



**RECORD OF DECISION TAKEN UNDER DELEGATED
AUTHORITY
(Not a Key Decision)**

Date of Decision:

**Executive Decision or 'Other Decision' to be
published?:** Yes

TITLE: Grant support for Birchwood Centre "Self Isolation doesn't have to mean Social Isolation" project

DECISION: That a grant of £10,000 be given to Birchwood to support the project

AUTHORITY:

Constitution 4.2: Proper Officer Provisions and Scheme of Delegation to Chief Officers
Issue Date 04.11.19

4.21 To take any action on behalf of the Council, following consultation with the Leader and relevant Portfolio Holder or the Chairman of the appropriate committee, in cases of urgency requiring immediate decisions, and where it would be unreasonable or impractical to convene a meeting.

REASONS FOR DECISION

The reasons for the decision are as set out below.

1.0 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Birchwood have set up a project to help support those affected by the impact of COVID-19.
- 1.2 Birchwood have set up to deliver food hampers, home cooked frozen meals, essential items and provide emotional support, advice and information to those who are most vulnerable.
- 1.3 Birchwood have secured the sole use of Tanhouse Community Centre for the next 3 months, for food storage, making up the hampers, food distribution and cooking meals, and are paying a weekly rental of £100 for the use of the space.
- 1.4 A proposal was received by the Council in early April requesting funding support of £21,000 to cover food purchase, transport costs, rental costs and other in-kind costs. This is attached as Appendix 1

2.0 CURRENT POSITION

- 2.1 All the food banks are being supported by the council on a weekly basis.
- 2.2 A process is in place to identify the correct supply and demand for each food bank. This is to be accommodated as best as possible by the Council and delivered to the foodbanks each week. This has included supplies to Birchwood.
- 2.3 Surplus perishables from both the hub and Ormskirk food bank are being delivered to Birchwood in addition to the weekly delivery.
- 2.4 This grant funding is to support the Birchwood Centre in the purchase of food, associated fuel costs for deliveries and to cover the 12 week rental costs for the Tanhouse Community Centre. This grant will totally cover the costs requested in relation to the food purchase (£7,500) and rental costs (£1,200) and partially cover some of the transport costs incurred

3.0 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED (IF ANY)

- 3.1 That support would be given by the way of a continued food supply as per the current arrangements with the 3 other food banks.
- 3.2 As the project is on a wider scale than just a food bank and as it requires additional premises to cook and distribute food from, and provides such a wide variety of services to the most vulnerable, it is deemed that additional support should be given to this organisation.

4.0 FINANCIAL AND RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 There is a cost of £10,000 for this project, this will be matched by the monies expended by the Birchwood Centre and in kind contributions.
- 4.2 There is a cost of approximately £2,000 per week for the supplies to the food banks. There will be a reduction to overall costs once the Birchwood grant is in place as we will no longer be directly supplying food or products to the project (apart from any fresh food donations made to the Council).
- 4.3 This will be funded by the budget which has been allocated to support work required in relation to Covid19.

5.0 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The project was set up to be a 12 week project to support the timescales given at the time in relation to the self-isolation guidance for the shielded and vulnerable group.
- 5.2 It is difficult to fully appreciate the timescale of this project and the support for the food banks at this time.

6.0 EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

6.1 There is a direct impact on members of the public, employees, elected members and / or stakeholders, therefore an Equality Impact Assessment is required. A formal equality impact assessment is attached as an Appendix to this Decision Notice, the results of which have been taken into account when making this decision.

7.0 BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS (For executive decisions and 'Other Decisions that require publishing)

7.1 The information about the project is attached as Appendix 1.

8.0 HEALTH AND WELLBEING IMPLICATIONS

8.1 The proposal will:-

- Enable vulnerable and socially isolated residents to get access to food and meals
- Enable support and signposting for other services such as mental health, befriending, financial support

9.0 FOR FURTHER INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT:

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Directorate & Service:

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DATE OF DECISION:

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Decision Taker: Chris Twomey (Corporate Director)

Signature: by email

In Consultation with: (Leader/Relevant Portfolio Holder Cllr K Wright)

Signature: by email

NOTES

(Executive Decisions)

1. **ANY CONFLICT OF INTEREST DECLARED BY THE PORTFOLIO HOLDER (Only required where decisions taken in consultation with):**

(Executive Decisions)

2. IF CONFLICT OF INTEREST EXISTS, DETAILS OF DISPENSATION GRANTED BY THE HEAD OF THE PAID SERVICE:

(‘Other Decisions’)

3. THE NAMES OF ANY COUNCILLOR WHO HAS DECLARED A CONFLICT OF INTEREST IN RELATION TO THE DECISION

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Birchwood Self Isolation doesn't have to mean Social Isolation" project

APPENDIX 1 –

Self Isolation doesn't have to mean Social Isolation Project

A proposal to support West Lancashire Borough Council during this challenging period by providing critical food hampers, home cooked frozen meals, welfare checks and emotional support to those who are vulnerable and impacted by CV19 across West Lancashire.

Birchwood feels it is uniquely placed to help WLBC deliver their ambition to support those groups who are most vulnerable based on Birchwood's already proven 'Self Isolation doesn't have to mean Social Isolation Project'. This project has been in operation since the close of Birchwood's Social Inclusion Community Cafes on the 18th March 2020.

Birchwood will deliver food hampers, home cooked frozen meals, essential items and provide emotional support, advice and information to those who are most vulnerable and have been impacted by CV19.

All referrals into the project will be assessed by experienced staff to determine need and vulnerability. Referrals pathways include WLBC, Police, GPs, Practice nurses, VCFS, self-referrals, and community referrals. Birchwood has also been able to identify known vulnerable individuals and families who require support

Once accepted as a referral individuals are telephone triaged to make sure they get the right support at the right time, this includes;

- Critical food hamper and home cooked frozen meals delivered to their home
- Essential items (cleaning materials, toilet rolls etc) delivered to their home
- Picking up medication from the pharmacy and delivered to their home
- Emotional support, provided mainly through telephone contact sessions, but does include text support and other platforms.
- Advice, information, guidance and reassurance in relation to CV19
- Liaising with other agencies e.g. Children's Social Care, GPs, Police etc as appropriate

All referrals accepted onto the project receive a minimum of three welfare calls, before delivering food hamper, essential items, after the delivery to check the delivery arrived and was appropriate, followed by a welfare check three days later. However, as stated the majority of referrals are benefitting from the additional emotional support and contact provided by the project on a caseload basis assigned to a caseworker.

The demand for the project is rapidly increasing we have delivered over 100 hampers this week, including home cooked frozen meals. The numbers of referrals is increasing daily.

With support from WLBC we have been able to secure Tanhouse Community Centre for the next 3 months, for food storage, making up the hampers, food distribution and cooking meals.

We have a full staff team and volunteers who have worked every day on the project including both weekends, taking referrals, contacting individuals and also delivered hampers and cooked meals over the weekend

Background

Birchwood has worked within West Lancashire for over 35 years and has a proven track record of delivering services to those who are most vulnerable. We are a proactive charity rooted in the local community, identifying and responding to gaps in services. We have extensive experience in successfully engaging with clients who are in crisis, are often on the margins and struggle to engage with statutory agencies

This include families and individuals who are:

- Experiencing or at risk of becoming homeless
- In crisis as a result of mental health, family breakdown
- Vulnerable as a result of a disability, mental illness.
- Experiencing multiple and complex needs
- Difficult to engage in mainstream services

Our unique position in West-Lancashire enables to be effective because:

- We have established links to wider stakeholders, referral agencies, third sector and health partners.
- We have wide range of holistic services that individuals and families can access.
- We have strong infrastructure, staffing, resources and a volunteer base in place to respond to people's needs.

As an organisation we have significant experience of responding to the wider needs of people we work with, by developing our services to ensure we work in a holistic way to ensure the best possible outcomes are achieved. We work with people who are often at their lowest point in life and work with them to find practical solutions, to the challenges they face.

Birchwood services include:

- Young peoples supported accommodation service
- Dispersed service
- Syrian Refugee Resettlement Project
- Mental Health Crisis Facility facilitating early discharge or prevention of a hospital admission
- Ennerdale Mental Health Support Centre
- Mediation service (resolving family conflict & prevention of homelessness)
- Counselling service, including MindsMatter counselling referrals
- Real Junk food café community food project

Birchwood is keen to work in partnership and help WLBC at this critical time.