

CORE OFFER BUDGET FOR THE ENGAGEMENT TEAM

WHY DOES THE COUNCIL HAVE TO PROVIDE THIS SERVICE AND WHAT DOES IT NEED TO COVER?

The Engagement Team currently provide a range of services that support a number of communities in Darlington. The team has been reduced over a number of years and has reduced further as part of the proposals for the MTFP 2016-20. This core offer is to retain the Community Engagement Officer for 0.5WTE and the Policy Officer who is full time. The roles of the two members of staff provide support to Members and officers within the Council but also support relationships and joint working with other partners including other public services, VCS and the armed forces.

The Policy Officer role identifies and draws together a range of issues to support strategic development on a broad remit of topics whilst ensuring delivery options are based on best practice. This has involved work on deprivation, financial inclusion, child poverty, domestic abuse in recent months. This function will help to inform service planning and commissioning. The post holder also acts as the interface between DWP and the local authority for the roll out of Universal Credit.

The team also work with partner organisations as a link role for those organisations to the VCS in Darlington. The officer will also be responsible for the supporting and developing relationships with the sector to meet the new challenges ahead. This will involve liaising not only with officers within the local authority but also with health, police and fire services. The team are also key point of access for information for the sector about consultations and policy developments and part of the team role is to support the representation of the sector on groups such as Community Safety and Health and Well Being Board. The team have supported the development of the Strategic Implementation Group (SIG) as the place where representation of the sector can be agreed and where strategic input from the sector can be developed. The group is owned by the VCS but supported by the team currently. It will provide the key co-design group and bring together work from a number of other groups including Unit of Planning and 11-19 Partnership to ensure broader buy-in and activity from the VCS to strategic priorities. It will also enable the sector to be pro-active in voicing issues of mutual concern and provide a forum for joint activity.

The team also supports contract development for a number of cross cutting areas of work including Financial Inclusion Crisis Support and Community Care Grant, formerly known as Social Fund.

The team also update the funding website, Darlington Advice Network and the Armed Forces Directory which will enable residents and local community and voluntary groups to become more self-supporting. These activities also help to bring funding into Darlington, reduce demand on statutory services and meet our commitments in terms of the Armed Forces Community Covenant. Many of these activities also link to regional VCS activity and also Tees Valley wide work including The part-time Engagement Officer is also the lead for work with armed Forces and Veterans and was instrumental in achieving the Bronze Award for the Employment Recognition Scheme.

The policy officer within the team is a corporate role that supports the analysis and data on cross cutting issues such as financial inclusion and multiple deprivation, child

poverty and employment. This work has been used to support partnership activity across departments within the local authority and to support joint work across sectors. The data and research has also been used to support the VCS when bidding for funding.

HOW DOES THE CORE OFFER BUDGET MEET THE COUNCIL'S OBLIGATIONS?

Whilst it is not a statutory requirement to have an engagement team there are a number of obligations that this team will provide support and capacity for:

- An active partnership with public sector and the local voluntary and community sector is often a pre-requisite for funding bids
- More and more work with health partners will require partnership with the VCS and this includes Better Care Fund, Healthy Towns, Better Health and the 20/20 Vision
- Services need to be developed with the VCS to support delivery of the three key priorities of
- A set of criteria has been used to decide on Darlington's Future proposals and the work of the team will support delivery of the following
 - Invest to protect the most vulnerable in society.
 - Invest to reduce costs in the future.
 - Invest to create and develop opportunities for the future.

DOES THIS DIFFER FROM THE CURRENT SERVICE?

The capacity to deliver will have been reduced by one full time senior post so capacity will be reduced and the focus will be on Building Stronger Communities and will be in line with the priorities of the organisation as set out in the obligation section set out above.

WHAT IS THE CORE BUDGET MADE UP OF?

2019/20 - £51,577

£50,000	1.5 fte staffing
£1,577	Overheads