

FALKIRK COUNCIL

Subject: BIG LOTTERY FUNDING – SUPPORTING WELFARE REFORM
Meeting: EXECUTIVE
Date: 17 SEPTEMBER 2013
Author: DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE & NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 “Support and Connect” is part of the BIG Lottery’s “Investing in Communities” portfolio. It is a £10 million fund that aims to improve the support available locally for people experiencing hardship and material need, particularly in relation to the impact of Welfare Reform measures. It encourages projects that enhance welfare and financial advice services through organisations working together more effectively so that services can provide more effective support and people in hardship have better access to services that can help them.

2. PROJECT PROPOSAL

- 2.1 Falkirk Council and Falkirk Citizens Advice Bureau worked together to develop a bid to fund a partnership between the three local Citizen Advice Bureaux and Falkirk Council to provide a quick response approach to people in need of advice and assistance who have been directly impacted by welfare reform. The project will place particular emphasis on rural areas and areas affected by deprivation. Falkirk CAB is the project lead.
- 2.2 The aim of the project is to provide a front line face-to-face service across Falkirk. Staff will:
- Carry out a holistic benefit assessment, identify potential benefit entitlement to maximise income and assist with the completion of benefit application forms;
 - Identify options and solutions to meet the person’s needs and work closely with other agencies to ensure that further assistance is accessed, where appropriate; and
 - Offer advice on appeal rights, identify suitable cases for progression to appeal and prepare appeal paperwork including seeking supporting medical evidence.
- 2.3 Importantly, this project will provide an early screening service for those refused benefits to determine whether a decision to progress an appeal is the best solution and will provide earlier access to other, support services than can currently be provided.
- 2.4 A steering group has been established to oversee the project implementation with representatives from the three local CABs, Social Work Community Advice (Welfare Benefits) Team and Corporate Policy. The first meeting of the steering group was on 31 July 2013.

3. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 We were advised in August that the project was approved. It will therefore run from September/October 2013 – March 2015. The total project has a value of £349,489.75. We asked BIG for a contribution of £334,489.75 (the maximum funding per application was £335,000). The steering group is requesting that the shortfall in funding (£15,000) is funded via the Fairer Falkirk Fund.
- 3.2 The project will have a Senior Project Officer, 4 Welfare Benefit Officers and one Admin Officer, which will be recruited to as soon as possible. These posts will be employed by Falkirk CAB.
- 3.3 The majority of appointments for service will be organised locally, within existing Council and CABx premises but the project is currently looking at low cost, basic, accommodation such as a meeting room to hold six people. The overall budget for the project is tight and the steering group is also asking each of the partners to identify any funding in kind that may be available for IT/Telephone services, equipment, and furniture and printing/stationary.

4. RECOMMENDATION

The Executive are asked to:

- 4.1 **Agree that the £15,000 project shortfall is met from the Fairer Falkirk Fund.**

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DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE & NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES

Date: 17 September 2013

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Background Papers

Nil