

Operational Decision Record

Publication Date 15 October 2024	Decision Reference Number 5190
Decision Title	
Financial Vulnerability grant funding extension	
Decision Value	
£203,000 for 6 months	
Revenue or Capital Spend?	
Revenue	
Spend Control Approval	
Has the spend been approved by Spend Control Board? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> n/a Spend Control Board approval reference number: 10176	
Department	
Public Health	
Contact Officer (Name, job title, and contact details)	
Bryany Cornish, Public Health Manager, bryany.cornish@nottinghamcity.gov.uk	
Decision Taken	
To approve the expenditure of £203,000 ring-fenced public health grant to enable extension of grant funding for the provision of advice and assistance for people in financial difficulty by 6 months from 1 April 2025 to 30 September 2025.	
Reasons for Decision and Background Information	
<p>One of the priorities in the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2022-2025 for Nottingham is to promote the financial wellbeing of citizens. The refreshed Strategy from April 2025 is expected to have a continued focus on health and financial wellbeing. An important element of improving financial wellbeing is working to assist people living in Nottingham who are vulnerable to financial difficulty to become more financially secure and to lessen the impact of financial problems on other aspects of their lives, including their physical and mental health, social and economic wellbeing, personal dignity, and contribution to society.</p> <p>Local data and intelligence tells us that many people in Nottingham experience deprivation and poor health and wellbeing. As a city we have high rates of unemployment, benefit dependency and a high proportion of citizens experiencing unmanageable debt. 5.7% of people in Nottingham claim out-of-work benefits, compared to the national average of 3.7%. Increasingly, groups of people who have never accessed benefits or advice in the past are seeking support and advice, with lower income households experiencing greater impact from rising energy and food costs. The negative health impacts of these factors is clear, with half of adults in problem debt also having a mental health problem (Money and Mental Health Policy Institute) and 30% of adults living in persistent poverty also being in poor health (The Health Foundation).</p>	

In order to mitigate some of these negative impacts on the health of Nottingham citizens, Nottingham City Public Health have provided £406,000 of grant funding from the Ringfenced Public Health Grant to Nottingham & District Citizens Advice Bureau (NDCAB), lead of the Advice Nottingham consortium of advice centres and the only collaboration of financially-regulated local advice services in Nottingham City. This funding has been in place 1 April 2024 to 30 March 2025 for NDCAB to deliver a moderate level of financial vulnerability advice via a mixed model approach, providing signposting, advice, referral, and direct action through case work type services,

The objectives of the service are to provide timely, targeted and effective information, advice and assistance for citizens who are experiencing or at risk of financial difficulty for the purposes of improving health and wellbeing outcomes. The service aims to reduce the impact of financial crises on health and wellbeing outcomes by helping citizens to: 1) prevent financial difficulty from occurring, 2) reduce or resolve immediate financial problems, and 3) avoid or better manage future financial difficulty.

A grant agreement is in place to ensure the grant to NDCAB is used in line with Public Health ringfenced conditions. Nottingham City Council is required to ensure the provision of public health services in line with the terms and conditions of the public health grant, which includes providing an annual Statement of Assurance that the grant has been used for the purposes intended. The terms of the public health grant outline prescribed (services mandated in the NHS Act 2006) and non-prescribed services, which are required as part of the grant. The current grant agreement with NDCAB is in place for 12 months and expires 31 March 2025. This decision is to extend the grant agreement for a further 6 months to 30 September 2025. The extensions would enable a full review of need and provision to take place, to determine future commissioning of advice services to promote health and wellbeing outcomes, and for the service to be commissioned through an appropriate procurement process which is fully compliant with the relevant regulations. The funding commitment for the new service model and procurement will be the subject of a future decision.

The proposed grant extension is permissible noting legal services have determined that the grant awarded for 2024-25 meets criteria to qualify it as a grant and it is not being altered in anyway. Procurement colleagues have noted the intention for a commissioning review with future arrangements subject to a form of competition:

As this decision relates to the extension of a grant funding arrangement, there are no procurement compliance implications. The proposed extension will allow time for the completion of the commissioning review and competitive procurement of a contract for future delivery. Jo Pettifor, Strategic Procurement Manager

Other Options Considered and why these were rejected

- 1) Do nothing. Allow the grant funding arrangement to end, and not fund the continued provision of advice and assistance for people in financial difficulty. Without future funding the capacity of advice services in the City will be significantly reduced whilst the need for such services continues to increase. This option would limit our ability to deliver against the financial wellbeing priority of the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy for Nottingham City and to promote and protect the health and wellbeing of citizens experiencing or at risk of financial difficulty. Therefore this option is not recommended.
- 2) Procure a new service to commence from 1 April 2025. This would not allow sufficient time to complete the full review of the outcomes for 2024-25 and complete a compliant process for commissioning a new service. It would be likely to result in some elements of the review and/or the procurement process being

carried out less thoroughly, for example stakeholder and service user involvement. This is likely to result in a service which is less well thought out and may not be able to meet the required needs. Therefore this option is not recommended.

- 3) Extend the grant for 12 months. With the availability of NDCAB performance data from service delivery in 2024-2025 the commissioning review can be feasibly carried out in the timescales specified to inform future arrangements and ensure we continue to assess Best Value. Therefore this option is not recommended.

Reasons why this decision is classified as operational

This is consistent with the existing approved use of the Public Health grant, and in line with the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy for Nottingham.

Additional Information

- **It is recommended that you seek and include finance advice where your decision has financial implications.**

You should also consider:

- obtaining and recording advice if necessary from legal, finance or other colleagues
- informing relevant ward councillors if a decision particularly affects their ward
- whether an EIA, DPIA, Carbon Impact assessment or consultation exercise is required for this decision
- for capital spend, confirmation that the decision has been through the appropriate capital approval processes
- referring to any related previous decisions
- risks of the decision and any mitigation of those risks
- if the decision is approving capital spend, please include confirmation that the Chief Finance Officer has agreed to it.

Decision Maker (Name and Job Title)

Lucy Hubber, Director of Public Health

Scheme of Delegation Reference Number

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Date Decision Taken

24th September, 2024