

## Delegated Cabinet Member Decision Report

<b>Decision Maker and Portfolio area:</b>	<b>Cllr Barbara Brownridge</b>
<b>Date of Decision:</b>	<b>8<sup>th</sup> February 2024</b>
<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Community Champions</b>
<b>Report Author:</b>	<b>Rachel Dyson, Thriving Communities Lead</b>
<b>Ward(s) Affected:</b>	<b>All Wards</b>

---

---

<b>Reason for the decision:</b>	The reason for this decision is to approve investment from the Covid Outbreak Management Fund (COMF) into the Community Champions Network.
<b>Summary:</b>	<p>This paper is proposing that £200,000 of COMF funding is used to invest in the Community Champions Network, for £180,000 of grants to the VCFSE organisations and £20,000 allocated to Action Together to administer the funding, and facilitate and support the network.</p> <p>It is recognised that the Community Champions approach could be applied to other public health challenges, in fact for the community organisations in the network Covid19 was only one of many health inequalities they were keen to engage with us about and help tackle within their communities. It is proposed that the funding should be used to develop the Community Champions Network further, with a focus on health, specifically on preventative approaches to promoting health and wellbeing outcomes and mitigating the impact of health inequalities.</p>
<b><i>What are the alternative option(s) to be considered? Please give the reason(s) for recommendation(s):</i></b>	Option 1 - £200,000 of COMF funding is used to invest in the Community Champions Network, for £180,000 of grants to the VCFSE organisations and £20,000 allocated to Action Together to

administer the funding, and facilitate and support the network.

Option 2 – No investment is made from COMF into the Community Champions Network. This will significantly reduce the capacity of VCFSE organisations to support the Council with developing and delivering preventative approaches to health and wellbeing in those communities most impacted by health inequalities.

**Recommendation(s):**

Option 1 - £200,000 of COMF funding is used invest in the Community Champions Network, for £180,000 of grants to the VCFSE organisations and £20,000 allocated to Action Together to administer the funding, and facilitate and support the network.

**Implications:**

*What are the **financial** implications?*

The preferred option (option 1) is to invest £200k into the Community Champions Network by awarding £180k to the Community Champions Network and £20k to Action Together to administer the fund.

It is proposed to carry £200k forward from the remaining balance of the Contain Outbreak Management Funding.

UK Health Security Agency have confirmed that the funding can be carried over but must be spent by 30 September 2024.

(Jenny Howarth Senior Accountant/Matt Kearns Finance Manager)

*What are the **procurement** implications?*

There are no procurement implications as this relates to the acceptance of grant funding.

(Emily Molden)

*What are the **legal** implications?*

What is proposed here is to distribute OMBC funds which have been received from central government. It is intended to transfer £200,000.00 of investment from the Covid Outbreak Management Fund via Action Together into the Community Champions Fund and from which £180,000.00 will be paid over to voluntary, community, faith and social enterprise sector

organisations who will expend the funds upon provision of the appropriate services. £20,000.00 will be paid to Action Together who will pay out those funds on behalf of the Council to the various recipient VCFSE organisations or other bodies who might sensibly use the funds.

Given all this there are three main legal considerations as follows.

(A) What were the permissions and constraints imposed by central government when providing these funds to Oldham? What needs to be done, if indeed anything, in order to comply with those central government criteria? Notes upon the financial implications deal with these issues

(B) Irrespective of central government impositions what requirements are to be found within Oldham MBC's own rules?

(C) Assuming that the demands of both (1) and (2) are satisfied what is then needed in order for the monies to be pay out to the recipient organisations via Action Together?

(1) Within the draft report it is stated "There are no background papers for this report" and what the operational team report is therefore alone the basis for the legal assessment which follows.

(2) If there is a transfer of funds from one initiative to another within the Council then the virement provisions within paragraphs 3.6 to 3.16 of Part 4F of the Constitution apply. However, we are informed that, notwithstanding the "Reason for the decision", there is to be no transfer or re-distribution of funds within the Council.

(3) Under the Community Champions Network scheme Action Together will distribute the funds on behalf of OMBC to VCFSE organisations and since that mechanism will rank as grant payments the provisions of paragraph 20.9 of the Financial Procurement Rules will apply.

(4) These may include: compliance with the Council's grants policy, submission of a full financial appraisal to the Director of Finance with necessity analysis, execution of a legal agreement, accordance with the Council's grant

support procedure and clear evidence as to delivery of Corporate Objectives - as the Finance Implications will address if and as appropriate.

(5) No grant approval document has been provided to the Legal Department.

(6) It is explained by the operational team that this proposal has already been approved in principle by the relevant Cabinet Member and the Director of Finance for signing off and that this paper will formalise matters.

(Mike Bentley, Consultant Locum Solicitor)

*What are the **Human Resources** implications?*

None

**Equality and Diversity Impact Assessment** attached or not required because (please give reason)

No vulnerable group will be adversely impacted by the recommended option, the funding is intended to support people and communities experiencing health inequalities.

*What are the **property** implications*

None

**Risks:**

This proposal will assist Voluntary, Community, Faith and Social Enterprise (VCFSE) sector deliver via the Community Champions Network. The service will need to ensure that the terms and conditions of the grant funding agreement are complied with for the provision of the grant and also ensure that Action Together continue to provide regular monitoring reports to the Council in relation to the fund.

Vicki Gallacher (Head of Insurance and Information Governance)

**Co-operative agenda**

By strengthening skills and capacity in local communities, to support residents' health and wellbeing the proposals align with the Council's co-operative values.

(Amanda Richardson, Policy Manager)

---

Has the relevant Legal Officer confirmed that the recommendations within this report are lawful and comply with the Council's Constitution?

Yes

Has the relevant Finance Officer confirmed that any expenditure referred to within this report is consistent with the Council's budget? Yes

Are any of the recommendations within this report contrary to the Policy Framework of the Council? No

**There are no background papers for this report**

---

<b>Report Author Sign-off:</b>	
	R. Dyson
<b>Date:</b>	31/01/24

Please list any appendices:-

<b>Appendix number or letter</b>	<b>Description</b>

## **Background:**

- 1.1 In January 2021 Oldham was awarded £500k funding from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government's (MHCLG) Community Champions Programme. MHCLG's stated purpose of the funding was 'to support people shown to be most at risk from Coronavirus (COVID-19) including those from an ethnic minority background, disabled people and others to follow safer behaviours and reduce the impact of the virus on themselves and those around them'. A further £25,000 was allocated to support this work from local Covid19 funds. The aim was to support our whole Covid19 response strategy primarily through the communication of virus rates, changes to national and local guidance, health protection and infection control messages, promotion and education around vaccination and testing and local humanitarian support offer.
- 1.2 A Community Champions Steering Group was established and worked together to deliver a programme of activity reaching priority communities identified in the initial bid to MHCLG; South Asian, Black African, Roma, people with Learning Disabilities & Autism and people with sensory disabilities. The approach taken in Oldham was to focus the majority of the investment (£300,000) in grants to VCFSE organisations working within those priority communities to build their capacity to engage with residents and deliver messages supporting the Covid19 strategy. Alongside the investment a community engagement network was established to bring funded organisations together. A further £225k was invested in August 2021 to extend the funded VCFSE activity until March 2022, and to broaden the scope of focus to other demographic groups negatively impacted by Covid19.
- 1.3 The remainder of the total funding was used to provide capacity within the steering group to deliver wider activities, providing key information and support to groups in the following ways; vaccination training, regular community champions newsletter, whatsapp communication channel, facilitation of community engagement network, community development support, updating of resource/asset library, development of bespoke comms and artwork, video editing, responding to key issues and questions. Central to the Community Champions approach was also understanding the needs, attitudes and perceptions of residents towards Covid19 and how that is changing over the course of the pandemic so a Community Champions Insight Tracker was established where any service or group could log key issues or insights that residents have raised with them and they could be reviewed by the steering group to ensure they are actioned or escalated where appropriate.
- 1.4 Evaluation at the time of the programme indicated that it was successful in opening up the dialogue with communities around testing and vaccinations, raising awareness of government guidelines, and reducing anxieties about Covid19 and the vaccine.
- 1.5 Since the MHCLG funding ended Action Together have continued to support and facilitate the Oldham Community Champions Network. During 22-23 they have secured funding related to tackling health inequalities in the vaccination programme and community engagement funding for the Network groups and organisations in relation to the Greater Manchester Integrated Care Partnership strategy development. Most recently funding has been secured for the Network from the DWP's Household Support Fund, via the Local Authority to support those Community Champions Groups and organisations to deliver Cost-of-Living Crisis engagement and direct to support to residents in the target groups (which have remained the same as in the original programme). The Community Champions Network member organisations are committed to continuing to work together in this way to tackle the inequalities in health and wealth faced by their communities across Oldham.

## **Proposals:**

- 2.1 Our Community Champions approach has enabled us to build a coordinated community engagement infrastructure with reach into our communities that suffer from the deepest

inequalities and have seldom heard voices. As a result, we were able to gain a much deeper understanding of their lived experience, their experiences and perceptions of health issues and health services than we would otherwise have had from existing data sources. Similarly taking this approach provided rich learning about the complexity and nuances that can inform health behaviours, and the extent to which these drivers can vary considerably between demographic groups or be very specific to a particular group or locality. Without consideration and recognition of this within our future public health policy there is a risk of perpetuating or exacerbating existing health inequalities.

- 2.2 Ensuring communities remain up to date with Covid19 guidance and are accessing vaccinations as appropriate remains a priority for our Community Champions approach. However, it is recognised that the approach could be applied to other public health challenges, in fact for the community organisations in the network Covid19 was only one of many health inequalities they were keen to engage with us about and help tackle within their communities. It is proposed that £200,000 of the remaining Covid Outbreak Management Funds should be used to develop the Community Champions Network further, with a focus on health, specifically on preventative approaches to promoting health and wellbeing outcomes and mitigating the impact of health inequalities. £180,000 will be invested in community groups, and £20,000 allocated to Action Together to administer the funding, facilitate and support the network.
- 2.3 Based on feedback from a recent focus group with existing Community Champions about the pressing concerns for the communities they are supporting following the Covid 19 Pandemic and during the current cost of living crisis, the following priorities were identified:
1. Communication and language barriers are significant issues to local people accessing health services – working more closely with community orgs could be a solution to this.
  2. Barriers exist in the accessibility of getting appointments and the right care pathway.
  3. People don't understand the system and how to access what they need, and changes to the way you access the system aren't communicated effectively.
  4. Care isn't personalised to people's needs, so people don't get the care they need.
  5. There should be more of a focus on wellbeing and prevention and this should be delivered in a way that works with local people's strengths and builds on local assets within communities.
- 2.4 Addressing Health Inequalities is also the primary goal of the programme for Public Health partners, and the aim of this funding approach is to be flexible and responsive to communities' needs. However, alongside a focus on Covid19, there is recognition that there are particular opportunities to address health inequalities through more targeted and culturally appropriate approaches to health improvement, and to preventing Measles which is a pressing Health Protection priority. Therefore, it is proposed that the programme has a particular focus on:
- Supporting residents to gain the knowledge and skills to confidently make choices and participate in decisions about their own health (Health & Wellbeing Plan, 2023-27)
  - Immunisations, primarily childhood immunisations including MMR & MMR2

This approach is aligned to Oldham's Prevention Framework, with the intention of providing targeted advice, information and support, as well as addressing system barriers, to enable residents to be 'Living Well'.

- 2.5 The focus communities for the programme will remain the same as previously (South Asian, Black African, Roma, people with Learning Disabilities & Autism, Young People & White Deprived Communities).
- 2.6 Organisations funded as part of the Community Champions network will undertake a range of activities to support the priorities of the programme, including:
- Participating in training and development on key health and wellbeing topics (e.g. MECC and Connect 5)
  - Engaging with residents around health and wellbeing information, skills and access to care
  - Delivering preventative activities within communities
  - Supporting residents to access services
  - Acting as champions, and work with public sector partners, to support tackling barriers to access and inequalities within care pathways
  - Sharing insight around community priorities and needs around health and wellbeing
- 2.7 Alongside this, it is equally important the system empowers the network to be most effective. This includes ensuring they have the latest information, as well as the skills and confidence to be able share this effectively, and that the insights shared by the network are heard and acted upon. There are a number of ways that this will be done:
- Providing information and training as required
  - Sharing the latest information and updates on key health policies and provision in Oldham, and on priorities identified by communities
  - Providing mechanisms for communities to share insights and influence system change, including participation in governance groups, working groups etc.
  - Ensuring insights are routinely shared in appropriate forums, and there is a consistent feedback loop into the Champions Network
  - Highlighting good practice approaches to addressing barriers to inequalities to ensure there is opportunity for system learning and wider adoption
- 2.8 Grants of up to £5,000 will be available to Community Champions Network VCFSE member groups. Oldham Community Champions Network brings together VCFSE community groups and organisations who have trusted relationships within the communities of Oldham that experience the deepest health inequalities. These organisations have a deep understanding of the issues that impact community members and have the ability to engage with their communities in a way that removes the barriers that often perpetuate the health inequalities experienced. There is an established Network of 31 community groups and organisations with over 100 Champions connected to those groups. The network is open to new members and there is information on the Action Together website about how to become a network member. Due diligence on groups and organisations is undertaken by Action Together as part of their membership process. The initial covid focus for the Community Champions was extended into recovery, mitigating the impact of inequality and pastoral support for communities. Across 2022 the Community Champions Network has been evolving to focus more broadly on health inequalities.
- 2.9 The grants programme will be a targeted investment programme, where network members will be invited to apply for an awarded to invest in their capacity to:
- Participate in Community Champions Network events and sessions
  - Deliver specific community engagement with their beneficiaries via their group or organisation's engagement channels
  - Undertake training and provide health and wellbeing community conversations alongside their community activity or support offer

- Help their beneficiaries to increase their health literacy and navigate health and well-being care pathways
- Promote the Oldham Council / NHS GM communications work by delivering flyers or sharing digital comms messages via their social media channels.
- Collect and share insight from their beneficiaries around their experiences of health inequalities
- Connect their beneficiaries to opportunities for wider engagement activities on health and wellbeing, including resident panel, and co-design and co-production opportunities.

In addition Action Together is working with the British Science Association's Ideas Fund and VOCAL to develop a project centred around the Oldham Community Champions Network that creates an opportunity for researchers and local people and community organisations to work and learn together to create a healthy [public engagement system](#). Approaching this work together will lead to changes in research practices and more effective returns for local people's time and involvement through influential engagement. The Ideas Fund are committing to invest circa £100,000 to this project. Whilst the priorities for allocation of this funding are currently being negotiated and are not yet confirmed, Action Together are advocating that some of this funding is used to support Community Champions to engage in the system's change and research project

- 2.10 The programme will be overseen strategically by the Health & Wellbeing Board and operationally by the Health Improvement Sub-group. A task and finish group will be brought together as required to coordinate the support offer from the public sector system, this is likely to include subject specialists, comms and programme management alongside Action Together and Champions Network members.

In consultation with

(Relevant Deputy Chief Executive/ Executive Director



Sayyed Osman

Date: Friday February 9<sup>th</sup> 2024