

Consultation questions

Please note: all of the information that you provide will be used anonymously for the purpose of this consultation.

Section One; Criteria

1. The Adult Services grant budgets are always under a great deal of pressure and it has therefore been difficult to identify resources to create new grant funding opportunities and to encourage applications from new groups or organisations. We wish to develop a more strategic approach to grant funding and focus our programme toward Adult Services priorities, in particular the 7 outcomes of; Improved Health and Emotional Wellbeing, Improved Quality of Life, Making a Positive Contribution, Increased Choice and Control, Freedom from Discrimination and Harassment, Economic Well-being and Maintaining Personal Dignity and Respect. We will seek to agree annual priorities for funding within this framework. The priorities will be publicised with each new grants round.

Proposal 1: To ensure that Adult Services grants funding meets the strategic priorities of the department and supports a move toward the priority of well-being. We will agree annual priorities for the grants programme within this framework. Do you agree with this approach? Do you have any other suggestions about how we could agree annual priorities?

Yes, but any schemes must be drafted in a way that does not exclude consideration of applications that do not allow all tick boxes to be completed.

2. Initial consultation for the review of Adult Services grants highlighted the fact that little funding is made available for innovation, capacity building or pump priming. This is something that has been difficult to achieve whilst the majority of the grants programme has been used to fund services on a recurrent basis. We recognise the need to maintain the stability of currently funded activities but wish, over time, to promote the use of grants for in particular innovation and capacity building. As such we wish, along with strategic priorities, to include capacity building, innovation and pump priming in the criteria for assessing grants applications.

Proposal 2: To ensure that Adult Services grant funding encourages new and innovative activity and is able to assist in developing the capacity of the voluntary and community sectors we are proposing that this is included in the criteria for assessing grant applications. Please tell us what you think of this proposal?

Proposal should be rejected. Priority should be to maintain existing services that meet identified needs. Only then should new initiatives be considered.

3. In order to allow for the funding of new services or activities and to encourage innovation and the use of grant aid for capacity building or pump priming it will be necessary to set annual targets for this.

Proposal 3: To ensure funding is available for new and/or innovative services we would like to propose a minimum percentage of the annual grants budget is used for this purpose. This could be within a range from 5% to 25%. What are your views of this proposal? Do you feel this is the right approach to encourage innovation? What percentage do you feel would be an appropriate amount?

This is totally inappropriate. The first priority must be to maintain existing provision. Fixing an artificial percentage for spend on new initiatives will only have an adverse effect on services and financial requirement.

4. The current criteria for grants stipulates that organisations applying for a new grant should not hold reserves in excess of one years running costs. Those organisations already in receipt of grant funding should not hold reserves in excess of three months. This definition lacks clarity and can penalise organisations that designate reserves for specific purposes, including those for prudent business reasons. We would like to amend this criteria to reflect this and define reserves as excess if they are undesignated. However, we wish to retain the ability to exclude applications in circumstances where designated reserves are considered excessive.

Proposal 4: We wish to amend the criteria to state that reserves that could be considered as excess will be those that are undesignated. Please tell us what you think of this proposal?

This is another tick box initiative. "Clever" applicants will designate resources to avoid them being determined as excessive. The criteria should allow all resources, whether designated or not to be taken into consideration when grant applications are determined.

5. The use of Adult Services grant funding for pump-priming of new and/or innovative services or activities will inevitably be time limited for this purpose. We wish to propose that this is for a period of up to two years. Where funding is used in this way Adult Services officers will seek to work with organisations on the development of the service. As part of this developmental process the requirement for future funding should be assessed, with a review undertaken at the end of the funding period to identify appropriate future funding arrangements. Other funding arrangements could include continued grant funding, funding from other sources or contractual arrangements, including full tendering.

Proposal 5. To seek to provide pump-priming funding to new and/or innovative activities for a period of up to two years. We will also assess the requirement for continued funding during this period and review this at the end of the funding arrangement. Please tell us what you think of this proposal?

Pump priming should be encouraged, but again this should not be to the detriment of existing essential grant support. A preliminary evaluation should also be carried out to ascertain long term viability of any schemes/projects.

6. For most grants funding is made available as a contribution to the overall cost of an activity, not the full cost. However, there may be circumstances where for the purposes of pump-priming an activity the full cost is required in the first instance. Currently the criteria for ASD grant funding does not allow this. In order to assist in the development of new services we would like the ability to fund new and/or innovative activities at the full cost for a limited period, as outlined above, for up to two years. All other funding arrangements would remain the same.

Proposal 6: We wish to have the ability to fund new and/or innovative services at full cost in order to pump-prime , where this is required and judged appropriate, for a period of up to two years. We would also like to amend the criteria for Adult Services grant accordingly. Please tell us what you think of this proposal.

Subject to maintenance of essential existing support there should be no limit on the level of pump priming finance, but each project should be assessed on whether it can sustain itself after the pump priming funding comes to an end.

7. As one of a range of funding organisations we also wish to encourage and stimulate diversity in the funding streams that organisations access. Given that the grant funding available through Hampshire County Council Adult Services is limited we will aim to put in place a number of mechanisms to ensure that this funding is used in the best possible way. Named Adult Services officers will assist in the process through annual and final year reviews, in particular around issues such as sustainability and service development.

As part of the monitoring process we wish to examine what actions organisations are taking to seek other and/or alternative funding for their currently funded activities.

Also, where services are receiving three year funding or pump-priming funding there should be an expectation that through the life of the agreement work is undertaken to secure other stable funding arrangements. As such, part of the final year review for activities funded in this way could include what actions have been taken to do this and what options are available for the future, including alternative funding, earned income, ongoing grant funding or formal contractual arrangements. The process for undertaking this work is included in the paperwork in appendix 1 – 4.

Proposal 7: It is proposed that as part of the formal monitoring and evaluation of funded activities that account is taken of the work that organisations have

done to secure other and/or alternative funding for the activity currently supported by Adult Services. Where funding has been provided for a three year or pump-priming agreement the final year review will evaluate what future funding arrangements are most appropriate. Please tell us what you think of these proposals?

This proposal is supported but it should be made clear that the alternative funding should not all be from public funds and some, at least, should be obtained via the other funding activities and the private sector.

8. The Compact Good Practice Funding Code includes the possibility of multi-year funding agreements, up to three years, to improve the sustainability of the voluntary and community sector and support longer term planning. The adoption of three year funding agreements is also supported by national best practice guidance.

Some multi-year funding agreements have been made over recent years. However, organisations funded in this way by Adult Services Grants are still required to reapply each year. This is resource intensive for both voluntary and community organisations and the County Council and almost always results in the same level of funding being awarded. This is an inefficient use of all organisations and individuals time and could be seen to discredit the grants process. Exceptions to this would be small revenue grants of under £2,000 or where three year funding is not desirable or required.

Proposal 8: To seek to issue 3 year funding agreements where these are appropriate, with annual renewal subject to demonstration of meeting agreed outcome or performance measures. Please tell us what you think of this proposal?

Support. This should give organisations security and the ability to adopt long term strategies.

Section Two; Process

9. In previous years, existing grant funded organisations have been required to reapply for grant funding in the same ways as new applicants. However, in practice this has not created a level playing field with new applicants, or achieved a more strategic use of grant funding.

An alternative process would be a more in-depth review during the final year of three year funding agreements, which would be seen as part of the ongoing management of grant funding. If appropriate this would have input from officers with commissioning responsibility for the relevant service area, to ensure that grant funding is more closely aligned with the Council's strategic objectives. The results of these final year reviews would form the basis for subsequent recommendations to continue or change existing grant funding arrangements. In some cases, where it is evident that grant funding is no longer achieving value for money or meeting priorities, there may be a recommendation to stop providing funding in order that new priorities can be met.

Proposal 9: Where 3 year grant agreements are awarded, we will replace the need to reapply annually for renewed grant funding with annual reviews. We will also conduct an in-depth final year review that will be used to inform any potential renewal or change in any future funding agreement. Paperwork for this process is contained in appendix 1-4. Please tell us your views on this proposal.

Support as this will reduce red tape. However, organisations should submit their annual accounts each year within a specified time frame.

10. At present the monitoring and reviewing arrangements for Adult Services grants require groups and organisations to submit a report and annual accounts, with some local monitoring which can be variable in its execution. This current arrangement does not provide consistent information or information proportionate to the length and level of funding given.

Any monitoring and review process needs to be proportionate. New paperwork has been developed to support a more efficient and consistent monitoring and review approach, building on current practice and taking into account the proposed final year review process. This will include monitoring and review of mutually agreed objectives and subsequent outputs and outcomes and in particular how the activity has contributed to achieving outcomes for individuals and Adult Services priorities, for example Self Directed Support or Personalisation. See appendices 1-4 for draft forms for Preliminary Checks, Annual Review £2-5k, Annual Review over £5k, and Final Year Review (all multi-year agreements). For grants awards of under £2k, the current arrangements will continue with the addition of informal visits from Council officers.

Proposal 10: To adopt the new draft paperwork at Appendices 1-4 to support the efficient and consistent monitoring and review of grant funding. Do you have any comments on the draft paperwork?

Support.

11. Applications for grant funding are currently submitted by January for processing for the March Executive Member for Adult Social Care decision day. Applicants are then informed of the outcome toward the end of March for funding decisions for the following financial year. This timing places a unnecessary burden on organisations in the New Year and imposes very tight timescales on council officers. It also has a significant impact on organisations ability to plan should an application be unsuccessful.

We wish to consider the possibility of addressing this by bringing the grants application deadline forward.

Proposal 11: We will consider the possibility of moving the grants application deadline forward to before Christmas. This would mean that the deadline moves to a point within the period September to November. Please tell us your views on this change and when you think would be the best deadline for application and decisions?

Deadline should be as close to the beginning of the next financial year as practicable.

12. Applications are nearly always received only in hard copy. This has led to an increase in the level of administration and can lead to delays. We would like to modernise the submission of applications and would like to make electronic application the norm. However, we also recognise that there will always be a proportion of applications that cannot be submitted electronically.

Proposal 12: To encourage the submission of applications electronically and make this method of application the norm by 2009/10. Please let us know your views on this proposal?

Support.