

Operational Decision Record

Publication Date 28/11/23	Decision Reference Number 5063
Decision Title	
Grant Funding to support Active Notts Walking Ambition	
Decision Value	
£124,000	
Revenue or Capital Spend?	
Revenue	
Department	
Public Health (People)	
Contact Officer (Name, job title, and contact details)	
Ruth Bell, Public Health Programme Manager, ruth.bell@nottinghamcity.gov.uk	
Decision Taken	
To fund Active Notts with a £124,000 grant to co-ordinate and facilitate county wide walking work. This was taken to programme board on 25 th July where it was supported.	
Reasons for Decision and Background Information	
Background <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Active Notts is one of 44 Active Partnerships covering England, funded primarily by Sport England. Their vision is to address inequality and empower everyone to be active in a way that works for them. Part of Active Notts role is to create a more joined-up approach to tackling inactivity in the local area.• The Active Notts vision strongly aligns to the Strategic Council Plan (2021-23) commitment to increase opportunities for people in the city to become more physically active, as well as being an important part of the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy for Nottingham's (2022-2025) focus on eating and moving for good health.• Active Notts have secured grant funding from local authority partners (Nottinghamshire) to support the development of a 'walking ambition' – aiming to enable the greatest number of residents to routinely walk for pleasure, personal, environmental or health benefits and travel convenience. The evidence shows that this has the potential to make a significant contribution to improved physical and mental health and wellbeing.	

Proposal

- The decision to provide total grant funding of £124,000 to Active Notts to support this ambition has been taken to ensure that Nottingham communities are also able to benefit from the activities to be undertaken. A Nottingham wide, joined up offer provides better value for money as well as being most beneficial for residents (equitable and seamless offer).
- Grant funding provided by Public Health; Nottingham City Council will enable Active Notts to;
 - Lead work across Nottingham to provide strategic direction and co-ordination of walking activities across the breadth of relevant partners and community groups
 - Promote communication campaigns and mass participation challenges to encourage participation in walking. This is likely to include the creation of a new digital platform to provide relevant information and the piloting and evaluation of digital walking incentive schemes.
 - Provide small grants to grassroots and community-based initiatives where walking is a fundamental component to ensure activity is well-embedded and builds on existing community assets.
- Active Notts currently receive funding from Derbyshire County Council for a programme of work related to walking which offers an opportunity to learn from best practice examples tested in other areas of the East Midlands. The value of the grant has been developed based on proposed plans from Active Notts and relates to the capacity and resource requirements identified.
- A grant agreement will be put in place between Nottingham City Council and Active Notts. Grant funding provided by Nottingham City Council will enable Active Notts to seek additional external funding, utilising the Council's contribution as match funding.

Increasing physical activity has always been an important priority in health improvement, but currently this work also supports several government post pandemic priorities:

Inequalities: We have seen a widening of the gap of inequalities in participation in physical activity post-pandemic. Although general physical activity levels have recovered, active lives data indicates that this trend has been led by groups who have always been more active, and some historically inactive groups are getting left behind. For example, when we look at the difference in activity levels in different socioeconomic groups in Nottingham:

- The most affluent group has seen increases in numbers of people who are physical activity (69.4% pre-pandemic – 70.2% post pandemic). Levels of inactivity have remained consistent with a decrease in those that are fairly active.
- The least affluent group has seen a decrease in numbers of people who are active (54.7% pre-pandemic – 51.2% post pandemic) and inactivity has increased from 33.7% - 38.3%.

Recovery: This work by Active Notts will aim to understand and work with communities who have been disproportionately impacted by the pandemic and subsequent cost of living crisis. Walking grew in popularity during the pandemic due to its accessible nature, and although numbers have now decreased, there is still a strong upward trend compared to pre-pandemic levels with an increase nationally of 2.6 million walkers. We would like to build on the energy behind walking as it is easily accessible and affordable and so we believe it is suited to address some of the barriers faced by our more inactive populations such as people with long term health conditions including those living with overweight or obesity. Physical activity is well documented as an effective intervention to support mental health, particularly depression and the social nature of walking groups can also help to combat loneliness

Resilience: [Public Health England](#) highlight that physical activity plays a role in maintaining a healthier weight as well as independent health benefits for those living with obesity such as a reduced risk of heart disease. During the COVID-19 pandemic, people living with overweight and obesity who contracted COVID-19, were significantly more likely to be hospitalised, and were at an increased risk of complications and death than their non-overweight counterparts. Furthermore, this exacerbated inequalities due to the unequal distribution of risk factors that contribute to excess weight.

Future pandemic preparedness includes creating a healthier, less vulnerable population, who are more resilient to viruses such as COVID-19. Supporting our citizens to walk more would contribute towards this goal. It also helps us build a population confident with this form of accessible physical activity providing protection against physical inactivity should future pandemics occur.

Other Options Considered and why these were rejected

- Not to award grant funding to Active Notts to support the promotion of and participation in walking as a way of increasing physical activity. This option has been rejected for the following reasons;
 - 1 in 4 (24.1%) of Nottingham adults are physically inactive, this means they engage less than 30 minutes of physical active per week. Reducing physically inactivity in Nottingham will improve multiple health and wellbeing outcomes, including healthy life expectancy.
 - Active Notts have already secured grant funding from other local authority partners. Our approach allows for added value through the learning and best practice developed in other areas.
- Option to commission a walking service which would involve a tender process. This proposal was rejected as work is already underway in the wider system and in neighbouring communities and a grant proposal allows us to tap into local expertise and enhance existing workstreams.

Reasons why this decision is classified as operational

Total decision value is less than £150,000 and is within existing budgets (public health grant funded)

Decision is in line with existing policy framework – increasing physical activity opportunities is a commitment in the Nottingham City Council Strategic Council Plan, the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy for Nottingham and the Eating and Moving for Good Health Strategy and Delivery plan within public health.

Additional Information

Procurement and legal colleagues agreed to the eligibility of the grant on the 19th October 2023. The grant paperwork including the grant agreement will be drawn up with legal colleagues to include a claw back clause giving Active Notts 2 years to use the grant funding with the programme commencing in April 2024.

Procurement Comment:

In this situation there are no procurement implications, as the funding is grant funding and not a contract.

Jo Pettifor, Category Manager – People, Finance and Resources, 27th November 2023

Legal Comment:

The use as grant funding will need to ensure that the proposed use of the funding by Active Notts is in accordance with any directions or guidance issued by the original funder, and complicit with any funding conditions imposed on the Council, including reporting, etc.

Grant funding is usually less prescriptive than funding by way of a contract and can allow flexibility, within the scope of any directions, guidance or conditions as referred to above. The grant funding paperwork should reflect the background and context of the decision to award the grant and ensure the Council can meet any obligations imposed by the funder, including, if necessary, repayment of funds. The grant conditions may also usefully cite the three requirements in bullet 2 above under Proposal.

The Council should be assuring itself that in not undertaking a tender process, the Council is securing best value and is not restricting the relevant market or the development of the relevant market.

Anthony Heath, Senior Solicitor, Contracts and Commercial, 27th November 2023

Decision Maker (Name and Job Title)

Lucy Hubber, Director of Public Health

Scheme of Delegation Reference Number

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Date Decision Taken

27/11/2023