

EXECUTIVE BOARD DECISION



REPORT OF: Executive Member for
Neighbourhood and Prevention Services

LEAD OFFICERS: Director of Localities and Prevention

DATE: 9 March 2017

PORTFOLIO/S AFFECTED: Neighbourhood and Prevention Services

WARD/S AFFECTED: All

KEY DECISION: YES NO

SUBJECT: Strengthening Communities; Volunteering in Lancashire

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Following a call for projects by the Lancashire LEP and with agreement from the Chief Executive and Director of Finance and IT an application was developed with partners and submitted by Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council as lead partner to the European Structural and Investment Funds Programme (ESIF) for funding from Investment Priority 1.4: Active Inclusion which focuses on supporting people with multiple and complex barriers to participation in the labour market to address these underlying issues and to move them closer to or into the labour market and to engage marginalised individuals and support them to re-engage with education, training, or employment.

Strengthening Communities; Volunteering in Lancashire is a Public and Voluntary Sector project which aims to boost access to volunteering across Lancashire, engaging individuals who would not otherwise participate in such activities, and providing them with life and work skills that will improve their chances of future employment.

Officers have been verbally informed by the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP), the Managing Authority for the Fund that they have recommended the project for approval. A formal Funding Agreement Letter is expected at any time. In anticipation of its arrival and to eliminate any unnecessary delays Board Members are asked to consider the recommendation below.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Executive Board:

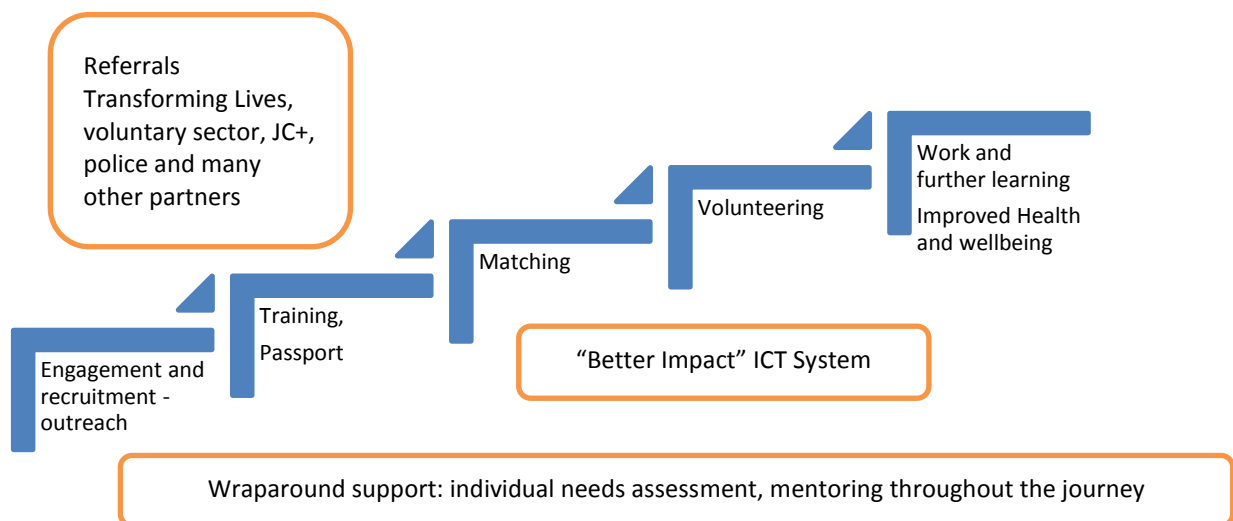
- Approves the appointment of Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council as the Accountable Body for the ESIF Strengthening Communities Volunteering in Lancashire project
- Approves the Council entering into a Funding Agreement with the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions for the project.

3. BACKGROUND

In response to a call for projects from the Lancashire LEP to assist in delivering the Lancashire ESIF programme Officers met with partners from across Lancashire to discuss and develop a proposal which delivered volunteering opportunities to the most hardest to reach across Lancashire. In Partnership with BwDCVS, Lancashire Association of Councils for Voluntary Service, Lancashire Adult Learning College, Blackpool Council Adult Learning, Lancashire Constabulary and BwD's Neighbourhoods Team a project was developed that will build on a range of existing activity across Lancashire and add value by:

- Increasing capacity
- Providing consistency
- Providing a strategic and operational infrastructure for delivery
- Sharing resources with the Lancs Constabulary Public Service Lancashire Volunteer Partnership Programme
- Integrating public sector and voluntary sector opportunities across the county.

The Client Journey



Specific Activities

This project will use established mechanisms to engage people in volunteering activities, and will provide outreach capability from existing community venues located in areas of disadvantage.

Activity is designed with an emphasis on the volunteer journey and providing wraparound support from initial engagement through to achieving outcomes of work, learning or becoming a peer mentor for future volunteers. This level of tailored support has been identified as a key gap in current provision (more detail about the limitations of existing provision is included in section 3.3.)

1. Support for individuals

Engagement and referral

- **Engagement** – a team of outreach workers will identify and engage target beneficiaries and act as case-managers and mentors for the duration of the volunteer journey
- **Referrals** – many referral pathways to identify individuals are already established through Pennine Lancashire's Transforming Lives programme (established multi-agency hubs working with those on the cusp of crisis). These multi-agency locality hubs will make referrals to the programme as part of their stepdown work. In addition links with a range of agencies will be made to develop pathways into the programme, including adults and children's social services,

police, job centres, voluntary sector organisations, probation, Youth Offending Service, and health partners.

- **Needs assessment** – every individual engaged with the programme will have a needs assessment to ensure the right training and volunteering activities are sourced, and that the right support is put in place to help every individual achieve their potential.

Training

A team of tutors will deliver training packages in 3 phases:

1. Initial confidence building and self-esteem workshops
2. An accredited package for volunteers including safeguarding and health and safety (a similar “Passport” is already delivered in Blackburn with Darwen and will be rolled out across the county)
3. Bespoke training to prepare them for volunteering

Brokering

- Individuals will be matched with suitable volunteering opportunities, either in the public sector, voluntary sector or with local businesses
- The “Better Impact” volunteer tasking and co-ordination ICT system is already in place and being rolled out further to facilitate matching of individuals with public sector placements
- Voluntary sector placements will be matched through existing centres operated in the county by the network of Councils for Voluntary Service CVS and volunteer centres
- Structured taster placements will be identified to prepare individuals for the main placement as part of the matching process, and to develop their interests and practical skills. They will also make best use of time and reduce barriers to participation, whilst waiting for DBS references and checks.

Additional support

1. Wraparound support from National Careers Service officers to guide volunteers’ progress into further learning and work. This is added value – not funded through direct project costs or match
2. Continuity of support throughout from a dedicated key worker with mentoring skills who can provide advice and coaching on a range of issues.
3. An incentive support scheme will be incorporated where appropriate to boost motivation of volunteers. Spice is a time credit scheme already used in Lancashire and has been very successful in ensuring volunteers feel valued and incentivised.

2. Co-ordination and development activity

Development of volunteering opportunities

- This project will help facilitate opportunities available to volunteers in the voluntary sector by engaging them as delivery partners, drawing on their extensive experience of working with disadvantaged people and providing structured support, training, development and placement brokering for volunteers;
- Opportunities in the public sector will also be opened up for target beneficiaries by linking in closely with the infrastructure that is being established through the Lancashire Public Service Volunteer Partnership Programme, from which match funding is being provided.
- A key area for this project will be creating links with local employers and developing opportunities for volunteer placement within a business setting. The Programme Manager and Volunteer Manager will build on existing links through the Business Hive in Blackburn with Darwen, Burnley Bond Holders, Pendle Vision Group and Chambers of Commerce. Using an evidence-based approach, their aim will be to demonstrate to employers the value of creating volunteering opportunities and encourage them to fulfil their corporate social responsibility around providing local opportunities for those furthest from the labour market. They will also build pathways into employment for the volunteers. The package of support for businesses will include an online resource with templates and policies for every aspect of their involvement with volunteers including induction, paying expenses, reviewing performance and measuring

impact of the work. All volunteering placements will be risk-assessed and monitored.

Coordination

Crucial to the success of this programme is the creation of a single infrastructure to co-ordinate activity across Lancashire both strategically and operationally. Strategically, the project will be overseen by a Programme Steering Group. The group will have senior level representation from all key programme stakeholders and report into Lancashire Volunteering Partnership Board, Lancashire Early Action Board and BwD's Executive Team.

Operationally, a small project management team will develop and manage this activity and ensure the impact of the work is captured.

This will include:

- Implementation of the project plan
- The production of a clear outcomes plan with baselines
- A simple monitoring framework to ensure regular progress against outputs and results can be measured and reported
- Qualitative work capturing the individual journeys of a significant number of participants on the programme
- Social impact and cost benefit.

Target beneficiaries

Target beneficiaries will be engaged through a number of routes, linking in with existing initiatives such as Transforming Lives and Troubled Families. Participation in the volunteering programme will create a step-down pathway from those programmes that deal with the high intensity, crisis stages. We will also use links across public services and the voluntary sector to identify people who are removed from the labour market and would benefit from the development offered by this volunteering programme. In brief, target individuals are likely to have a number of the following characteristics:

- Long term unemployed
- Economically inactive
- Over 50 years of age
- BME backgrounds
- Disabilities
- Physical or mental health problems
- Women
- Resident in disadvantaged areas
- Overcoming drug or alcohol abuse
- Care leavers
- Caring responsibilities for children or other adults
- Lacking basic skills.
- Prisoners on release/sex offenders
- Those serving community sentences

The wraparound support provided as part of this initiative will help people address issues that act as barriers to social and economic participation and will be tailored to the specific situation of each individual in order to reduce those barriers for the longer term. It is flexible and holistic support that takes a thorough look at inhibiting aspects of lifestyle, attitudes and behaviours as well as helping beneficiaries find opportunities that will develop their personal and occupational capabilities and capacity.

The programme will be responsive to the differing community profiles and needs evident in different areas of Lancashire, therefore the make-up of cohorts are likely to vary from area to area. Our primary focus will be in areas of disadvantage. Data collection to capture characteristics of participants will form part of the monitoring and evaluation framework.

Location of activity

This proposal aims to reach across Lancashire, with a particular focus on reaching individuals through peripatetic resourcing. Workers will operate from established community venues in the most disadvantaged areas, and the package of support available will flex to the needs of those communities and the individuals who engage with the programme.

4. KEY ISSUES & RISKS

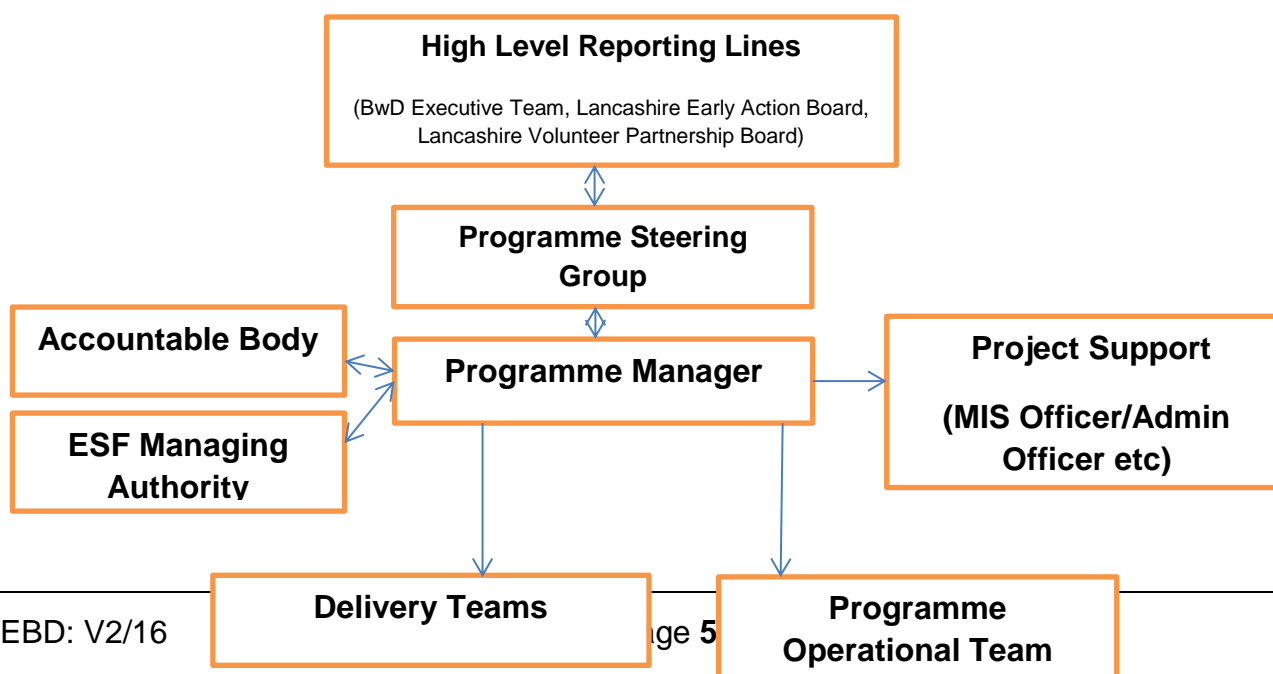
Funder Compliance Requirements - As Accountable Body for the project the Council would be responsible for ensuring that all aspects of project delivery are compliant with the funder's requirements. This covers eligible expenditure, procurement, publicity, state aid and document retention. Any non-compliance will result in a reduction/repayment of grant funding from the Accountable Body irrespective of which project partner did not fulfil compliance requirements.

Clear guidance is provided by the funder from the outset and applications are assessed on their ability to fulfil compliance requirements. Tests are further carried out by the funder at the Project Inception Visit and through monitoring, verification and audit visits during the life of the project.

Mitigation Actions –

- Officers have shared the funder's guidance with project partners during the development of the project to ensure they are fully aware of the compliance requirements and restrictions of the fund.
- Prior to commencement of the project a Partnership Agreement will be drawn up and signed by all partners and will set out obligations of each partner, clearly stating the funder's requirements and reflect the conditions as set out in the Funding Agreement Letter to the Accountable Body.
- A dedicated Programme Manager and support staff will be employed by the Accountable Body to ensure delivery of key performance targets and that all aspects of delivery fulfil the compliance requirements of the funder.
- During delivery of the project, regular monitoring and spot checks will be carried out by the Programme Team and Officers from Finance and Audit to eliminate compliance irregularities.

Governance Structure –



4. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The project aligns with strategic corporate priorities as outlined in the corporate plan. Furthermore, building resilient communities through volunteering and asset based working is one of four key development themes underpinning the work of the local authority.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

ESIF funding	Public Match Funding	Total Project Cost
£1,206,891	£804, 597 (contributions from Delivery Partners)	£2,011,488

The Public Match Funding includes £286,588 from Blackburn with Darwen Council. This amount is made up of salaries of existing staff (Locality Leads and Community Connectors) and indirect staff and other costs which will support the delivery of the project, therefore is not an additional requirement from the Council budget.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

Blackburn with Darwen as Accountable Body for the project will be required to sign a Funding Agreement which will set out the terms and conditions of grant funding including specific requirements concerning the products/services delivered, the financing plan and timescales.

On receipt of the Funding Agreement Officers will seek advice from the Council's Legal Department prior to sign off.

8. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

The Accountable Body will employ a full time Programme Manager and Skills Development Officer along with a part time Admin Officer and MIS Officer to deliver the project on its behalf. These posts will be funded by ESIF.

Project delivery will be supported by Locality Leads and Community Connectors from within the Neighbourhoods Team. Programme Management will be supported by management time and back office support (finance, HR, IT etc). This cost will be borne by existing staff budgets.

9. EQUALITY AND HEALTH IMPLICATIONS

Please select one of the options below. Where appropriate please include the hyperlink to the EIA.

Option 1 Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) not required – the EIA checklist has been completed.

Option 2 In determining this matter the Executive Member needs to consider the EIA associated with this item in advance of making the decision. *(insert EIA link here)*

Option 3 In determining this matter the Executive Board Members need to consider the EIA associated with this item in advance of making the decision.



ESIF EIA v1.1.pdf

10. CONSULTATIONS

The project proposal was developed in consultation with representatives from CVS and Adult Learning across Lancashire, Lancashire County Council and Lancashire Constabulary. A report was presented to the Early Action Board who endorsed the proposal.

11. STATEMENT OF COMPLIANCE

The recommendations are made further to advice from the Monitoring Officer and the Section 151 Officer has confirmed that they do not incur unlawful expenditure. They are also compliant with equality legislation and an equality analysis and impact assessment has been considered. The recommendations reflect the core principles of good governance set out in the Council's Code of Corporate Governance.

12. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

All Declarations of Interest of any Executive Member consulted and note of any dispensation granted by the Chief Executive will be recorded in the Summary of Decisions published on the day following the meeting.

VERSION:	1
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CONTACT OFFICER:	Heather Taylor
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DATE:	7 th February 2017
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BACKGROUND PAPER:	
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