

Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council

Action Taken Under Delegated Powers

Brexit preparation – funding additional capacity in advice services

1 Summary Statement

- 1.1 The council has been allocated additional one off Government funding to assist with the preparations for Brexit.
- 1.2 National and local evidence indicates that there is increased pressure on advice services as a result of concerns about Brexit - including the need for advice on immigration, benefits advice (linked to the Habitual Residence Test) employment rights, housing rights, debt, consumer issues and hate crime/ discrimination. Misinformation or lack of information is causing confusion and distress, and this is likely to be exacerbated when a resident has mental health problems, has language barriers, is not computer literate or is finding it difficult to prove residence.
- 1.3 It is proposed to enhance the capacity of voluntary sector advice provision in Sandwell by increasing the specialist immigration advice provision delivered by Brushstrokes and by increasing generalist advice in Citizens Advice Sandwell. The following posts will be funded for 12 months to provide support to people affected by Brexit:

Additional full time equivalent immigration advice worker at Brushstrokes (OISC level 2) with effect from January - April 2020, depending on when the additional capacity is required. Cost: £32,649

Two additional full time equivalent community navigator posts to provide generalist advice including OISC level 1 immigration advice, plus hands on casework support for vulnerable residents with effect from January 2020. Cost: £46,598

Total cost of these proposals: £79,247.

- 1.4 Monthly monitoring reports will be provided by Brushstrokes and by Citizens Advice Sandwell.

2 Recommendation

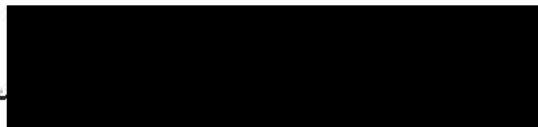
- 2.1 That an additional one-off grant of £32,649 is made to Brushstrokes in November 2019 to enable them to employ a

full time equivalent OISC level 2 immigration advice worker for 12 months

- 2.2** That an additional one-off grant of £46,598 is made to Citizens Advice Sandwell in November 2019 to enable them to employ two full time equivalent community navigators to deliver generalist advice (including OISC level 1 immigration advice) and casework support for 12 months

In accordance with the authority delegated to Chief Officers to act on matters within the authority delegated to them under Part 3 of the Council's Constitution, I intend to take the action(s) recommended above.

I ~~do~~/do not have an interest to declare in this matter



Alison Knight Executive Director Neighbourhoods

Date 12 - 11 - 19

If the Constitution requires the decision to be taken in consultation with another chief officer, the following signature box should also be included

I confirm that I have been consulted on the above proposals and have no objection to their proceeding.


Darren Carter Executive Director Resources

Date 12-11-19

Contact Officer

Heather Chinner heather_chinner 0121 569 3020

3. Background Details

3.1 These proposals form part of a number of measures being put in place to support residents through the uncertainties that arise from Brexit.

3.2 Monthly monitoring returns will be provided by Brushstrokes and Citizens Advice Sandwell and case studies will be collected to illustrate the impact of the additional advice capacity.

Source Documents

Report from Citizens Advice Sandwell (Community Engagement Brexit Report October 2019)

Brexit briefing Citizens Advice (National report October 2019)