities to feed into the processes, raise any issues or concerns and keep abreast of key dates and requirements.

Commissioning of Befriending Services

7.2 Based on the respective funding values for these services, it was not necessary to go to full tender. The procurement was run as a quote process. Contract term for all contracts was one year with an option to extend for one year to allow for flexibility through the significant amount of change ahead for the Council.

	Quote Process Undertaken	Outcome
Mental Health	One bid received and scored. Meets quality & financial threshold	Contract award recommended
General (18+)	Out to quote twice due to insufficient quality of original quote. Second quote process led to more quotes and of better	Contract award recommended

	quality. Meets quality & financial threshold	
Dementia	Out to quote twice with no response from market. No bids received.	Decision required on next steps Recommendation: reinvest the £35k from this lot into Prevention Grant award to mitigate potential impacts identified in EqIA.

There is more information on the impact of the recommendation included within Confidential Appendix 2.

Distribution of Prevention Grants

- 7.3 Following agreement to the revised approach and initial engagement with key stakeholders, work was undertaken to identify the key priority areas that the grants would align to. Consultation was undertaken with the Communities' team, Public Health and CCG partners ensuring alignment with the *Better Lives Strategy 2018-2021* and *Prevention, Early Help and Supporting People at a Community Level Market Position Statement 2018-2022*.
- 7.4 A communications plan was developed to publicise the offer to the wider community via a variety of media including e-mail, social media, partner newsletters and via Community Impact Bucks (CIB) who currently deliver the infrastructure contract. A webpage on the BCC public website was also developed to host all information and documents for transparency and accessibility for all applicants.
- 7.5 Guidance notes, criteria and application forms were developed based on learning from the grant process for 2019/20, BCC Local Area Forum funding process and other Local Authority grant programmes.
- 7.6 The grant application process opened on Monday 14th October and closed on Friday 15th November. A total of 36 applications were received from current grant funded and new organisations for a range of projects. All applications were individually evaluated and moderated by officers from the Integrated Commissioning Service and the Communities Team.
- 7.7 Following the scoring and moderation of the applications, an Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA) was completed for the recommended award. As a result, a number of groups that may be disadvantaged by the recommended award were highlighted. These are discussed in more detail within the Confidential Appendix 2.
- 7.8 The full EqIA is included at Confidential Appendix 3.

8. Options and Next Steps

8.1 Options for next steps are set out in the table below, taking account of the risks identified in section 7.

Option	Pro's	Con's
<p>RECOMMENDED 1) Do not commission a Dementia Befriending service AND Transfer funds (£35k) to the Community Prevention Grant fund to mitigate potential impacts identified in EqlA</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increases funding available to the wider VCS to deliver a range of services • Reinvestment allows for mitigation of equalities impacts as defined within the EqlA for the award of the Prevention Grants • Continues to fund services that support people with dementia and their carers through a range of services e.g. lunch clubs, music therapy etc. (highlighted in blue in Appendix 1). This helps mitigate the non-award of the dementia befriending lot. • Current provider of grant funded dementia befriending service reports that they will continue to maintain their current service offer in Bucks without BCC funding. • Light touch officer involvement • Achievable within the given time frame 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reputational risk to BCC due to perceived non-investment in befriending service for those people and their carers living with dementia. However, this is mitigated by investment in support for those with dementia and their families as part of the Prevention Grant award recommendations • Will not produce any additional financial savings • Less able to capture performance data through grant funded dementia support to help inform and shape future dementia services. • No direct control over future delivery of dementia support by the current grant funded provider once they lose their funding.
<p>2) Do not award any of the befriending services. Revert to grant award to providers who received Prevention Grant in 2019/20 based on their 2020/21 submissions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimises risk of previously grant-funded provision reducing due to reduced funding from the Council. • Reduced officer time required to support transition into 2020-21 financial year • Results in an underspend against projected MTP targets for 2020-21 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reputational risk to the Council due to move away from previously communicated changes to scheme • Reputational damage due to new bidders under the scheme being rejected for funding in opposition to previous communication • Relational risk with VCS organisations in Bucks for future opportunities and impact on future joint working • Does not support the direction of travel in terms of moving to commissioned model of delivery where appropriate to do so • Limits the availability of information on need for befriending services on an ongoing basis in comparison with the recommended option. • Reduced control of the befriending offer available in Buckinghamshire in comparison to recommended option.

Option	Pro's	Con's
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does not address duplication of offer or gaps in provision across Buckinghamshire in respect of befriending services • Reduction in delivery (some previous grant applicants did not apply) • Does not address inequity in application process that changes were put in place to address
3) Award befriending service contracts where possible (general over 18 and Mental Health). Revert to award to providers who received Prevention Grant in 2019/20 based on their 2020/21 submissions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimises risk of previously grant-funded provision reducing due to reduced funding availability from the Council. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Result in an overspend against projected MTP targets for 2020-21 • Reputational risk to Buckinghamshire County Council (and Buckinghamshire Council) due to move away from previously communicated changes to scheme • Reputational damage due to new bidders under the scheme being rejected for funding outside of the scoring process in opposition to previously communicated messages. • Relational risk with VCS organisations in Bucks for future opportunities and impact on future joint working • Does not address inequity in application process that changes were put in place to address



9. Financial Implications

- 9.1 It is proposed that the £35k earmarked for the dementia befriending lot is diverted to award additional prevention grants for 2020/21 to mitigate against potential detrimental impacts identified in the EqlA. This would amount to making five additional awards totalling £35,275 (see Appendix 1). The only financial impact is therefore a small reduction of £275 in the MTP saving of £105k for 2020/21.

10. Legal Implications

- 10.1 None envisaged.

11. Other Key Risks

- 11.1 **Befriending** – as previously highlighted in this report
- 11.2 **Community Prevention Grants** – in addition to those risks previously highlighted in this report:
- **Closure of services and reputational risk** – If organisations do not secure funding they may have to reduce or cease operation which could result in a gap in local provision. This could also lead to negative press for the Council who are currently working to support the VCS.
 - **Dependency on grant funding** – If organisations who have been deemed to not meet the criteria are funded then this could create further dependency on grant funds and undermine key messages about sustainability. It is proposed that further support is provided to these organisations to mitigate against this.
 - **Timeliness of Decision Making** – If a prompt decision is not forthcoming, then this may significantly impact of VCS organisation ability to plan and deliver key community services into 2020/21 financial year. It would also impact on the 2.5 month implementation period for the new commissioned befriending services. This would also act to further any potential reputation damage to the council (both Buckinghamshire County Council and Buckinghamshire Council)

12. Dependencies

- 12.1 The interdependencies between the Prevention Grants and Befriending Services have been discussed in the main body of the paper. There are no further dependencies that have been identified.

13. Consultation

- 13.1 Stakeholder engagement carried out (detailed in Section 6.1). Communications Team advised that there would be no formal consultation required as part of the project.

14. Communications Plan

14.1 The Communications Team are aware of this project and have been involved within the process so far. They will be consulted for further input in relation to effectively communicating the agreed approach.

15. Equalities Implications

15.1 An Equalities Impact Assessment was completed prior to the change of policy and suggested that a further Equalities Impact Assessment was completed prior to award to capture and allow for mitigation of any adverse impact on those with protected characteristics.

15.2 The Equalities Impact Assessment in regard to the recommended award is attached at Appendix 3 and is discussed within the main body of this report

16. Data Implications

16.1 A Data Protection Impact Assessment is not required.

17. Next Steps

17.1 If option 1 is agreed, then the Prevention Grants and befriending contracts will be awarded in line with the Appendices to this report.

17.2 In terms of decision making the proposed route is as follows:

- Shadow Executive: 31/03/2020

Background Papers	None.
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