

GRANTS TO ORGANISATIONS PROVIDING SERVICES TO HOMELESS PEOPLE

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Portfolio: Regeneration and Development

Ward(s) affected: All Wards

Purpose of the Report

To seek approval for the allocation of funding reserved for voluntary organisations that provide homelessness related services.

Recommendation

That Members approve the recommended allocations.

Reasons

The Council offers grants to assist with the statutory requirement to provide free advice and information about homelessness and its prevention. The level of requests for financial support is greater than the finance available, therefore this report seeks to outline reasons as to how the grants should be awarded in order to maximise the outcomes in line with the Council's adopted Homelessness Strategy.

1. Background

- 1.1 The Council's budget for grants to organisations providing services to homeless people in 2012 -13 has been set with £17,500. The grants assessment panel will consider grants which are under £5,000.
- 1.2 The Council has a statutory responsibility to provide free advice and information about homelessness and its prevention. These responsibilities can be discharged in a variety of ways. Although the main approach is through the Newcastle Housing Advice Contract with Aspire Housing to provide homelessness, housing advice and the maintenance of the housing register, it is acknowledged that many agencies provide valuable support to those who have or may become homeless.
- 1.3 The organisations applying for grant aid provide very valuable, complementary services and should be seen as a vital part of the Council's overall strategy for dealing with homelessness and housing advice. The Housing Act 1996 refers specifically to the practice of giving grants in section 180, "Assistance for voluntary organisations", which allows a local authority to help voluntary (i.e. not for profit) organisations concerned with homelessness by providing grants.

2. Issues

- 2.1 The 2010 Homelessness Strategy sets out how the Council plans to address homelessness issues within the Borough. As part of the grant application each organisation has been asked to state how their service will meet the aims and priorities set out within the Homelessness Strategy.
- 2.2 Following on from previous years' grant allocations all organisations are required to sign a service level agreement and submit monitoring statistics, which enables the Council to monitor the service availability to and take up from Newcastle residents.

- 2.3 Some of the organisation that have applied for grant funding this year have received funding in previous years and have been able to submit statistics; monitoring statistics from the previous year's allocations are listed below each organisation.
- 2.4 There are organisations that have applied, which have not received funding in previous years and therefore, they have not been able to provide monitoring statistics. However, these organisations have been established for many years and have assisted the residents of Newcastle-under-Lyme. Information of their work is also listed below.

3. **Options Considered**

- 3.1 £35,628.50 has been requested this year, which is above the amount of £17,500 allocated for these bids.
- 3.2 Nine grant applications have been submitted for consideration. Each is listed below, giving the amount requested, the amount recommended by officers and a brief explanation.
- 3.3 The option considered is to allocate the available funding to grant applications.

4. **Proposal**

- 4.1 In assessing the grant applications, it has been decided that certain applications should not be awarded any funding, as in principle these have either demonstrated a low value for money or the projects will duplicate an existing service.
- 4.2 There are other grant applications, which in principle have demonstrated that they will provide a service that will directly link in with homelessness prevention and the recommendation has been to approve these applications. However, there is insufficient funding to support these grants in full.
- 4.3 Officers have exercised their judgement to allocate the funding. This judgement has been based on the performance of the organisation and the usefulness of the service to residents of Newcastle-under-Lyme.

Arch - Elizabeth House Advice Service

Requested £ 2,628.50

Elizabeth House is based in the Borough and provides emergency and temporary accommodation to women and families experiencing homelessness. The application for funding is to support the advice and information and signposting work which is carried out by the service. This service is particularly beneficial because it deals with enquiries out of regular office hours when no other service is available.

Total enquiries for Newcastle 2009/2010 (three quarters) = 39

Total enquires for Newcastle 2010/2011 (there quarters) = 22

Total enquires for Newcastle 2011/2012 (there quarters) = 33

Officers are therefore recommending awarding £2,628.50, the full grant requested.

Gingerbread

Requested £5,000

Gingerbread will provide residential and non-residential housing and tenancy advice to vulnerable lone parent families and single pregnant women who may be at risk of becoming homeless. The grant application explains how the grant application helps support the service provided in Newcastle. The bid outlines how the Stoke on Trent Supporting People contract does not cover all of the support services provided to Newcastle residents. Importantly Gingerbread is the only family focussed support provider requesting financial assistance.

Total enquiries for Newcastle 2009/2010 (three quarters) = 59

Total enquires for Newcastle 2010/2011 (there quarters) = 59

Total enquires for Newcastle 2011/2012 (there quarters) = 69

Officers are therefore recommending awarding the full grant of £5,000 requested.

Arch – Julia Refuge (*Previously Potteries Women’s Refuge*)

Requested £5,000

The Julia Refuge which was previously Potteries Women’s Refuge will continue to provide help for women and children escaping domestic violence and abuse. The refuge is situated in Stoke on Trent but assists Newcastle residents. The bid states that any monies received will go towards the telephone costs and staffing contribution for the training of the volunteer staff to ensure that they are able to continue to help vulnerable women and children from Newcastle.

Total enquiries for Newcastle 2009/2010 (three quarters) = 28

Total enquires for Newcastle 2010/2011 (there quarters) = 22

Total enquires for Newcastle 2011/2012 (there quarters) = 24

Officers are therefore recommending awarding the full grant of £5,000 requested.

Salvation Army – Stoke

Requested £2,000

The Salvation Army provides support and temporary accommodation to homeless men. The grant application would enable the Salvation Army staff to provide advice and sign posting to those residents who are identified as having a local connection with Newcastle. In addition the centre provides an extensive life skills programme (including budgeting, cleaning, cooking, ironing, painting and decorating and developing hobbies) these skills all provide the necessary skills for independent living and employment, thus reducing the chances of individuals becoming homeless again.

Total enquiries for Newcastle 2009/2010 (three quarters) = 28

Total enquires for Newcastle 2010/2011 (there quarters) = 29

Total enquires for Newcastle 2011/2012 (there quarters) = 30

Officers are therefore recommending awarding the full grant of £2,000 requested.

North Staffordshire Furniture Mine

Requested £5,000

The Furniture Mine is a furniture reuse project, established in 1990. The function of the project is to facilitate the reuse of good quality pre-owned furniture and domestic appliances

donated from the general public and the business sector by the less well off members of the community. To ensure the furniture is available only to those who need it most, the organisation works with a network of agencies, in both the statutory and voluntary sector, who identify clients. Also individuals who are unable to obtain a referral but are on benefits or a low income can register and purchase items at low cost at the Furniture Mine showroom.

The table below is a summary of key performance of the organisation and demonstrate activity across the region:-

Year	Referrals	Self Referrals	Collections	Tons collected
2009/2010	1596	1354	5888	486
2010/2011	1617	1469	5194	407
2011/2012 (to Dec)	1276	994	4333	324

For Newcastle-under-Lyme, Furniture Mine has had a total of 245 referrals for April to December 2011 (three quarters).

The grant application has been made to contribute to the core cost of providing this service within Newcastle-under-Lyme. The indicative total expenditure for the next year is projected approximately at £375,215

Through the 3rd Sector Commissioning Framework, the provision for a Furniture Reuse Service will be commissioned shortly. It is anticipated that the contracts will commence in Quarter 2 of 2012/2013. Up until that time Officers are recommending awarding Furniture Mine a proportional grant, which will ensure that they will continue to provide a service to Newcastle-under-Lyme for Quarter 1 of 2012/2013, up until a re-use service, is in operation under the Commissioning Framework. Officers are therefore recommending awarding a grant of £1,871.50.

North Staffordshire Community Chaplaincy – Saltbox

Requested £1,000

North Staffs Community Chaplaincy seeks to address re-offending and prevent homelessness in North Staffordshire. The organisation states that it has 33 houses across the area, all of which are owned by local landlords who have entered into a contractual arrangement. Of these houses, two are within Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough, which provides accommodation to four men and one woman. There organisation also work with a number of people who are vulnerably housed, who access our debt management service (Money Matters). Statistics for Money Matters show that over 20 people from the borough in the past year have accessed this service.

North Staffs Community Chaplaincy has recently secured funding to use a trainer to address life skills and will be use the voluntary grant to fund budgeting training and one to one support for residents from/in the Newcastle area. It is anticipated that 4 training days will be undertaken throughout the year, for a minimum of 10 clients.

Officers are recommending awarding the full grant of £1,000 requested.

The Lyme Trust

Requested £5,000

The Lyme Trust is a voluntary charitable based in Newcastle-under-Lyme, which provides supported accommodation for adults with a diagnosed mental health need, dual diagnosis and homelessness. The grant application has been made to employ a Life Skill Worker, who will be employed for 16 hour per week, which will be divided into 4 days. It is intended that the life skill worker will work with the residents to build basic life skills i.e. budgetary, cooking etc.

Officers believe that although the intended project will benefit the residents – there seems to be significant overlap between the concept of the life skill work and the provision of housing support that is currently funded by Staffordshire Supporting People. This raises questions about the duplication of services that are being applied for under this funding. Therefore, the recommendation is not to approve this project under this particular grant.

Revival Home Improvement Agency

Requested £5,000

Revival Home Improvement Agency helps vulnerable people in North Staffordshire stay independent, providing a range of services to help them live in a warm, safe and secure home. The services include 'home from hospital', adaptations service, decorating and gardening, handyperson service, fire prevention, falls prevention, repairs management, housing options, and help to fund repairs.

The funding requested will be spent by freeing up family accommodation from people who are under occupying. Revival Home Improvement Agency states that intends to work with Aspire and other RSL's in Newcastle-under-Lyme to identify vulnerable people who need, and wish to move to more suitable accommodation or downsize to free up family homes.

Revival Home Improvement Agency has estimated that through the funding requested they would be able to support three people in Newcastle with moving to alternative accommodation.

Officers believe that although the intended project will benefit the residents, the project does not offer value for money. The funding requested of £5,000 would assist 3 people, which equates to a cost of approximately £1,667.00 for every person assisted. Therefore, the recommendation is not to approve this project under this particular grant.

YMCA

Requested £5,000

YMCA North Staffordshire is a large provider of housing and accommodation services across North Staffordshire and provide floating support services across North Staffordshire and the Staffordshire Moorlands. The main focus of the organisation is young people with engage group ranging from 16 – 25. YMCA North Staffordshire has established a customer forum, whereby young people have a platform to initiate ideas and support development. Within the customer forum is a peer mentoring team.

The funding has been requested for a project whereby the peer mentoring team, would identify schools that exist in within the Borough where social groups are particularly vulnerable to homelessness i.e. BME communities and lone parents and these schools would become the main focus of the campaign to raise awareness, provide information and training to young people about the reality of homelessness issues.

YMCA has estimated that they would be able to work with 6 schools with a total of 30 groups

and this would directly impact on 180 young people. They have stated that the indirect number of people whom would benefit is much higher due to the wider family impact.

Officers believe that although the intended project will benefit the residents – the project is seeking to provide a service that is due to be commissioned under the 3rd Sector Commissioning framework. Homelessness Prevention for Young People aged 16 years and under & 16 years and over service. A project to raise awareness about the realities of homelessness amongst young people. Therefore, the recommendation is not to approve this project under this particular grant. However, correspondence will be sent to the YMCA to make them aware of the opportunity to bid for this project under the 3rd Sector Commissioning framework.

5. **Reasons for Preferred Solution**

- 5.1 The organisations who have applied and have been recommended for grant aid provide very valuable, complementary services and should be seen as a vital part of the Council's overall strategy for dealing with homelessness and housing advice.

6. **Outcomes Linked to Sustainable Community Strategy and Corporate Priorities**

- 6.1 Addressing homelessness fits within all the Corporate Priorities especially that of 'creating a borough of opportunity'.

7. **Legal and Statutory Implications**

- 7.1 The Housing Act 1996 refers specifically to the practice of giving grants in section 180, 'Assistance for Voluntary Organisations', which allows a local authority to help voluntary (i.e. not for profit) organisations concerned with homelessness by providing grants.

8. **Equality Impact Assessment**

- 8.1 The Equality Impact Assessment has been completed on the Housing Strategy and the Homelessness Strategy.

9. **Financial and Resource Implications**

- 9.1 The amount allocated for 2012/13 is £17,500.

10. **Major Risks**

- 10.1 Provision of these services for Newcastle residents may not be available if funding is not granted.

11. **Key Decision Information**

- 11.1 Services are available to residents from all wards within the Borough.

12. **Earlier Cabinet/Committee Resolutions**

- 12.1 None

13. **List of Appendices**

- 13.1 Further details of each of the above applications are available from the Housing Strategy Team on request.