

**HEALTH AND PARTNERSHIPS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
5 DECEMBER 2019**

**VOLUNTARY AND COMMUNITY SECTOR FUNDING: UPDATE ON PILOT
COMMUNITY BASED INITIATIVES**

SUMMARY REPORT

Purpose of the Report

1. This report provides an update on the community based initiatives, funded from Voluntary Sector Development Fund monies, which are being piloted during 2019/20.

Summary

2. In late 2018, the Chief Officers Executive (COE) gave approval for the implementation of 7 pilot community based initiatives using Voluntary Sector Development Fund monies.
3. The priorities for the non-recurring funding were identified as reducing isolation and loneliness in adults to improve health and wellbeing, and providing early intervention support to vulnerable families to support children and young people to remain in education and live at home.
4. The 7 initiatives were agreed at a series of workshops attended by representatives from the Council, the Police, Health, Education, the Fire Brigade and a wide range of both small and large community and voluntary sector organisations.

Recommendation

5. It is recommended that Members receive this progress report for information.

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Background Papers

No background papers were used in the preparation of this report.

S17 Crime and Disorder	This report is for information and will have neither a positive or negative impact on Crime and Disorder
Health and Well Being	This report has implications on the Health and Well Being of residents of Darlington.
Carbon Impact and Climate Change	This report is for information and will have neither a positive or negative impact on Carbon Impact
Diversity	There are no issues relating to diversity which this report needs to address
Wards Affected	The impact of the report on any individual Ward is considered to be minimal.
Groups Affected	The impact of the report on any individual Group is considered to be minimal.
Budget and Policy Framework	This report does not represent a change to the budget and policy framework.
Key Decision	This is not a key decision
Urgent Decision	This is not an urgent decision
One Darlington: Perfectly Placed	The report contributes to the Sustainable Community Strategy in a number of ways through the involvement of Members in contributing to the delivery of the eight outcomes.
Efficiency	The Work Programmes are integral to scrutinising and monitoring services efficiently (and effectively), however this report does not identify specific efficiency savings.
Impact on Looked After Children and Care Leavers	One project outlined in this report will benefit Looked After Children and Care Leavers

MAIN REPORT

6. In late 2018, the Chief Officers Executive (COE) gave approval for the implementation of 7 pilot community based initiatives using Voluntary Sector Development Fund monies.
7. £142,000 was initially allocated and an additional £21,000 has recently been made available from the Community Facilities Fund (ring-fenced to benefit the Skerne Park area of the borough).
8. Inclusion North were asked to facilitate a multi-agency steering group to oversee this work, and to manage the funding on behalf of Darlington Borough Council. The steering group first met in January 2019 and has since met a further three times.
9. The priorities for the non-recurring funding were identified as reducing isolation and loneliness in adults to improve health and wellbeing, and providing early intervention support to vulnerable families to support children and young people to remain in education and live at home. Seven initiatives (projects) were agreed at a series of workshops attended by representatives from the Council, the Police, Health, Education, the Fire Brigade and a wide range of both small and large community and voluntary sector organisations.
10. Initiative 1 – Small Sparks £23,400

This project is being led by the Voluntary and Community Sector Engagement Group (formerly known as SIG). The primary aim of the funding is to develop innovative ways of reducing social isolation/promoting community inclusion. Community organisations can apply for between £150 and £3000. There is a short, simple application process with a six week deadline in which to apply. The first bidding round is currently underway and will end on 15 November. Information is being shared with the voluntary and community sector in the area to ensure a wide range of applications. If there are funds remaining after the first bidding round, a second round will be opened up.

11. Initiatives 2 and 3 – Mutual Gain £36,800

Two projects are being led by the Neighbourhood Policing Team based on the Mutual Gain approach. The purpose of Mutual Gain is to empower organisations and communities to have greater participation and active citizenship, and to increase social capital for the mutual benefit of the entire community. The project is focussing on the Bank Top area and two funds were made available to ensure equal focus on both children and young people and socially isolated adults in the area.

The aim of these projects is to involve the local community in participatory budgeting, so share the decision making and control, and to co-produce solutions to local issues with the community itself. To date, a small amount of funding (£405) has been used to engage with the local community to co-design a picture of what is good about the area and what could be improved. Local groups have been invited to bid for funds by designing a simple solution to a local problem. There is a planned participatory budgeting event on 16th November, where the local community will come and vote on the initiatives that have so far been put forward.

To date there have been 20 applications received, and each will be at the event to share their ideas with the public and attempt to win votes.

12. Initiative 4 – Supporting the work of Well Being Facilitators £28,400

The aim of this project is to reduce dependence on traditional social care support services and reduce reliance on urgent, emergency and out of hours services. The Well Being Facilitators team are managing the fund as part of their work to improve social and community support and assets. As well as increasing signposting to and utilisation of the Voluntary sector and identifying gaps in service provision, they are able to use the fund to find one off simple solutions to issues that might otherwise escalate and require statutory service input. The intended beneficiaries are those who are aged 65+ years and are frail. Well Being Facilitators have worked together to agree a criteria for the fund. This includes a maximum spend of £50 per issue without a team decision making process. This has given the Well Being Facilitators individual autonomy, with the back up of team scrutiny for more expensive items. To date £942 has been spent on a range of interventions including support for friendship groups and individuals who want to attend local events. Referrals to the Well Being Facilitators are coming from staff based within GP practices, district nurses and the DBC RIACT team.

13. Initiative 5 – Early Help £35,400

The aim is to strengthen the Early Help offer to children and young people by offering all schools access to a fund aimed at supporting children and young people to attend school. The fund is used by schools to identify small things that will make a big difference to children and young people's attendance and attainment. Schools allocate small amounts of funding based on clear guidelines. The fund was launched in September, and to date schools have been using the funding to enable the most vulnerable families to buy uniform and to enable individual children and young people to buy equipment which would enable them to participate in the Duke of Edinburgh award scheme and associated expeditions or trips.

14. Initiative 6 – Working Together £10,000

Funding for this project has been used to run a Holiday Enrichment Programme and to support the development of Darlington Young Advisors.

Holiday Enrichment Programme - free stimulating activities and food were provided during the six-week school holiday period for 60 children leaving year 6 to start secondary school in September 2019. The children who were offered this support lived in four areas of multiple deprivation across Darlington, and attended four different primary schools, including Skerne Park. Each school identified 15 children that they felt would benefit from the provision, including children they suspected could go hungry, who may not have reliable care at home or whose behaviour they believed would deteriorate over the summer holidays without some structured stimulating activity. Following the Programme, an initial evaluation was completed which showed that:

- 90% of parents rated their children's enjoyment level of the programme as 10 out of 10 with the remaining 10% rating the enjoyment levels at 9 out of 10

- 100% of parents who completed the questionnaire rated the transport as 10 out of 10, stating that they felt that being collected from their locality was a key contributing factor in the children being able to attend the programme
- 100% also stated that they would recommend the programme to others

Officers are currently collecting further information from the schools regarding the impact of this programme on the attendance and attainment levels for the children involved following their return to school in September.

Darlington Young Advisors - The creation of the Young Darlington Advisors (YDA) pilot project aims to draw together all of the work already being carried out by young people across Darlington in relation to commissioning, consultation, engagement, training, recruitment, monitoring and evaluation. YDA will play a significant role in ensuring that children and young people growing up in Darlington receive the best possible service and support. Its aim is to capture the voice and experience of children and young people and use this to shape future services and projects.

A YDA Board will be established comprising of 8 – 10 young people aged between 13 and 19 year old (or up to 25 for care leavers and 25 for those with a EHCP or SEN support plan). Young people on the Board will come from a range of backgrounds, have a variety of interests and hobbies, and have different experiences and aspirations. Some young people maybe be living away from home, care leavers and some may have disabilities or care for family members. Also invited to attend the YDA Board, will be young people who are part of existing youth groups mentioned earlier in the report. These existing youth groups/organisations will be of particular benefit in providing young people with specific knowledge or experience in relation to a Service support already being provided by the Council and partner organisations.

The Board is currently being established and will be operational from late January 2020.

15. Initiative 7 – Economic Growth – Skerne Park £21,149

The aim of this project is to support grassroots asset based community development in the area. Building partnerships with the voluntary ad community sector to build local capacity. This project is being led by the Voluntary and Community Sector Engagement Group (formerly known as SIG) and will be initiated in January 2020.