

Operational Decision Record

Publication Date 21 October 2021	Decision Reference Number 4409
Decision Title	
COVID-19 trace doorstep service	
Decision Value	
Up to £75,000	
Revenue or Capital Spend?	
Revenue	
Department	
Public Health, People	
Contact Officer (Name, job title, and contact details)	
Caroline Keenan, Senior Public Health Manager, caroline.keenan@nottinghamcity.gov.uk	
Decision Taken	
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Allocate up to £75,000 of Nottingham City's Contain Outbreak Management Fund to the delivery of a COVID-19 trace doorstep service from November 2021 to March 2022.2. Approval for exemption from Procurement Procedures (Article 18.55, seeking invitation for quotations) in accordance with Article 18.79 of the Contract Procedure Rules, to approve the direct award of a contract for the delivery of the COVID-19 trace doorstep service to Freewheelers.3. To delegate authority to the Head of Procurement and Contracting to sign the contract.	
Reasons for Decision and Background Information	
<u>Background and context</u> <p>The Department of Health and Social Care's (DHSC) Contain Outbreak Management Fund provides English local authorities with financial support to be used for test, trace and contain activity. The fund for the financial year 2020 to 2021 was distributed to local authorities in the form of a one-off payment. The DHSC listed 'additional contact tracing' as one of the possible activities that might be funded by the grant.</p>	

Launched in May 2020, the NHS Test and Trace service involves contacting all COVID-19 cases to offer self-isolation advice, guidance and support and to gather information about cases' close contacts. Close contacts are contacted by the service to offer self-isolation advice, guidance and support. In the latest version of the DHSC's COVID-19 contain framework: a guide for local decision makers (updated 5 August 2021), test, trace and isolate is cited as having an important ongoing role in the management of local outbreaks.

The specific approach to contact tracing varies by local authority. There are three main models:

- 1) Standard model: The national team attempts to make contact with cases and close contacts. Cases are referred to the local authority if contact is unsuccessful.
- 2) Local zero for cases: The local authority contacts all cases. The national team contacts the close contacts of cases.
- 3) Local zero for cases and contacts: The local authority contacts all cases and all close contacts.

At time of writing, Nottingham operates a standard model and will shortly be piloting local zero for cases in Radford ward, with a view to gradually scaling up the model to the whole city. Approximately 20% cases are referred to Nottingham City Council under the standard model. The Customer Hub can reach approximately half of these (approximately 10% all cases) by telephone. The remaining cases are referred to a pilot doorstep service provided by Freewheelers. The doorstep service visits the case and requests that they contact the Customer Hub.

Reasons leading to the decision to allocate funding to a COVID-19 trace doorstep service

- 1) Supporting people to self-isolate, establishing where and when they may have become infected to help identify potential outbreaks, and finding out who their close contact are remains critical to the health and wellbeing of Nottingham City residents. Without a doorstep service, approximately 10% cases would not be contacted.
- 2) The DHSC closely monitors the effectiveness of contact tracing cases. 80% cases must be contacted within 24 hours and 90% must be successfully contacted thereafter.

Reasons leading to the decision to direct award to Freewheelers

- 1) Freewheelers have successfully delivered the pilot.
- 2) Freewheelers have access to the required Nottingham City Council internal systems and are mobilised to deliver the service.
- 3) Freewheelers have the required hardware in place, which represents a cost saving.
- 4) Freewheelers have completed face-to-face training sessions as well as Nottingham City Council GDPR and Information Security Awareness e-learning.
- 5) A data processing impact assessment is in place with Freewheelers.
- 6) There are no identified alternative external providers.
- 7) Other options considered are not feasible or are more expensive to deliver.

Other Options Considered and why these were rejected

- 1) To undertake a full tender. Rejected for the reasons listed above. In addition, securing a new provider is unlikely to achieve a successful outcome in the timeframe available to deliver the service by 1 November 2021.
- 2) Staffing the service with the existing Nottingham City Council workforce. Rejected because staff resource is not available due to service reinstatement.
- 3) Commissioning an internal team to deliver the service. Rejected because this option is more expensive.

Reasons why this decision is classified as operational

Advice from Constitutional Services.

Additional Information

Legal Advice

The decision seeks authority to utilise part of the Contain Outbreak Management fund received by the Council for the continued delivery of the doorstep track and test service to support the continued track, trace and contain activity within the City.

It is understood that this service has been delivered successfully by way of a pilot by the named supplier and it is proposed to extend the service whilst there is available funding to support it.

It is noted for the reasons provided within the report, that alternative providers are not available either in terms of experience and availability in general or in terms of swift delivery to ensure the funding is used before the end of this financial year in accordance with the terms of funding.

The report also identifies why the proposed service is considered to offer value for money.

If the service is deemed necessary beyond this period a more long term solution should be considered by way of a compliantly commissioned procurement.

For the reasons given within the report and the fact that the services are well below the procurement threshold in the Public Contracts Regulations 2015, the request for exemption from the Procurement Procedures is supported from a legal perspective. It is understood that has been approved by the Chief Finance Officer following completion and assessment of a Request for an Exemption from Procurement Procedure Form in line with constitutional requirements. Advice provided by Dionne Claire Screamon (Solicitor) on 05/10/2021.

Finance advice

As outlined in the brief, this decision seeks to confirm the allocation of £75,000 of Contain Outbreak Management Fund for use in trace doorstep service between November 2021 to March 2022. The guidance attached to the Contain Outbreak Management Fund indicates that using the funds in this way does comply with grant conditions.

The Contain Outbreak Management Fund received in 2020/21, carried forwards and 2021/22 must be used as per the grant conditions in financial year 2021/22, and the use of £75,000 of this fund on trace doorstep service has been included in the planned expenditure for Contain Outbreak Management Fund, thus funding is secure.

As outlined in the brief, there are many factors that contribute to the decision to directly award the service delivery to Freewheelers, and thus dispensation from Financial Regulations Contract Procedure Rules 4.1.1 is supported. Advice provided by Graeme Black (Commercial Business Partner) on 30/09/2021.

Procurement advice

The funding received from the DHSC Contain Outbreak Management Fund for 2020/2021 was distributed to Local Authorities as a one-off payment. This Decision to use £75,000 of the funding for the delivery of a Covid-19 doorstep tracing service from November 2021 to March 2022 by direct awarding a contract to Freewheelers is supported by Procurement for the reasons set out in this decision. It is advised that should it be determined that there is a longer term need for this service beyond this period, then the contract should be secured through a compliant procurement process. Advice provided by Jo Pettifor (Procurement Team Manager) on 05/10/2021.

Councillor Adele Williams, Portfolio Holder for Adults and Health, has been briefed on the decision and rationale.

A DPIA is in place with the provider.

Decision Maker (Name and Job Title)
Lucy Hubber, Director of Public Health
Scheme of Delegation Reference Number
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Date Decision Taken
13/10/2021