

Committee Name and Date of Committee Meeting

Delegated Officer Decision – 03 October 2023

Report Title

Re-commissioning – Sensory Impairment Service

Is this a Key Decision and has it been included on the Forward Plan?

No, but it has been included on the Forward Plan

Strategic Director Approving Submission of the Report

Ian Spicer, Strategic Director of Adult Care, Housing and Public Health

Report Author(s)

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Ward(s) Affected

Borough-Wide

Report Summary

Grant Terms associated with the Council's Sensory Impairment Service reach their term on 31 March 2024.

The Service is currently provided by Sheffield Royal Society for the Blind and is known as Rotherham Sight and Sound.

The service makes a positive contribution to the Council's duty under the Care Act 2014 to promote wellbeing and prevent, reduce and delay the need for care. The people who benefit from the service are living in their own homes in the community.

The Service offers a variety of services to enable people with sensory impairment to achieve their optimum level of independence. It is a preventative service and supports the Council to divert demand away from higher cost care and support options.

It also supports the Council's Adult Care Directorate to meet its obligations under the Equality Act 2010 with an enhanced sensory offer above the statutory Care Act 2014 requirements. The service is unique in that they have a dual purpose in meeting the needs of both the deaf and blind community and are able to meet the needs of the deafblind.

The Service is well established in Rotherham.

This report outlines the proposal for the Council to continue to secure the services going forward under a further grant arrangement.

Recommendation

That, a grant be directly awarded to Sheffield Royal Society for the Blind for the provision of a Sensory Impairment Service in Rotherham. To be offered prior to the termination of the current arrangement on 31 March 2024 to secure the service for a period of 3 years from 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2027.

List of Appendices Included

Appendix 1 Record of Officer Executive Decision

Background Papers

None

Consideration by any other Council Committee, Scrutiny or Advisory Panel

No

Council Approval Required

No

Exempt from the Press and Public

No

Re-commission – Sensory Impairment Service

1.	Background
1.1	The Sensory Impairment Service was developed in 2016 and has been provided by Sheffield Royal Society for the Blind since its inception.
1.2	In October 2020, Cabinet agreed to a recommendation to continue to commission the service, via a competitive grant opportunity, offered to suitably qualified VCS organisations via the Rotherham Compact and the Council's website
1.3	The grant was advertised in October 2021 and Sheffield Royal Society for the Blind were successful in obtaining the grant to operate the Service from April 2022 for a two year period up to March 2024.
1.4	Sheffield Royal Society for the Blind were the only applicants for the Grant.
1.5	There is now a requirement to secure the Service post April 2024.
1.6	<p>Service Outcomes:</p> <p>Over the year 2022/23 more than 400 referrals were made to the service which now works with over 2000 people on a regular basis. 32 volunteers work in the service and the support they have offered to people to access benefits has added an estimated £500,000 to the Rotherham economy in this period.</p>
1.7	<p>Principal aims of the service:</p> <p>A single point of access to information, advice and specified services for people with sensory impairments which enable people to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Live as independently as possible • To maintain and, where possible, improve their quality of life and well-being • To enjoy the same quality of life that could reasonably be expected by any resident of the Borough • Seamless interface between services and avoid barriers • Access a range of service options which promote independent living, avoid duplication, delay, repetition and are provided at the right time
1.8	<p>Added Value</p> <p>The service has continued to develop and grow, with an established presence in the town centre and following recent fundraising efforts, Sheffield Royal Society for the Blind are currently refurbishing the building to include installation of a lift, updating the kitchen facilities and reconfiguring the available space to increase its usage and expand the service offer.</p> <p>Alongside the investment made to purchase and maintain the building the service is provided in, the Provider's annual accounts, June 2023, indicate that the service running costs are in excess of the Grant funding, at circa £170,000 per annum.</p>

2.	Key Issues
2.1	The Sensory Impairment Service grant agreement reaches its current term on 31 st March 2024 and there are currently no ongoing arrangements in place for the continuation of this service.
2.2	A replacement arrangement is required in order to continue the Sensory Impairment Service.
2.3	The total value of the Grant available from April 2024 (3 years) is £375,000.
2.4	<p>The current grant recipient is an experienced VCS provider, who has a substantial understanding of the needs and challenges facing people with sensory impairment. The service offer is multi-faceted and supports people who are sight impaired, hearing impaired or deaf-blind.</p> <p>The multi-faceted nature of the service offers people with sensory impairments streamlined access to the relevant support without unnecessary ‘hand-offs’ which ensures a positive experience for those accessing the service.</p>
3.	Options Considered and Recommendation
3.1	Option 1 – not recommended - Undertake a competitive grant process
	<p>The Rotherham Sight and Sound Service is multi-functional; possessing the skills and capabilities to provide support to people affected by sight loss, to people affected by hearing loss and to people with both sight and hearing loss.</p> <p>Whilst the needs of each cohort remain distinct the service is successful in achieving positive outcomes for each distinct cohort and has achieved a level of integration between the blind and the deaf community.</p> <p>This level of expertise in a composite provision is uncommon in the care and support market.</p>
3.2	<p>Due to the specialised nature of the service, there is a requirement to have a suitable and accessible building base. The Sheffield Royal Society for the Blind has made a substantial financial investment into the development of the service and remodelling and adapting the building from which the service is delivered. This level of financial contribution cannot be assumed from another provider via a competitive grant.</p> <p>The budget available to support the grant is relatively low and potentially unattractive to prospective bidders that can operate at the current level of quality, capacity and efficiency.</p>
3.3	For the reasons set out in 3.1 and 3.2 it is unlikely that Option 1 will achieve the desired outcome for people accessing the service.

3.4	Option 2 - recommended – Direct award a grant to Sheffield Royal Society for the Blind
	Option 2 will enable the incumbent provider to continue to develop the service at the current location and offer the benefits described at 1.8 and 2.4 above.
	It is therefore recommended Option 2 is progressed and prior to the termination of the current arrangement, Sheffield Royal Society for the Blind are awarded a new grant agreement for a period of 3 years - 1st April 2023 until 31 March 2027 - to deliver the Rotherham Sight and Sound sensory impairment service in Rotherham.
4.	Consultation on proposal
4.1	Extensive consultation with relevant stakeholders took place during the development of the service (including with people accessing the services). The current service is monitored in line with the requirements of the service specification which gives access to case studies and views of people accessing the services which are favourable.
5.	Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision
5.1	If this proposal is agreed, the new Grant agreement will be in place by November 2023. Any revisions required to the current service specification and terms will be agreed with the Provider prior to this.
6.	Financial and Procurement Advice and Implications
6.1	There are no procurement implications associated with the award of this grant arrangement.
6.2	The proposed payments outlined in this report are in line with the approved annual budget of £125,000 per annum for the Sensory Impairment Service
7.	Legal Advice and Implications (to be written by Legal Officer on behalf of Assistant Director Legal Services)
7.1	The Council has power to fund the VCS through various pieces of legislation including the Health Services and Public Health Act 1968, the Local Government Act 1972, the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976, and the Localism Act 2011. This Act provides the General Power of Competence which gives Councils the power to do anything an individual can do provided it is not prohibited by other legislation.
7.2	The grant made to the Provider will set out what is required for delivery and will be legally enforceable. The terms of such grant are currently being drafted, it is anticipated that it will reflect the current agreement and will need to be agreed by both parties, the term of this grant is for three years and should provide for a review clause at the end of each year if objectives are not being

	met or a suitable claw back provision to ensure the finance can be returned if the organisation does not fulfil the agreed objectives.
8.	Human Resources Advice and Implications
8.1	There are no implications for the Council.
9.	Implications for Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults
9.1	The services outlined in this report make a positive contribution in supporting vulnerable adults in Rotherham. As the report recommends continuing the services long term there are no negative implications envisaged. The Rotherham Sight and Sound service offers parents of children with sensory impairment support and therefore indirectly provides positive benefits to children and young people.
10.	Equalities and Human Rights Advice and Implications
10.1	The recommendation to sustain the services outlined in this report has positive implications for people with protected characteristics including people with disabilities, mental ill health and unpaid carers.
10.2	An Equality Analysis was undertaken when the service was commissioned in 2020 and actions completed.
11.	Implications for CO2 Emissions and Climate Change
11.1	This proposal has no additional impact on emissions.
12.	Implications for Partners
12.1	The services described in this report complement those provided by our health partners and assist in reducing demand on more formal services.
13.	Risks and Mitigation
13.1	Risk: The Provider will not accept the offer of the Grant.
13.2	Mitigation: In initial discussions, the Provider has indicated their willingness to continue to provide the service.
14.	Accountable Officers
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