

Appendix A (i) Advice Grant

1.Current grant funding arrangements

1.1 Current funding arrangements (see Appendix 1) have run from 1st April 2019 and are due to continue until 31st March 2024

1.2 Funding history timeline

1.2.1 Cabinet decision October 2018

- Original funding plan (see **Appendix 1**) was signed off at Cabinet October 2018 - [Grant Funding Plan for Information, Advice and Guidance Services](#)
- Initial grant was for an 18-month period (1st April 2019 – 30th September 2020) to maintain service provision whilst a larger Bristol City Council (BCC) corporate project was scoped and designed
- The corporate project aimed to join up BCC's internal advice offer with the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise Sector (VCSE) provision. To deliver savings and build a cohesive advice service in the city with 'one front door'

1.1.2 Cabinet decision March 2020

- Cabinet decision in March 2020 extended the grant for a year to allow more progress to be made on corporate project - [Grant Funding for Information, Advice & Guidance Services March 2020](#)
- Included an option to extend the grant period by delegated Officer Executive Decision (OED) for a further two and a half years (until 31st March 2024)

1.1.3 OED July 2021

- OED taken to approve the extension of the grant until 31st March 2024 - [OED- Information, Advice and Guidance Grant July 2021](#)

1.3 Grant Value

- The value of current grant for Advice provision is £560,000 per annum
- £484,000 of this is from Bristol City Council general fund
- £76,000 is from Public Health funding

1.4 The current Advice grant provision

- Current advice provision is focused on 5 main types of advice including:
 - Welfare benefit
 - Housing

- Employment
- Money and Debt
- Immigration

1.5 Strategic aims of current grant funding plan:

- The original grant funding plan (see **Appendix 1**) set out the main strategic aims for the grant spend:
 - 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
 - To develop a three-tier model of advice provision (in line with the adult social care model)
 - Tier 1: help to help yourself
 - Tier 2: help or a service when you need it.
 - Tier 3: help to live your life – more intensive support or services where they are needed most

1.6 Current providers

- The current grant was awarded to the Bristol Advice Partnership (BAP), A group of charitable advice services in Bristol delivering a wide range of holistic information, advice, casework, and legal support
- The Partnership is comprised of:
 - Citizens Advice Bristol (lead partner)
 - Bristol Law Centre
 - St Pauls Advice centre
 - Talking Money
 - WECIL (West of England Centre for Inclusive Living)
 - North Bristol Advice Centre
 - South Bristol Advice Services
- The partners each bring their own specialisms and targeted service models to the partnership and work together to ensure city wide access to advice and legal advice provision

1.7 Other advice funders

- There is a complex funding picture for advice services in the city (see **Appendix 4**)
- BCC funding forms only a fraction of the overall funding of the advice partners
- Total other funding brought into the partnership: £3,884,015 for 21/22

2. Current Grant performance

2.1 During 2020 / 2021 Bristol Advice Partnership:

- Achieved additional benefits payments for clients amounting to £8,854,340
- Managed debt for clients to the value of £12,537,286
- In addition to this direct economic impact the work of the partnership delivers a further fiscal benefit by, for example, ensuring the payment of council tax. In the past year they negotiated payment arrangements on £944,260 worth of council tax that could otherwise gone unpaid.
- Handed out 3300 food bank vouchers

2.2 Strategic benefits of Bristol Advice Partnership since 2018:

- The BCC IAG grant gives BAP members stable funding which has enabled them to think longer term about improvements to services in the city
- The partners have taken a series of effective steps to deliver the strategic intention of the funding model (see **Appendix 2**)
- The lead partner role has enabled the drive towards system improvement
- Partnership principles are embedded in wider pieces of work with better information sharing and joint bids

2.3 Challenges to achieving strategic goals of funding plan:

- Since January 2020, the Covid-19 pandemic and cost of living crisis has presented significant challenges to the advice sector
- The global health pandemic and lockdown meant the advice sector had to change their service delivery models overnight from face-to-face provision, to online, telephone and video calls
- The current cost of living crisis has placed a huge demand on the advice sector and the advice partnership has played a leading strategic role in the city
- The funding plan was devised as part of the wider corporate plan with the intention that we as a city would look to influence and support the development of different elements of the proposed funding model
- The cooperate project has not progressed internally since 2019
- This has meant that there has not been a resource to progress towards some of the wider goals for a city branded advice service
- BCC is not the only contributor to funding of advice services and can only influence advice offer in the city
- See **Appendix 3** for an outline of the key issues currently facing the advice sector

3 Holistic benefits of advice provision

- The social benefits from debt advice are estimated to be £300 million - £700 million annually across the UK¹

¹ Economic Impact of Debt advice – The Money Advice Service 2021 [Economic Impact of Debt Advice](#)

- The improvement in quality of life is estimated to be worth £24-52 million annually²
- Debt advice has a direct, beneficial impact on improving the mental health states of those suffering from conditions such as depression, anxiety, and panic attacks the associated benefit due to reduced health service costs is £50-93 million annually across the UK³

4. Options appraisal

4.1 Option 1

- Renew Current Grant Arrangement – extend the current grant arrangements until 31st March 2026 (an extra two years)
- Focus on developing the current model
- Allow time to develop a holistic funding plan working with other funders in the city
- Maintain current funding levels

4.1.1 Timeline

- Cabinet decision in April 2023

4.1.2 Advantages

- Gives sector stability at volatile time
- Enables advice sector to be more strategic and focus on meeting the challenges of the Cost-of-living Crisis
- Allows us to build in learning from Covid-19 and Cost- of-living crisis into future model of funding
- Provides time to build on work with key partners in the city e.g., Health commissioners and Bristol Funders Network to develop a more joined up holistic, integrated approach to funding advice services in the city
- Realistic with resources that are currently available within Community resource team

4.1.3 Challenges

Challenges	Mitigation
Danger of developing a two-tier advice sector. Those within the Bristol Advice Partnership and those not.	Ensure effective engagement with ACFA for information sharing. Develop a city-wide advice sector strategy.
BCC regularly signposts to other advice providers in the city (e.g., Age UK Bristol) yet we do not supply funding.	Develop with other funders a city-wide strategy for funding advice provision.
A proper Application cycle could give a more exact picture of need in the city.	Produce an EQIA (Equality Impact Assessments) as part of cabinet paper in partnership with Bristol Advice Partnership to produce an accurate picture of advice provision, gaps in

² Economic Impact of Debt advice – The Money Advice Service 2021 [Economic Impact of Debt Advice](#)

³ Economic Impact of Debt advice – The Money Advice Service 2021 [Economic Impact of Debt Advice](#)

	service and use current grant resources to mitigate any issues.
The grant has already been renewed once. Last time that it was awarded was in 2019 Not running a grant process as indicated in the OED (Officer Executive Decision) may lead to reputational damage with other advice providers.	Communicate clearly with advice sector intent to extend current arrangements with a clear timetable for when next funding round will be opened. A longer timeline will ensure that there is a more thorough consultation and a longer application period. This would leave sufficient time for organisations to negotiate and form new partnerships.
The model of advice provision is still very much service based. Running a new grant funding round would allow us to build in new ways of working.	Look for opportunities with BIF (Bristol Impact Fund) 2 to look at more asset-based models- such as the Boost project that works to build peoples aspirations. Explore options to develop as part of a future funding model.

4.2 Option 2

- Redesign a new funding plan for IAG Grant - run a full funding process with new grant starting on 1st April 2024

4.2.1 Timeline

Activity	Timeline
Needs assessment (desk based)	December 2022
Consultation with key partners	January – February 2022
Prepare draft model/proposal	Jan- March 2022/3
Formal Consultation	March – May 2023
Finalise Proposal	June- August 2023
Cabinet	September 2023
Information events	September 2023
Publish Grant Opportunity	September 2023
Notify current grant holders of end of grant	December 2023
Award grant	December 2023
Consider potential Tupe implications	January – March 2023
New grant funding starts	1 st April 2024

4.2.2

Advantages

- An UpToDate Needs analysis would ensure that funding plan is responsive to more current advice needs of the city
- May provide an opportunity to look at more asset-based responses to advice in line with Service plan objectives
- Offer an opportunity to make savings of the current grant

4.2.3 Challenges and mitigations

Challenges	Mitigations
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Create disruption and uncertainty during a period of high pressure from cost of living crisis.	<p>Have a clear timetable of grant funding process.</p> <p>Make limited changes to the funding model .</p> <p>Timetable bulk of activity for after winter to avoid the peak of cost of living crisis.</p>
To run the most effective process, we would need to leave sufficient time for organisations to negotiate and form new partnerships. Running a quick process may inhibit this.	<p>Provide early indications of model to allow conversations between advice sector agencies.</p> <p>Talk to Voscur and Black Southwest Network to see if they can provide resource to support the sector with partnership options.</p>
Would use a lot of resources from advice sector at a time of high demand	<p>Plan to ensure that any advice sector resource in the process is relevant and beneficial.</p> <p>Use learning, we already have from cost-of-living crisis and Covid-19.</p>
Would require considerable time from Community resources team at a time when it is limited,	Work with community resources manager to manage capacity and priorities of the team.

4.3 Option 3

- Renew current grant arrangements but reduce current funding levels

4.3.1 Advantages

- Provides an opportunity to make savings on current spend- £560,000 per annum

4.3.2 Disadvantages

Challenges	Mitigations
Create disruption and uncertainty during a period of high pressure from cost of living.	<p>Have a clear timetable of process.</p> <p>Make limited changes to the funding model</p> <p>Timetable bulk of activity for after winter to avoid the peak crisis of cost of living.</p>
Decrease spend would decrease the availability of advice in the city at a time of high need.	Talk to Bristol Funders Network to discuss city wide funding strategy for the city.
Would use a lot of resources from advice sector at a time of high demand.	<p>Plan process to ensure that any advice sector resource in the process is relevant and beneficial.</p> <p>Use learning, we already have from Cost-of-living crisis and covid-19.</p>

Would threaten the sustainability of some advice partners.	Work with other funders in the city to protect advice service provision.
Would require considerable time from Community resources team at a time when it is limited.	Work with community resources manager to manage capacity and priorities of the team.

Appendices

Appendix 1 2019 Grant funding plan

See separate attachment

Appendix 2 Strategic developments of current grant

What we wanted to achieve	What has changed
An integrated, clearly 'branded' user- and referrer-friendly way of communicating what services deliver, to whom and how to access them	<p>Development of joint communications for Covid –19, cost of living crisis and other issues to provide clear pathways for citizens and prevent duplication amongst providers.</p> <p>Partnership providing strategic leadership for the advice sector.</p> <p>Partnership is discussing the use of Refernet to create one front door to the partnership.</p> <p>Going forward explore the lessons learned from city Covid-19 response and provision of one front door service- 'We are Bristol'.</p> <p>This strategic aim formed a longer- term ambition of the funding plan and was part of the unrealised corporate plan.</p>
Maximising efficiency through centralising shared elements of delivery and effectiveness through locating provision to cover the key areas of the city	<p>Partners sharing back-office space and jointly delivering provision.</p> <p>e.g., Citizens Advice are delivering their Universal Credit Help to Claim Service from South Bristol Advice Services. Better managing the demand for support with Universal Credit in the South of the City.</p>

<p>Work towards a clearer shared triage system with a wider community network and explore solutions to using on-line information and self-help</p>	<p>A model of this delivery has been developed as part of city response to cost of living.</p> <p>Lessons learnt from this could be implemented in future funding models.</p>
<p>Develop a shared, agreed set of outcomes to describe the combined impact of the services.</p>	<p>Shared outcomes have been agreed and are now in place. More work to make these more outcome focused (as opposed to output).</p>
<p>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</p>	<p>All clients are assessed for the best course of action. Where a client is 'at risk' they are given more support than those who are capable of self-help and assisted information. Individual tailored support based on risk.</p> <p>Joint systems have been developed by partners to ensure that the right help is received at the right time.</p> <p>E.g., Use of WhatsApp to manage capacity for referrals across the partnership ensuring that citizens get right help at the right time.</p>
<p>Explore options for information sharing across a more integrated system to create the most efficient, shortest service user journey possible to the right level of support</p>	<p>A referral portal for Benefit Tribunal cases has been created which enables a city-wide response to the need for this advice.</p> <p>'Warm handovers' where information is shared between agencies to ensure that signposting is effective.</p>
<p>Develop three tier model Tier 1: help to help yourself Tier 2: help or a service when you need it. Tier 3: help to live your life – more intensive support or services where they are needed most</p>	<p>New online platforms are now in place where clients can access self-help information such as North Bristol's advice tool. (I Need Advice - Welfare benefits NBAC (northbristoladvice.org.uk))</p> <p>The adoption of "blended" service models offering a wider variety of access and delivery methods. Including telephone, WhatsApp, Zoom.</p>

	Face to face provision prioritised for vulnerable or high need clients.
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Appendix 3 Outline of key issues currently facing the Advice Sector

Main Current issues/needs within Advice sector

1. Cost of living crisis

- Cost of living impact assessment for Bristol estimates that 1 in 4 households (around 50,000 households) across Bristol will be spending £1 out of every £5 of their household budgets on energy bills in 2022/23, after housing costs
- Significantly, these households are also home to 1/3 of all children in Bristol (32%)
- The five wards showing the highest risk of the impact of the cost-of-living crisis are Hartcliffe & Withywood, Lawrence Hill, Lockleaze, Easton, and Filwood
- Advice agencies are already reporting an increase in demand on services for welfare and benefit support
- WECIL (West of England Centre for Inclusive Living) report an increase in people claiming PIP (Personal Independence Payment) to meet their living costs
- Mental health of staff and volunteers being affected by not being able to find solutions for people's issues
- BAP is playing a leading strategic role in the city's response to the Cost-of-living crisis

2. Covid –19

- Compounded inequality in the city⁴
- Put huge demands on the advice sector who had to adapt their service provision overnight to be able to continue to support citizens remotely

3. Pressures affecting the sustainability of sector

- Leaders of sector feeling the strain of responding to constant crisis
- Key leadership changes in partnership organisations
- Advice sector leaders report a wider issue with (all) inflationary pressures and salary costs outstripping funding receipts this is having a knock-on effect on staff retention and service delivery
- Advice agencies report that funding period for grants (generally) are now much shorter decreasing the stability of the sector
- Skill shortage in being able to find people to fill roles
- Advice sector finding it increasingly difficult to fill volunteer roles as more people are seeking work as opposed to volunteer roles

4. Resource Issue in meeting demand:

- High- level Housing advice

⁴ Designing a new social reality- Feb 2021 [Designing a new social reality](#)

01/11/2022

- Immigration advice and significant delays in Home Office decision causing back log in cases.
- Finding funding for early intervention work

5. Increasing complexity of cases presented to advice services

- The proportion of clients who turn out to have multiple needs has increased
- More complex multiple advice needs required more tailored support and advice ⁵
- Sourcing funding for high level advice (case work) is becoming increasingly challenging

6. Mental Health and advice provision

- Advisers have reported increasing instances of clients having mental health difficulties either underlying their advice needs, or as a more overarching concern where there were sometimes no longer any specific advice needs that advice services could help with.

Appendix 4 Other funders in the city

AB Charitable Foundation
Access to Justice Foundation
Aviva Foundation
Bristol Impact Fund
Bristol Wessex Water
Chapman Family Fund
Children in Need
Clarion Housing
Community Legal Services Fund
East Bristol Food Bank
EU Settlement Fund HO
Garfield Weston Foundation
Good Things Foundation
Henry Smith Charity
Institute of Money Advisers

⁵Evidencing the holistic nature of advice provided by Citizens Advice Bureaux in Scotland- Seymour research [Evidencing the holistic nature of advice provided by Citizens Advice in Scotland](#)

01/11/2022

John James Bristol Foundation
Macmillan
Marsh Christian Trust
Medlock Charitable Trust
Money and Pensions Service
MS Society
National Citizens Advice
National Lottery Community Fund
Needham Cooper Charitable Fund
Nisbet Trust
NHS
Quartet Community Foundation
Quartet Resilience Fund
Schroder Trust
Singer Trust
Sovereign
The LEF
Therium Access
Three Guineas Trust
Trusthouse Charitable foundation
Tudor Trust
WHAM (Warmer Homes, Advice and Money)
Wessex water