

Decision Taker:	Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing
Date:	6 November 2024
Report title:	Alexandra Rose Voucher grant increase (£60K)
Ward(s) or groups affected:	All
Classification:	Open
From:	Strategic Director of Children and Adult Services

RECOMMENDATION

1. That the Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing approve the allocation of £60,000 to Alexandra Rose Charity (ARC). This grant will fund vouchers for families currently on the waiting list and pregnant women to access the Rose Voucher scheme for 12 months from November 2024.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

2. Alexandra Rose (ARC) has been delivering the Rose Voucher scheme in Southwark since 2018.
3. The scheme is well established in the borough, providing vouchers for pregnant women and families with children under 5 years old with a low income or who have no recourse to public funds (NRPF). Vouchers are redeemed at local markets to purchase fruit and vegetables.
4. Between 2018 and early 2023, the scheme was fully funded by Impact on Urban Health (IoUH). Since early 2023, Southwark Council has partially funded this project to support low-income families in Southwark to afford to eat more fruit and vegetables.
5. Southwark Council awarded £290,000 to support the scheme between April 2023 to December 2024. The funding has been awarded to:
 - a. maintain support for families accessing the scheme at a level of approximately 1000 families per year
 - b. extend the scheme to 50 new families in South Bermondsey
 - c. develop a process for conducting health and wellbeing checks for supported families.

All three of these deliverables have been actioned. This funding is non-recurrent.

6. In 2023, ARC completed an evaluation of family outcomes that included

interviewing over 40 families receiving Rose vouchers. Families reported the vouchers covered the cost of most or all their fruit and vegetable weekly shop and helped them afford a wider variety of fruit and vegetables. Families on the scheme increased their fruit and vegetables intake by 3 portions a day and reported good health across their household with a low frequency of sickness and GP visits.

7. For the health and wellbeing checks (see 5c), a questionnaire which uses a Making Every Contact Count approach is completed at voucher registration and collection. This supports evaluation of the scheme on families' health and emotional and financial wellbeing, as well as enable a consistent approach to identifying issues families face and signposting them to appropriate services for support.
8. The scheme supported 1,447 children from 724 families in Southwark between April and July 2024, and provided vouchers for over 4,500 children since 2018. Currently nine pregnant women are receiving Rose vouchers in Southwark. Approximately 88% of families supported identify as black, Asian, or an ethnic background other than white, and 26% of families have no recourse to public funds (Appendix 1). There are currently 150 families on the Southwark waiting list.

KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

9. An additional allocation of £60,000 to Alexandra Rose Charity in Q3 2024 would allow 150 extra families to receive vouchers, including at least 20 pregnant women. These families have been on the waiting list to receive vouchers for up to a year.
10. The scheme will be newly promoted to pregnant women in Q3 2024. Officers and Alexandra Rose will work with Midwifery, Health Visiting, Family Early Help and Children & Family Centres to encourage at least 20 pregnant women living in SE1, SE5, SE15 or SE17 onto the scheme.
11. Over the next few months, officers will review the impact of the voucher scheme on food-insecure families, utilising data collected through standard monitoring and through the new health and wellbeing checks. An internal evaluation is currently being undertaken.
12. Subject to evaluation of the scheme's impact to date in Southwark, funding the Rose Vouchers on a recurrent basis is currently under consideration. Understanding the long term funding forecast for the charity is key to making the business case for this, acknowledging that the annual contribution from Impact on Urban Health has decreased significantly since 2022 and will cease in September 2026. It is likely that several scenarios will need to be prepared to decide the appropriate and affordable level of investment each year, exploring the following variables:
 - a. how many families will be supported
 - b. which postcodes are served
 - c. value of vouchers per week
 - d. the average length of time families remain eligible for the scheme

Key risks

13. If this recommendation is not taken forward, 150 families currently on the waiting list will not receive vouchers for at least six months, until other families 'age out' of the programme or no longer meet eligibility criteria. The average family duration on the programme is approximately 23 months.
14. Compared to pregnant women and families receiving vouchers, those on the waiting list will have less money to purchase fruits and vegetables, which could lead to poorer nutrition and health outcomes. Furthermore, these individuals may not access the wider support available from the Children & Family Centres that distribute Rose Vouchers.

Policy framework implications

15. The Rose Voucher scheme directly contributes to Southwark Council's Fairer Future Commitment of tackling health inequalities.
16. The Rose Voucher scheme supports children and families most affected by the Cost of Living crisis, helping to meet the council's Delivery Plan 2022 – 2026 regarding: A thriving & inclusive economy - Support residents hit hardest by the cost of living crisis.
17. The Rose Voucher scheme contributes to Southwark's Food Security Action Plan and Sustainable Food Strategy 2023 – 2026 and supports the council's Right to Food pledge.

Community, equalities (including socio-economic) and health impacts

Community impact statement

18. The Rose Voucher scheme provides targeted support to children and families vulnerable to food insecurity and helps them to access nutritious food.
19. The 2019 Survey for Londoners highlighted the stark issue of food insecurity in Southwark. 23.5% of people over 16 years and 25.8% of children surveyed were food insecure, equating to approximately 75,000 of residents over 16 years and over 15,000 Southwark children (Appendix 2). Food insecurity for both adults and children is worse in Southwark than the London average (21% for adults and 17.5% for children).
20. The Rose Voucher scheme also provides value by partnering with community-led organisations and training volunteers, as well as providing a return to the local economy. Wider social impact is demonstrated through regular engagement with early years services, which includes 9 children's centres in Southwark.

Equalities (including socio-economic) impact statement

21. Residents provided with Rose Vouchers are low-income households who are most vulnerable to the effects of the cost of living.

Health impact statement

22. The provision of Rose Vouchers allows families and pregnant women to purchase more fresh fruit and vegetables.
23. Financial insecurity is associated with poorer health outcomes, including increased risk of obesity and mental health issues. The health and wellbeing checks offered to residents newly registering for the voucher scheme help vulnerable families to access health and financial support.

Climate change implications

24. There are no direct climate change impacts arising from this decision. Registered families are supported to eat a more climate friendly diet.

Resource implications

25. The grant will be funded from the recurrent vulnerable families budget (Public Health Grant).

	Cost excluding VAT
Additional funding to enable 150 families on the waiting list and an additional 20 pregnant women to receive Rose Vouchers	£60,000
Total cost	£60,000

26. The grant conditions for the Rose Voucher scheme are monitored by the Public Health Policy and Programme Officer for Sustainable Food.

Consultation

27. There is a steering group led by 1st Place Children's Centre which informs the Rose Voucher scheme development, involving Public Health, Children's services, Markets team, and Alexandra Rose. Rose Voucher distribution sites are also invited to share the impact of this programme on their communities and the challenges faced by their organisations and service users so that the project team can be receptive to these needs.

SUPPLEMENTARY ADVICE FROM OTHER OFFICERS

Assistant Chief Executive, Governance and Assurance (SB161024)

28. This report seeks approval of a grant funding allocation of £60,000 to the Alexandra Rose Charity to fund vouchers for families currently on the waiting list and pregnant women to access the Rose Voucher scheme for 12 months from November 2024.
29. The decision to approve the report recommendation is one which is expressly

reserved to the Cabinet Member under Part 3D of the council Constitution. The proposed grant award represents an extension of the existing Rose Voucher scheme and is consistent with the council's statutory duties and powers (notably the Public Sector Equality Duty imposed by the Equality Act 2010) and with current corporate policy, as noted within paragraphs 15 to 17.

30. The proposed grant award will be regulated by the funding conditions which cover the original allocation made in April 2023 and which contain a "break" clause that provides the council with the ability to end the funding arrangement in the event of any serious and/or persistent failures in service provision.

Strategic Director, Resources

31. The Strategic Director of Resources notes the recommendation set out in this report for approval for the allocation of £60,000 to Alexandra Rose Charity (ARC) to fund vouchers for families currently on the waiting list and pregnant women to access the Rose Voucher scheme for 12 months from November 2024.
32. The Strategic Director of Resources notes the financial implications section which confirms there is sufficient budget within the Public Health grant to fund this.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Background Papers	Held At	Contact
Southwark Food Security Action Plan https://www.southwark.gov.uk/assets/attach/10363/Fairer-Food-Southwark-Summary.pdf	Public Health Directorate, Children and Adult Services, 160 Tooley Street, London SE1 2QH	Charlotte Pollins 07526 189 904
Good Food Southwark: Sustainable Food Strategy 2023-2026 https://www.southwark.gov.uk/assets/attach/214970/Good-Food-Southwark-Sustainable-Food-Strategy-2023-26.pdf	Public Health Directorate, Children and Adult Services, 160 Tooley Street, London SE1 2QH	Charlotte Pollins 07526 189 904
Southwark Council Household Food Insecurity 2021, Southwark's JSNA https://www.southwark.gov.uk/assets/attach/12893/final-full-jsna-food-insecurity-v2.pdf	Public Health Directorate, Children and Adult Services, 160 Tooley Street, London SE1 2QH	Charlotte Pollins 07526 189 904

APPENDICES

No.	Title
Appendix 1	Southwark Rose Voucher project report February 2024

AUDIT TRAIL

Lead Officer	David Quirke-Thornton, Strategic Director of Children and Adult Services	
Report Author	Charlotte Pollins, Public Health Policy and Programme Officer	
Version	Final	
Dated	15 October 2024	
Key Decision?	Yes	
CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / CABINET MEMBER		
Officer Title	Comments Sought	Comments Included
Assistant Chief Executive, Governance and Assurance	Yes	Yes
Strategic Director, Resources	Yes	Yes
List other officers here		
Cabinet Member	Yes	Yes
Date final report sent to Constitutional Team	6 November 2024	