

**Derbyshire County Council
Voluntary and Community Sector
Infrastructure support proposal
2020-2024**

Voluntary and Community Sector Infrastructure Grants Proposal

1. Introduction

Creating empowered and self-sufficient local communities is a key priority for the Council and supporting the voluntary and community sector (VCS) to grow and thrive will be central to achieving this.

Whilst some voluntary organisations and charities are able to operate effectively without any assistance, the Council recognises that the sector includes a large number of voluntary and community groups that require varying levels of support in order to establish themselves, grow and thrive.

Local infrastructure organisations can provide the sector with a single front door to offer vital support to the VCS as and when a need arises. These organisations can also reach new, small and marginal organisations across the county, and generate invaluable feedback and intelligence about the sector. By knowing the local area and local needs, local infrastructure organisations can help the VCS to:

- attract funding
- operate good governance
- recruit and manage volunteers
- network and collaborate
- disseminate knowledge at a local level
- identify gaps and develop new activity
- influence the public sector

The Council recognises that this support is not free. To ensure a recognised and experienced provision is available, infrastructure organisations require ongoing investment to help support the communities we want to build together.

The Council is proposing a new way of working with infrastructure providers and could have a significant impact on how some providers across the county are funded by the Council and what providers are asked to deliver going forward.

This proposal set out in this document will outline the:

- Design principles for the new approach
- Outcomes framework and key performance indicators
- Delivery model and collaboration
- Funding approach
- Monitoring and review process

2. Principles

The Council wants to ensure that the VCS in Derbyshire is supported to grow and thrive. To achieve this it is proposed that the Council commits to the following principles in its approach to developing and delivering infrastructure support moving forward:

- **Valued** – Infrastructure providers play a vital role supporting the VCS to allow communities to support themselves and meet the specific needs of local people
- **Sustainable** – The Council understands that its funding approach needs to offer greater sustainability to provider organisations, which includes certainty regarding future funding commitments
- **Transparent** – It must be made clear which organisations the Council funds for infrastructure support and what outcomes have been achieved for the Council's investment
- **Local** – The VCS works best when it is local and at the heart of communities. Any provision of support needs to reflect this
- **Proportional** – What the Council requires of infrastructure organisations will be commensurate to the level of funding provided
- **Outcome driven** – Infrastructure investment will focus on outcomes rather than how support is delivered
- **Fair** – Infrastructure funding needs to be fairly distributed throughout the county to ensure that community organisations receive an equitable offer of support regardless of their location
- **Independent** – The Council recognises the independence of the voluntary and community sector.

These principles have been developed following analysis of engagement and discussions with officers at the Council, current infrastructure providers and partner organisations which identified common themes and current challenges.

3. Proposed Infrastructure Model

The proposed infrastructure approach has been developed through a series of options papers, research and learning from the work so far, engagement with infrastructure providers and sector developments with other funding partners. It is proposed the approach has the following key features:

1. The Council would adopt an Outcomes Framework with agreed Key Performance Indicators, which forms the basis of a whole Council approach
2. Sector support would be delivered by providers through collaboration based on district boundaries
3. A four year funding commitment through a grant award with six monthly monitoring, yearly priority setting and review after two years.

4. The Outcomes Framework

Across Derbyshire, infrastructure organisations have different organisational models to support the sector. This means the Council needs to be clear about the types of support it wants to see delivered to the sector moving forward.

The purpose of having an outcomes framework is to allow the Council to have an articulated and shared understanding of its expectations and requirements from VCS infrastructure providers. It is expected that this would also support the agreement of clear and measurable objectives.

The framework (attached at appendix B) outlines the three main outcomes for infrastructure support. These are:

Outcome 1 - The VCS is supported to grow and develop, enabling residents to contribute to social and cultural opportunities, which enhances their lives and the lives of others

Outcome 2 - There are increased pathways to volunteering which give opportunities to individuals to contribute to their community and enhances the sectors contribution across the county

Outcome 3 - VCS organisations can be supported to contribute to the strategic priorities of the Council.

Whilst outcomes will be clearly defined at the outset of each grant arrangement, organisations will need to explain how they intend to achieve each outcome in their local area. This will mean that support can be delivered flexibly, responding to the varying requirements of the sector in each geographical area – through collaboration where necessary.

It is proposed that against each outcome there will be a number of Key Performance Indicator's that infrastructure providers will be asked to report on as part of the routine monitoring process (for example – amount of funding for the sector). By working to achieve clearly defined outcomes and reporting on these outcomes, organisations will be able to demonstrate their impact much more clearly and effectively.

The Council will work with infrastructure organisations on an ongoing basis to ensure that the outcomes and KPIs requested are relevant to the sector and proportionate to the level of investment.

5. Delivery model and collaboration

The Council recognises that across the county there are different sector support organisations which operate across different geographies.

To ensure the new approach is as simple as possible, all currently funded organisations will be given the chance to participate in discussions, it is proposed that where there are multi-providers in an area, providers would be

invited to come together and collaborate on how they can deliver the outcomes framework through a non-competitive process where possible.

It is proposed that where there is more than one provider across a geography, collaborations will work most effectively across a familiar and recognised geography. It is therefore proposed that district boundaries are used as the basis to build any model, however some specialist support may have to be organised at a county level.

To participate in a collaboration or consortia arrangement the Council is clear that infrastructure providers would have to be working within the district in question and are a recognised infrastructure organisation. This means that they are accredited to a national body which would provide a level of quality assurance to monitoring officers.

The Council will work with VCS infrastructure organisations to determine how new arrangements can be established in each area, but there will be an expectation that providers will work together, build consensus and cooperation to deliver the outcomes framework jointly.

6. Grant Funding

It is proposed that the Council will continue to use grant funding to secure the provision of sector support across the county.

Grant funding would allow organisations the flexibility to provide support that is responsive to local need, whilst delivering the Council's priority outcomes. Providers will be able to deliver local activities that are tailored to the specific sector issues within their locality.

The Council believes given the overarching principles and the emergent nature of the work, grant funding would be the best tool to allow all parties to collaborate to establish an approach and allow the approach to adapt as the new model is implemented.

7. Funding Allocation

It is proposed that current grant providers across the Council (Adult Care and Policy & Research) combine their grant funding as part of the new shared approach. This would mean that providers will have one grant allocation, one point of contact at the Council and would be asked to provide one monitoring report. The purpose of this is to reduce duplication and make it as simple as possible for providers to report on their impact and achievements.

The combined total funding therefore for infrastructure support across the County will be £353,000 per year. This is a reduction of around 12% total funding, due to a reduction of 30% from the Policy and Research budget taken in 2014, topped up every year from reserves which has been recognised as

unsustainable (the top up has been included in the ‘current funding’ outlined below as this shows the real-time reduction).

It is proposed that infrastructure grant funding will be distributed throughout the county on a fair and consistent basis. This should ensure VCS organisations in each geographical area will receive an equitable offer of support, enabling the sector to grow and develop support around the needs of local communities. Under this proposal each district therefore will have an allocation of £41,500 per year to deliver the objectives outlined in the outcomes framework.

There is also a separate countywide allocation of funding for support to the BME and Rural VCS sector, both allocations have a value of £10,500 per year. For these allocations providers also have to work within the outcomes framework and deliver against the KPI’s commensurate to the amount of funding and specific challenges working across those communities of need.

The chart below shows the anticipated change in funding, outlined by district, if proposals are taken forward. Please note that the proposed funding allocations have been rounded. Please also note that both current and proposed funding have a £22,000 per year reduction which is tied to some current providers’ grants for befriending services. It is proposed that this support is be looked at separately with other specific befriending grants.

Area	Current Funding	Proposed Funding	Change
Amber Valley	£47,896	£41,500	−£6,396
Bolsover	£22,488	£41,500	£19,012
Chesterfield	£24,461	£41,500	£17,039
Derbyshire Dales	£50,511	£41,500	−£9,011
Erewash	£73,473	£41,500	−£31,973
High Peak	£73,808	£41,500	−£32,308
North East Derbyshire	£24,461	£41,500	£17,039
South Derbyshire	£52,262	£41,500	−£10,762
County Wide (BME and Rural)	£30,778	£21,000	−£9,778
Total	£400,138	£353,000	−£47,138

8. Monitoring

It is proposed that a corporate service level agreement for core infrastructure services be developed and used for infrastructure support. This would provide clarity of the Councils expectations of a consistent, high quality offer throughout the county. Where specialist infrastructure services are required such as activities supporting specific departmental priorities, additional elements could be included in the SLA.

Grant monitoring will take place on a six monthly basis. Infrastructure organisations will be asked to evidence their performance against the Outcomes Framework and Service Level Agreement. To ensure providers engaging with the Councils strategic aims, it is proposed that a yearly priority setting meeting will take place with providers to establish the priorities for the year ahead based on the needs of the Council and the sector at a given time.

9. Commitment and review

A key issue relating to the sustainability of the sector was the short term nature of the funding (year by year) which the organisations said did not allow them to plan long term.

It is proposed that the allocation of funding across the Council for infrastructure support be committed until March 2024. This will allow organisations to fully embed the outcomes framework and where necessary, develop new ways of working that better support the delivery of those outcomes.

A full review will be completed at years two and four to assess what has been achieved against the Council's grant funding arrangements across the county and make changes to the infrastructure support model where appropriate.