

Appendix A – Information, Advice and Guidance grant extension

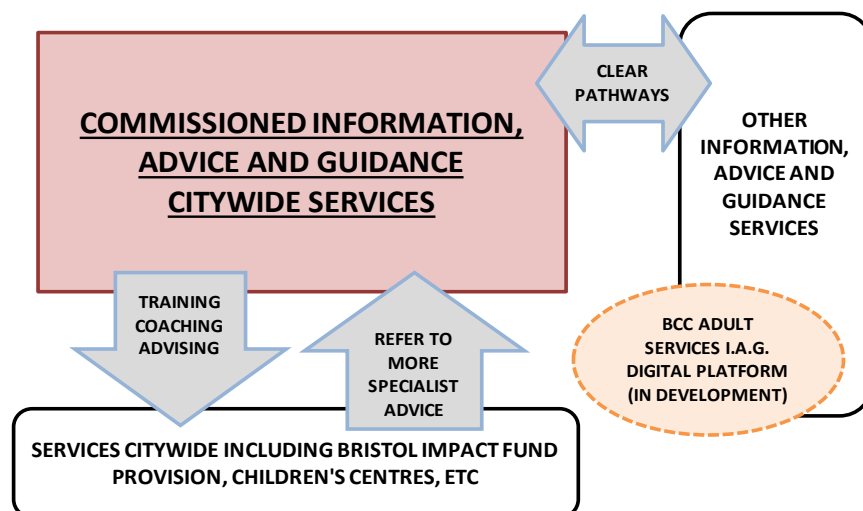
Introduction

- Bristol City Council (BCC) has grant funded a network of community Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) services through an outcome-based grants process, since 2011-12. Since then, the landscape has changed markedly. Austerity and welfare reform and the introduction of Universal Credit have placed significant pressures on the advice sector, whilst reductions in local authority budgets have necessitated a reduction in the funding towards advice provision.
- In the light of these pressures, it was recognised in 2018 that when designing a new grant, the city needed to make best use of resources and move to a more integrated IAG system for the benefit of its citizens.
- The IAG Service helps us fulfil our statutory duties in relation to:-
 - establishing and maintaining a service that provide people in its area with information and advice relating to care and support for adults and support for carers;
 - make provision for a Health and Social Care Information Centre and to provide information relating to health or social care matters;
 - provide advisory services for the homeless;
 - make available to young persons and relevant young adults for whom it is responsible, information, advice and guidance including careers information;
 - provide information, advice and assistance for parents;
 - make information available for children and young people who have special educational needs or a disability and their parents and carers.

April 2019- October 2020 grant plan

- With these challenges in mind, a large amount of work went into developing a new grant funding plan for the 2019- 2020 (see Appendix B) grant period including:
 - A series of structured conversations with IAG providers
 - An 8 week consultation with provider, community groups, members and internal BCC providers (See Appendix B for consultation report)
 - Commissioning a detailed needs assessment (See Appendix I)

- The grant plan identified some potential developments and structural re-shaping challenges to the existing service model using the current grant period to provide a 'step-change' towards an integrated 'whole system' model. This aims to:
 - Create an integrated, referrer/citizen friendly system
 - Centralise and share elements of advice service and delivery
 - Develop a shared, agreed set of outcomes to describe the combined impact of the services
 - Explore the possibility of up-skilling a wider network of informal, 'first line' providers to triage service user need accurately and provide a basic level of support as part of a three-tier model approach
 - Explore options for information sharing across a more integrated system
 - Support the step-change among external BCC funded services into a coherent, clearly-articulated set of services that can contribute to a wider system review.



- The funding plan was for an 18 month funding period to develop this proposed model in the advice sector and to tie in with a larger co-operate project that looked at how to integrate internal BCC IAG services into the model
- The larger corporate project was postponed in 2019

Current grant

- The current IAG grant relates to advice provision around 5 main types of advice including:
 - Welfare benefit advice
 - Housing
 - Employment

- Money and Debt
- Immigration
- Including specialist provision of disability and legal advice in relation to the categories above.
- These services contribute to the following outcomes:
 - 1) Maintaining tenancies in social and private rented housing.
 - 2) Preventing homelessness
 - 3) Supporting the most vulnerable individuals to maintain sustainable income and maximise their income
 - 4) Reducing financial, food and fuel poverty
 - 5) Improving access to information services and opportunities in the city and increasing digital inclusion
- The funding plan model created a single lead organisation responsible for receiving and distributing grant funding to consortium partners - the newly formed Bristol Advice partnership
- The consortium comprises a number of advice organisations that collectively provide comprehensive information, advice and guidance services across the city.
- Listed below are the services that are being offered by providers currently funded by BCC IAG grant funding:

Service Provider	IAG Offer	Delivered To
Avon & Bristol Law Centre	Providing specialist legal advice that includes community care, employment, housing, mental health, welfare benefits, immigration and asylum law.	Referrals from other organisations in order to get specialist legal advice for their clients. Eligible clients with no redress to funding who are in crisis.
Bristol Citizen's Advice Bureau	Debt, employment, housing, immigration and welfare benefits.	Bristol City-wide targeted at the most vulnerable clients.
North Bristol Citizen's Advice Bureau	Debt and welfare benefits.	Prioritised towards vulnerable clients.
South Bristol Advice Services	Debt and welfare benefits	Older people, disabled people, under 30s, people from high areas of deprivation and people with mental health issues.

Talking Money	Debt and welfare benefits	Bristol City-wide, targeted at the most vulnerable
St Pauls Advice Centre	Debt, employment, housing, immigration and welfare benefits	The most vulnerable clients within the geographical area, reflecting the ward profile in St Pauls, Montpelier, St Agnes, St Philips and St Werburghs, Lawrence Hill, Barton Hill, Easton & Fishponds.
WECIL	Welfare benefits advice.	Bristol City-wide to disabled people and parent/carers

Evidence of need

- A significant needs analysis was commissioned at the time of the last grant commissioning (see Appendix I) which still offers a good reflection of demand and need for advice provision in the city. However the State of Bristol report 2019 highlights areas of need¹:
 - **Deprivation**
 - Bristol has 41 areas in the most deprived 10% in England
 - Including 3 areas in the most deprived 1% (Hartcliffe and Withywood, Filwood and Lawrence Hill).
 - 15% of residents – 70,400 people live in the most deprived areas including 18,900 children and 7,900 older people. (significantly higher than the national average 17.2%)
 - 20,700 households are estimated to live in fuel poverty (10.8%)
 - Almost 43,000 people are considered food insecure in Bristol (2016 estimate)
 - **Homelessness**
 - 82 people were found to be sleeping rough (on the streets) in November 2018 a rapid rise over the last 7 years (just 8 were found rough sleeping in November 2011)
 - As at 31st March 2019 there are:
 - 521 homeless households that Bristol city council has a statutory duty to house
 - 520 households living in temporary accommodation
 - **Welfare reform**

¹ State of Bristol Key facts 2019 <https://www.bristol.gov.uk/documents/20182/32947/State+of+Bristol+-+Key+Facts+2018-19.PDF/263d5f0f-763e-9553-467d-c9704f307d7c>

- Bristol as of August 2019 has 13,320 Universal Credit (UC) claimants. 7,458n are receiving a housing element. At present UC only affects new claimants or those with a change of circumstance.
- Managed migration for those still on 'legacy' benefits is due to start in November 2020. The pilot shows that this will place significant demand on advice services
- As of May 2019 there were still 3,261 working age claimants in Bristol receiving Disability Living Allowance (DLA) due to be migrated to Personal Independence Payment. (PIP) This is still approximately ¼ of the total number of claimants getting DLA when PIP was introduced in 2013.

Current grant performance

- Information Advice and Guidance services currently support some of the most vulnerable citizens in the city, effective triage in place at advice centres ensures that advice is targeted to those who need it most.
- In the first 9 months of the new Bristol advice partnership they have:
 - Seen 1273 citizens regarding issues with Housing benefit or Council tax
 - Supported clients to access over a £0.5 million in unclaimed Housing benefit and Council tax benefits
 - Supported 1691 clients with Debt related to housing.
 - Prevented 133 evictions
 - Supported client to claim benefits to the value of £3,631,718
 - Supported citizens to have £5,490,479 of debt written off
 - 892 Immigration issues handled at OISC level 1
 - Issued 2725 food vouchers
 - Supported 621 Fuel Utility Debt cases
 - Made a total of £2,393,364 financial gains for clients
 - For every £1 spent over the year, Citizen's Advice calculates that clients benefit by £13²

More strategically the partnership reports that the new grant arrangements are :

- Driving improvement in the advice sector, providing stability, giving confidence to funders
- Supporting the development of a more integrated approach to bidding for additional funding

² Advising in Austerity: The value of good advice; Professor Morag McDermont, University of Bristol, Ben Crawford, Knowledge Exchange Fellow, University of Bristol, Sue Evans, Director, Bristol Citizens Advice November 2017

- Creating Stronger/ more strategic approach to city wide provision resulting
- More intelligent use of advice resources across the city

Leverage

- The advice sector uses Bristol City Council funding to leverage more money into the sector to support advice for citizens
- In 18/19 the total leverage for the benefit of Bristol was **£12,330,463** including:
 - Additional funding sources achieved: £1,764,321
 - The value of our volunteers: £689,249
 - Money raised for Bristol Citizens: £9,876,893

See Appendix I for a full report of outcomes and case studies from the Bristol Advice Partnership

Current funding

The current grant is for IAG services is £560,000 per annum:

- £484,000 of this is from BCC general fund
- £76,000 is from Public Health
- The grant has been cut considerably over the last 2 years:
 - A reduction of £300,000 made in 2017/18,
 - An additional reduction of £250,000 was agreed for 18/19.

These budget reductions have been made to both internally and externally funded services.

What should we do now- Options considered.

Options	Pro	Con
Option 1 (recommended)		
Extended current grant agreement by 3 and a half years.	New Grant funding arrangements are just beginning to bed in and deliver change. Extending the current arrangement will give it time to deliver real change.	Some IAG providers in the city felt they had been shut out of the process as we required a joint bid from several agencies. They felt this approach favoured agencies that

		<p>were already delivering BCC grant funded IAG service.</p> <p>Extending funding for a significant period may lead to complaints.</p>
	Extending grant arrangements for a significant period will give current providers stability at a time of high demand.	
	Extending will give time for the new model to continue to develop and to attract external funding.	
	The current grant finishes in October 2020. Extending current arrangements will ensure that there is no disruption to services.	
Option 2		
Extended current agreement by a shorter time period	Shorter extension period may lead to less complaints	Short funding time periods makes it hard to attract additional funding. Threatening the sustainability of sector
		Short funding periods leaves the service area unstable at a time of high demand
Option 3		
Run a new grant process	This will allow new bidders to make an application for funding.	Resource intensive and won't be completed in time to prevent service disruption.
	A new grant process would allow us to change the model being developed	Places advice services in flux at a time of high demand
		The Bristol Advice Partnership has put in considerable effort and

		resource to change to the new grant arrangements, to tie in with the corporate project. Changing the grant funding plan after a relatively short grant period would potentially damage BCC's relationship with the advice sector. Making it harder to build consensus for strategic change in the future.
Option 4		
Stop/ Cut funding advice provision	A general advice service is not a statutory duty and therefore provisions could be reduced to only meet statutory duties.	Advice services support some of the most vulnerable citizens in the city. Stopping or cutting Advice services would potentially leave them at risk and potentially leading to reliance on more expensive statutory services.
		Advice services use Council funding to leverage in funding from other sources. Any cuts to funding therefore have a cumulative impact on the sector.
		Authorities that have made cuts have seen damage to their reputation. In the case of Suffolk county council they had to reverse their initial decision due to public outcry.

Proposed way forward.

The preferred option is to extend the current grant agreement with a commitment to a further 3.5 years of funding.

Reasoning

- The funding gives the existing providers some long term stability and assurance of funding (though all funding is subject to budgets being available and Government funding etc
- Allows new grant arrangements to bed down and deliver real system change
- Gives time for the wider project looking at internal IAG spend to be completed
- Is realistic given current commitments and resource
- IAG services are still facing unprecedented demand due to Welfare reform and austerity policies

Timescales

Current grant funding runs till October 2020, new arrangements need to be in place by then to ensure no disruption to services.