

Item No.	Classification: Open	Date: 3 August 2021	Individual Decision Maker: Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing
Report title:		VCS COVID-19 Outreach Grants	
Ward(s) or groups affected:		Borough-wide	
From:		Head of Programme for Healthy Places, Public Health	

RECOMMENDATION

1. That the Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing approves the offer of eight grants to VCS organisations to support a more targeted Community Health Ambassador Network approach. This would be incorporated within the wider Community Health Ambassador Network but with the aim of focusing on community groups with greatest COVID-19 vulnerability.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

2. Southwark's Outbreak Prevention and Control Plan (OPCP) sets out Southwark Council's ambition and approach to providing local leadership and support for the pandemic response; led by Public Health, but working closely with many council, health service, and voluntary sector partners.
3. The OPCR operational response involves three strands of work: Prevent, Identify and Control. Our prevention work aims to develop a sustainable and meaningful dialogue with residents, communities and the voluntary sector that enables the exchange of information and intelligence that will facilitate the objectives of the OPCR and the prevention of COVID-19 outbreaks.
4. Community Southwark and local VCS organisations are important partners for the Prevent strand, as they have existing relationships with key communities who are vulnerable to COVID-19 and are well placed to both communicate prevention messages and offer support to these groups.
5. The Council funded the employment of a VCS Engagement Officer at Community Southwark to support COVID-19 prevention work, including the Community Health Ambassadors Network.
6. The Community Health Ambassadors Network aims to empower and support Southwark residents to protect themselves and their communities from COVID-19. The role of the Ambassador is to pass on accurate, reliable, and current information to their communities in relation to COVID-19. The Ambassadors also feedback concerns and questions from community members, to ensure that community voices are heard and their questions answered.
7. Over 90 residents and employees in Southwark have completed their onboarding training, and are volunteering as Community Health Ambassadors, since the inception of the Network in November 2020. Currently, the Network is open for any Southwark employee or resident to sign-up to join, but the next stage of the

programme is to focus outreach efforts on signing up targeted Ambassadors connected to community groups with greatest COVID-19 vulnerability.

KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

8. The VCS COVID-19 Outreach Grants will enable focused and targeted support to be provided to community groups with greatest COVID-19 vulnerability, by working closely with local VCS organisations that have existing connections with these communities. This programme will be incorporated within the existing Community Health Ambassador Network, but through its more targeted approach will have the following aims:
 - helping us to identify barriers that vulnerable and high-risk communities face in receiving and following COVID-19 public health guidance
 - overcoming barriers by assisting communities to more effectively protect themselves
 - amplifying and improving messaging and engagement with community members to build trust and improve the effectiveness of public health initiatives and their delivery to specific communities.
9. Southwark Public Health are collating local and national health intelligence data from public health colleagues and wider stakeholders to ascertain which population groups have the greatest COVID-19 vulnerability and would benefit from additional support as part of a targeted Community Health Ambassador Network approach.
10. VCS organisations that have existing connections with the identified vulnerable population groups will be able to apply for grant funding of £15,000 per organisation. The grants would be used by the VCS organisations to fund COVID-19 outreach prevention roles within the organisations, and have been calculated based on a part-time VCS officer supporting this programme for 3 days a week for approximately 7 months. Expected monthly outreach activities and outputs for these grant funded roles will be clearly defined as part of the application supporting documentation and the terms and conditions of grant funding.
11. Successful grant funding will be issued to a maximum of eight VCS organisations, totaling £120,000. Successful grant applicants will be determined by an assessment panel.
12. Southwark Council will be the grant awarding body. Community Southwark will be providing ongoing monitoring and evaluation support for the grants programme, in partnership with Southwark Council.
13. The council will agree the monitoring and evaluation requirements that each grant recipient must adhere to. This information will be shared with the Lead Cabinet Member who will be updated on progress. This will provide an audit trail of how the grant funding has been used and its impact. Community Southwark will support the administration of the monitoring and evaluation requirements, working with the grant recipients to ensure documentation is accurate and collected in a timely manner.

Policy implications

14. The VCS COVID-19 Outreach Grants are aligned to Southwark's OPCP. It is a

crucial operational aspect enabling us to effectively deliver the Prevent strand within the OPCP, and ensure community groups with greatest COVID-19 vulnerability are appropriately supported. The grants will also support the recovery process over the coming months, addressing identified inequalities and vulnerabilities.

Community impact statement

15. This grants programme will focus on community groups with greatest COVID-19 vulnerability, specifically targeting:
 - Communities who are at higher risk of COVID-19 infection,
 - Communities with lower vaccination uptake rates,
 - Communities who are at a higher risk of poor outcomes from COVID-19, and
 - Communities who are less likely to be reached by traditional council communication methods, including the existing Community Health Ambassador Network
16. The grants programme aims to provide additional support to these communities to communicate COVID-19 prevention messaging, prevent transmission of COVID-19, and address COVID-19 vaccine concerns.
17. The council has undertaken a baseline Equality Impact Assessment for the Outbreak Prevention and Control Plan.

Resource implications

18. A new contract with Community Southwark to recruit an additional officer is currently going through procurement, which will enhance our capacity to run the grants programme. Southwark Public Health have also previously recruited a COVID-19 Programme Officer who will support the grants programme, and wider prevention work.

Legal implications

19. Please see the concurrent report of the Director of Law and Governance below.

Financial implications

20. £2,954,462 of Contain Outbreak Management Fund (COMF) has been awarded to Southwark from the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) for 2021/22 to support the council's pandemic response.
21. 'Support for vulnerable groups and targeted community interventions', is one of the major elements permissible under the COMF funding conditions.
22. The £120,000 funding for these eight VCS grants will be included as part of the monthly monitoring and reporting to the DHSC.

Consultation

SUPPLEMENTARY ADVICE FROM OTHER OFFICERS

Director of Law and Governance

23. This report seeks approval of the proposed offer of Covid-19 related outreach grants to a maximum of eight VCS organisations to support a more targeted Community Health Ambassador Network approach. The decision to approve the Recommendation is one which is expressly reserved to the Cabinet Member under Part 3D of the council Constitution.
24. Paragraphs 8 to 13 of the report set out details of the grant funded programme, which aligns with Southwark's Outbreak Prevention and Control Plan. The report also confirms that a planned and robust process is to be carried out, for the purposes of attracting proposals from interested voluntary organisations, evaluating those proposals and monitoring performance of the activities and outputs following allocation of the grants.
25. Paragraph 15 notes that the grants programme is intended to target and benefit individuals and groups within the local community which are particularly vulnerable to Covid-19 infection. This is consistent with the requirements of the council's statutory duty (the Public Sector Equality Duty) as prescribed by the Equality Act 2010.
26. Following the allocation of the grant funding to successful applicants appropriate legal terms and conditions will regulate the various grant awards.

Strategic Director of Finance and Governance (EL21/026)

27. This report is requesting approval from the Cabinet Member for Public Health and Community Safety for the offer of eight grants to VCS organisations to support a more targeted Community Health Ambassador Network approach.
28. The strategic director of finance and governance notes that the total funding of £120,000 available for these grant awards is an allocation from the £2,954,462 DHSC COMF grant, ring-fenced for the pandemic response.
29. Staffing and any other costs connected with these recommendations are to be contained within pre-allocated and existing departmental revenue resources

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Background Papers	Held At	Contact
COMF Funding Proposal	Public Health / Environment, Leisure and Public Health	Rosie Dalton-Lucas 07917307597
Link TBC		
Southwark's Outbreak Prevention and Control Plan	Public Health / Environment, Leisure and Public Health	Sangeeta Leahy, Director of Public Health
https://www.southwark.gov.uk/assets/attach/12902/Southwark-s-Outbreak-Prevention-and-Control-Plan.pdf		

APPENDICES

No.	Title
None	

AUDIT TRAIL

Lead Officer	Jin Lim, Acting Director of Public Health	
Report Author	Ginette Hogan, Public Health Policy Officer	
Version	Final	
Dated	4 June 2021	
Key Decision?	No	
CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / CABINET MEMBER		
	Officer Title	Comments Sought
		Comments Included
	Director of Law and Governance	Yes
	Strategic Director of Finance and Governance	No
	Cabinet Member	Yes/No
	Date final report sent to Constitutional Team	3 August 2021