



Report of the Head of Poverty and Prevention

Poverty Policy Development and Delivery Committee – 27 September 2017

Communities First Transition

Background

In his statement on the 14th February 2017, the Cabinet Secretary for Communities and Children announced that *'Communities First should be phased out'*.

The Cabinet Secretary also announced –

- Establishment of a £6m Legacy Fund Grant, distributed across current Communities First local authorities from April 2018.
- An additional £4m of capital funding made available this year and in future years via the Community Facilities Programme for Local Authorities and the third sector to apply. Taking resources available to £6m in 2017/18 and 2018/19, £4.5m in 2019/20 and £4.4m in 2020/21.
- Funding of nearly £12m across Wales from April 2018 for employability support, supporting the Communities for Work programme. Local Authorities will have the opportunity to introduce this new infrastructure before April 2018. This funding will ensure infrastructure for the ongoing delivery of Communities for Work as well as continued support for management, premises costs and additional mentoring and engagement posts. This is currently known as the Employability Grant.

Note: At the time of writing, the allocation of Employability Grant funding for Swansea is anticipated to be £1,008,460 for the financial year 2018/19 subject to final approval from Welsh Government.

Communities First Funding 2017/18

It has been confirmed that *'Communities First funding will continue at 70% of 2016/17 levels until March 2018.'*

The total Communities First Funding for Swansea in 2016/17 was £2,844,812.00. (Reduced to £2,702,812 following £142k being vired to Supporting People.) £1,991,368.40 has been awarded and profiled for this new financial year. (A reduction of £853,443.60.)

Early Adoption of Employability Grant

Swansea has been confirmed as one of four local authorities across Wales to become an 'early adopter' of the Employability Grant.

As an Early Adopter, we are working with Welsh Government to phase-out the Communities First Programme by December 31st 2017 and implement a structure for the delivery of the Employability Grant from January 1st 2018. Early adoption during 2017/18 will be funded within the Communities First allocation for 107/18 and is not early access to this new funding stream prior to April 2018. The Employability Grant will initially be available until 2020 to support employability alongside the Communities for Work Programme.

Swansea Communities Transition Plan

Welsh Government approved the Swansea Communities Transition Plan 2017/18 on June 21st 2017. The plan submitted sought to meet the requirements set out by Welsh Government, as well as setting out the key local principles for the Transition Year based on the information that was available at the time. It is recognised that the Transition Year is a period of ongoing change and development, and we are continuing to working closely with Welsh Government throughout this process.

In summary, the key principles and considerations of the plan are as follows –

Timescales

- The Communities First Programme will be phased out in Swansea in-line with 'Early Adoption'.
- Early adoption of the Employability Grant structure and ways of working will be implemented by 1st January 2018. (within allocated Communities First funding 2017/18)

Staffing

- Ensuring that the right people with the right skills are in the right jobs.
- Recognising that there will be significantly less posts available through the Employability Grant than the Communities First Programme has provided.
- Minimising as far as possible, the risk of redundancy to existing Communities First staff by holding vacant posts and supporting eligible staff to access redeployment opportunities.
- To secure key posts identified as essential for managing and implementing the transition process. (Project delivery staff – contracts extended to December 31st 2017, Management, Support and Finance staff – contracts extended to March 31st 2018.)
- Provide remaining staff fair opportunity to access available posts in the Employability Grant delivery model.

Third Party Organisations (Faith in Families and Bonymaen Kids Play Initiative)

- Support Third Party Organisations by committing 100% of non-reduced funding for the full financial year 2017/18.
- Provide an explicit contract for the Transition Year which specifies the condition that Third Parties develop and implement an exit strategy for their Communities First funded activity.

Premises

- To continue to occupy office space in public access community buildings in the existing 'Delivery Areas' (The Phoenix Centre Townhill, The Action Resource Centre Blaenymaes and Caernarvon Way, Bonymaen)
- To continue to co-ordinate hub delivery at Dyfatty Community Centre and Seion Newydd Morriston.
- To withdraw from the former Daniel James site office space (No public access)

Lift Programme

The Lift Programme reflects the commitment in the Welsh Government's Tackling Poverty Action Plan to provide 5,000 training and employment opportunities across Wales to people from workless households by the end of 2017.

In Swansea, the Lift pilot has been running in the North West Cluster (Penderry) and to date has supported 110 people into employment (16hrs or more pw).

The LIFT Programme is due to complete and close from December 2017 to March 2018.

Welsh Government have confirmed that as an Early Adopter, the LIFT Programme in Swansea should be part of the wider transition process so that staff have fair and equal opportunity to potentially access available roles made available through the Employability Grant.

Current Situation

As Lead Delivery Body for the Communities First Programme in Swansea, we will receive the allocated funding via an application process that is due to commence over the coming months. This grant will fund agreed community based posts, management structure and appropriate budget lines for the delivery of the Employability Grant. Discussions with Welsh Government are ongoing in support of both the early adoption process and application and approval process for the forthcoming funding.

Employability Grant

Welsh Government are in the early process of developing guidance and performance monitoring for the delivery of the Employability Grant, therefore many of the details are unknown at this point.

We do know that the grant will allow us to:-

- Support individuals that are not eligible for Communities for Work. This means that we can support people who have been unemployed or economically inactive for a year or less through the Employability Grant.
- Support individuals that are poor employed.
- Continue to focus in geographic areas of deprivation whilst having a flexible approach to boundaries. (The terminology of Communities First Clusters will be phased out across Wales, these areas will be known as Delivery Areas)

The Communities First programme had been designed to deliver agreed 'projects' at a local level, the forthcoming Employability Grant will not deliver such projects. The Employability Grant will provide intensive one-to-one mentoring for participants.