

Overview of Responses and Recommendations

Budget Proposals 16/17: Friends in Need		Rachel Johnson - Senior Programme Officer	19 January 2016 Version 2 (Exec)
Proposal:	To cease the funding for this service.		
Total budget 15/16:	£25,000	Recommended officer saving 16/17:	£0
Initial proposed saving 16/17:	£25,000 (100%)	Final recommendation to Executive 16/17:	To continue to fund this service at the current level.
Nos of responses:	Seven in total, three from organisations and four from individuals.		
Key issues raised:	<p>Concern that Friends in Need offers a unique service for people experiencing depression and helps to reach individuals that are hard to reach. Stopping the service could be detrimental for people already using this service especially when there is a lack of community support for people experiencing mental ill health in West Berkshire.</p> <p>Some respondents used their personal experiences to demonstrate the positive impact that the Friends in Need project has on their recovery and the added value of meeting face-to-face with other people and participating in the group activities, something which is not provided by other organisations such as Talking Therapies.</p> <p>Although there has been an increasing number of referrals into Friends in Need from Talking therapies and more awareness of Friends in Need generally, though promotion of the service at different events, referrals from GPs and Talking Therapies have been slower than originally anticipated.</p>		
Equality issues:	One respondents view was that cutting funding for this service could also be seen to discriminate against those who have mental health as a disability.		
Suggestions for reducing the impact on service users:	Suggestion	Council response	
	Continue to fund Friends in Need	The number of referrals into Friends in Need has been lower than anticipated. There has been some difficulty in recruiting peer support volunteers and developing a peer support network. Although the numbers of people accessing Friends in Need is small, the people that have used the service appear to be fully supported and are making progress in their recovery. There has been a suggestion that the project is now gaining momentum, with more people and professionals being made aware of this service. We could continue to fund Friends in Need, but consider whether the existing model of delivery is working or whether some tweaking needs to be done.	

NB: This overview and recommendation paper should be read in conjunction with the Summary of Responses and Verbatim Responses received in relation to this proposal, circulated electronically to all members alongside the agenda pack and published online on our [Consultation Portal](#).

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	Talk to existing mental health support groups and see what services they offer and the ways they could expand to meet the needs of Friends in Need clients.	The Project Coordinator attends a variety of awareness raising events and has established good links with a wide range of organisations. The other local support groups do not currently offer access to an online support network, which Friends in Need does.	
	Online support is offered by other organisations such as Talking Therapies. This could meet the needs of those clients who have previously been referred to Friends in Need.	Online support is useful but will have a limited impact on reducing social isolation and developing peer support networks. Groups give social support which can help reduce depression.	
Alternative options for applying the saving in this area:	Suggestion	Council response	
	None		
Suggestions for how others may help contribute:	Suggestion	Council response	
	There is support in Mind, Eight Bells for Mental Health and Pulling Together, all operating locally, so someone should be talking to all these organisations.	A council representative attends regularly the monthly mental health forum, which is attended by these groups. As it currently stands, Friends in Need offers meets the needs of a different group of service users, ones with lower level mental health conditions such as depression, stress and anxiety who may or may not be accessing primary or secondary mental health care and are able to access peer support through the online Friends in Need network.	
Officer conclusion as a result of the responses:	The exercise has not highlighted any impacts that are not already anticipated.		
Officer recommendation as a result of responses:	This project is being funded jointly with Newbury and District Clinical Commissioning Group and North and West Reading Clinical Commissioning Group. Any decisions made to council funding need to be made in consideration of other partners involved in this pilot. We do not intend to make any savings in this area at this point.		

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