

Hampshire County Council Future Services Consultation

Proposals relating to the Adult Social Care grants programme for voluntary, community and social enterprise organisations

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What is the current situation?

Hampshire County Council has responsibilities^[1] to prevent or delay people developing care and support needs. We meet these responsibilities in several ways including:

- by providing a comprehensive online information and advice service (Connect to Support Hampshire^[2])
- by supporting the Hampshire Social Prescriber Network^[3]
- by working with partners to increase volunteering capacity in voluntary preventative services

We also offer an annual grants programme to voluntary, community and social enterprise organisations; this programme has a current value of £620,000 and includes the following three schemes:

- Councils for Voluntary Service Infrastructure Grant
- Citizens Advice Infrastructure Grant
- Local Solutions Grant

About the grants included in this consultation

The grants in the three schemes included in this consultation have been awarded for one to two years, with no guarantee that the organisations currently receiving the grants would receive them again in later grant rounds:

1. Council for Voluntary Services Infrastructure Grant

Total awarded in 2023/24: £495,990

This grant supports the work of eight organisations that form the Hampshire Council for Voluntary Services (CVS) Network. We have worked with this network to support strong, inclusive, and resilient communities. The CVS organisations use the funding to provide

[1] legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2014/23/contents/enacted

[2] connecttosupporthampshire.org.uk

[3] cfirst.org.uk/wellbeing/hspn/

support to the wider Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) sector – for example, by providing advice, building capacity, attracting funding, supporting financial resilience, developing partnerships, and providing a collective voice for this sector. The grant does not fund VCSE organisations to directly support people in Hampshire.

In 2022/23, the CVS organisations used this grant to part fund their support to 3,750 VCSE groups, to help secure £2.8 million in funding, and to recruit 1,750 volunteers for them. The grant was also used to part fund the delivery of 500 training sessions for the VCSE sector which were attended by 3,500 people.

2. Citizens Advice Infrastructure Grant

Total awarded in 2023/24: £63,000

This grant helps to fund an organisation which supports the 12 local Citizens Advice offices in Hampshire. It funds the delivery of training and development to staff and volunteers, and it helps to generate further fundraising to support service delivery. The organisation also provides a single point of contact between local Citizens Advice for the County Council and other partners. The grant does not fund local Citizens Advice offices to support people in Hampshire directly.

In 2022/23, the grant supported the delivery of 41 training sessions, which were attended by 490 people. This training helped the local Citizens Advice offices to support Hampshire residents with 178,516 issues.

3. Local Solutions Grant

Local solution grants are awarded throughout the year

Between 1 April to 30 November 2023, £77,200 has been awarded^[4]

This grant provides one-off funding to VCSE organisations to help them start local projects within Hampshire which enable people to live long happy lives and avoid social care involvement as far as possible.

Awards are made to projects which are likely to have resources to continue beyond the grant period. The projects funded vary in the support they offer, but many focus on reducing social isolation and loneliness, by increasing physical activity and by supporting carers.

In 2022/23 grants were awarded to 20 organisations. These projects supported adults who are older as well as adults who have physical disabilities, learning disabilities or mental health challenges.

[4] The total awarded in 2022/23 (the latest full year data available) was £53,000, which was supplemented by extra Directorate grant funding of £176,379.

What is being proposed?

We are proposing to withdraw all funding for the Adult Social Care grants programme for voluntary, community and social enterprise organisations, which comprises:

- Council for Voluntary Services Infrastructure Grant
- Citizens Advice Infrastructure Grant
- Local Solutions Grant

The total value of the proposed savings is £620,000 per year.

Why is this being proposed?

Until a sustainable long-term national funding solution can be found to address the intense financial pressures facing not only the County Council, but also wider local government, we have no choice but to consider changing or reducing services in some areas and propose options for savings.

Withdrawal of the three grant schemes would contribute £620,000 towards addressing the County Council's overall anticipated £132 million budget deficit from April 2025.

How would the proposal be implemented?

If approved, the Adult Social Care grant programme would be withdrawn by April 2025.

In the remaining period we would actively work with the current grant holders and other voluntary, community and social enterprise organisations which provide similar services, to help them adjust to operate without our grant income; by, for example:

- providing fundraising support such as:
 - identifying and sharing suitable external funding opportunities
 - supporting or collaborating on funding applications
 - applying for external funding which can be distributed to voluntary, community and social enterprise organisations
- working with voluntary, community and social enterprise organisations to increase the number of volunteers in Hampshire through research, marketing and the sharing of good practice
- continuing to collaborate with other public services (such as NHS, district and borough councils and the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner) in engaging with and supporting the sector

What are the potential impacts?

The services that could be affected by this proposal are not provided directly by the County Council, so any service decisions would be taken by the organisations currently in receipt of the grants.

Both the Council for Voluntary Services Infrastructure Grant and Citizens Advice Infrastructure Grant do not fund services directly working with individuals, but the VCSE organisations that they support through the grant are likely to include those that work with the same groups as the Local Solutions Grants, as well as other groups, such as children.

This proposal could therefore impact:

- voluntary, community and social enterprise organisations
- people receiving support from the organisations currently in receipt of the grants
- other public services which work with VCSE organisations in Hampshire

1. Voluntary, community and social enterprise organisations

Should these organisations wish to continue their services, then they would need to consider alternative options to meet the funding shortfall, such as:

- securing alternative funding from a different grant or organisation
- asking service users to pay towards the service(s) they receive
- adjusting the service so it is less costly to provide

Should the decision be made to withdraw the grants, we would continue to work actively with the current grant holders to explore ways that the services could continue to be sustained. In the case of the Council for Voluntary Services Infrastructure Grant and the Citizens Advice Infrastructure Grant, if alternative options are not workable, then the service(s) may be reduced or stopped in due course.

2. People receiving support from the organisations currently in receipt of the grants

Older people, adults with physical disabilities, adults with learning disabilities, and adults with poor mental health are the main recipients of current services supported by the Local Solutions Grants. Some may also be acting as unpaid carers for others.

The proposal could particularly impact rural areas where service users often live further away from each other and service venues, so more transport is needed, and areas of higher deprivation where service users are less able to make a contribution towards service costs.

The proposal could affect the ability of some residents from ethnic minority groups to access support which is appropriate to their culture.

The proposal could also mean that support to some individuals:

- could be withdrawn
- may include a request for a financial contribution
- may be delivered by a different provider
- may be available in a different location, format or frequency

A potential reduction or withdrawal of services over time could lead to an increased demand for Adult Social Care services and other services and organisations that work with older or vulnerable people. This is because the services currently funded support the County Council's prevention work and frequently address known health and wellbeing risk factors, such as loneliness.

If the proposal to withdraw the grants is agreed, potential negative impacts on service users could be limited by:

- signposting users to alternative provision where possible – for example, if any social groups stop, it may be possible to redirect users to an alternative social group; where volunteer drivers are required, alternative options could include using the volunteer drivers managed by the County Council that are used for Adult Social Care activity
- supporting people to successfully carry out tasks online and to use online options, such as Connect to Support Hampshire, to find out about alternative local services, including community support, social groups and group exercise opportunities
- providing training to other organisations to increase their understanding of how they could support people by:
 - signposting to the support provided by the voluntary sector
 - showing how and when it is appropriate to access Adults' Health and Care support and services
 - supporting mental health concerns
 - showing how technology can enable people to live safely at home for longer and how to access it
 - showing how to access equipment that supports health and wellbeing at home

3. Other public services which work with VCSE organisations in Hampshire (e.g. the NHS, district and borough councils and the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner)

We would continue to work with partner agencies to maximise and coordinate funding opportunities across the voluntary, community and social enterprise sector and to continue to engage and enable the sector to participate in the design of services.

What alternatives have been considered?

There are other approaches that we could take that are not proposed at this time. Examples of these are shown below:

- reducing the value of the budget for Adult Social Care grants
- removing one or two of the grants
- continuing the current level of funding for the Adult Social Care grant schemes

However, none of these options would contribute enough savings towards the £132 million budget deficit that the County Council is facing from April 2025. This would mean that further savings need to be made elsewhere in the Adults' Health and Care budget, which may compromise our ability to meet our legal responsibilities set out in the Care Act 2014.