

Bolsover District Council

Executive

11 August 2014

Funding Support – Derbyshire Law Centre

Report of Cllr E Watts

This report is public.

Purpose of the Report

- To highlight past performance and update on activity to date provided by Derbyshire Law Centre (formerly Chesterfield Law Centre) for 2013/14.
- To consider support for future funding for 2014/15 and 2015/16

1 Report Details

1.1 Derbyshire Law Centre (DLC) are a specialist advice agency, employing a team of solicitors and advice workers providing free legal advice, assistance and representation services to individuals and families on low incomes.

1.2 Whilst the organisation provides services across the County, from a Bolsover District perspective up to the end of the financial year 2013/14 DLC have:

- advised 654 residents and
- assisted & represented 153 clients
- Received enquiries - top three areas:
 - 1st – 307 from Bolsover
 - 2nd – 147 from Clowne
 - 3rd – 52 from Shirebrook
- Dealt with Cases - top three areas:
 - 1st – 71 from Bolsover
 - 2nd – 18 from Shirebrook
 - 3rd – 16 from Creswell and Whitwell
- Top three issues why Bolsover residents use Law Centre's services:
 1. Preventing homelessness
 - Housing and homelessness advice, casework and representation service
 - County Court Duty Scheme

2. Housing-related debt

- Rent and mortgage arrears (prevention of homelessness)
- Mortgage Rescue work

3. Employment

- Advice on right and staying in work
- Advice on dismissals & redundancies - securing wages owed & compensation

- Example of how Advice and Representation service saves Council's resources:

Each time the Law Centre delay or prevent homelessness (rented and mortgaged properties) a saving is made for BDC of £5000.

Early intervention with employment advice (where there is no longer any legal aid) DLC keep people employed and the local economy going.

- Appendices attached providing an evidence based report on a specialist preventative legal advice example relating to Mental Health Conditions which includes Case Studies.

1.3 In the current economic climate the need for such services is at a maximum alongside others such as NEDCAB and Derbyshire Unemployed Workers who DLC work collaboratively with. A key contributor being the impact of the Coalition's Welfare Reforms and the need to provide specialist advice and support to local people suffering hardship.

1.4 In addition, to ensure our Housing and Homeless Advice Service is effective and efficient in delivering services, we make best use of the limited Homeless Prevention Grant from Communities and Local Government (CLG), by working in partnership with Chesterfield Borough and North East Derbyshire District Councils to jointly commission and support other agencies. This enables us to shape services to meet the specific needs of people within our Districts.

As part of this arrangement, we each provided £12,000 to the Chesterfield Law Centre (now Derbyshire Law Centre) in 2014/15. This was to enable them to provide support and advice to people being threatened with homelessness, specifically through the Mortgage Rescue Scheme.

The Mortgage Rescue Scheme has now ended, however, the support provided by Derbyshire Law Centre has proved invaluable and following preliminary discussions, each Council is in a position to commit funding during 2015/16 to enable them to continue providing a wider range of support for homeless people.

1.5 The Council has also received a request from DLC to offer a seat on their Management Committee alongside other Local Authority funders.

2 Conclusions and Reasons for Recommendation

2.1 DLC are a much needed source of advice and support and this is demonstrated both in the statistics provided and more importantly the Case Studies evidencing assistance to individuals residing within Bolsover District.

- 2.2 The Council have provided financial assistance previously to the service and are therefore being asked to consider resources initially for this year 2014/15 of £18,000 from the Local Authority's Reserves budget. Member's are also asked to agree in principle consideration of support for the following year for the equivalent amount of £18,000, where this will be considered as part of the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) decisions for 2015/16.
- 2.3 The Council have the opportunity to be represented on the Management Committee of DLC alongside other Local Authorities across Derbyshire.

3 Consultation and Equality Impact

- 3.1 Consultation with the Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council, the Cabinet Member for Social Inclusion and a presentation to a Member Development Seminar – June 2014

4 Alternative Options and Reasons for Rejection

- 4.1 There are other agencies providing varying elements of support covering the District, however, these are complementary to the services DLC provide rather than duplicating them. The funding proposal therefore is considered to provide value for money in terms of the Council's investment and the anticipated outcomes delivered for local residents within our communities.

A Service Level Agreement (SLA) will be developed, intended outcomes agreed, performance managed and reported on a bi-annual basis alongside other grant funded agencies.

5 Implications

5.1 Finance and Risk Implications

£18,000 from Reserves budget 2014/15 with in principle support agreement for the year 2015/16 of £18,000 being subject to the MTFP process.

5.2 Legal Implications including Data Protection

None

5.3 Human Resources Implications

None

6 Recommendations

- 6.1 Members consider supporting Derbyshire Law Centre for the year 2014/15 to the amount of £18,000 and agree in principle support for a further £18,000 for the year 2015/16 subject to the MTFP process.
- 6.2 Subject to agreeing 6.1 above, Members agree that a Service Level Agreement be developed as part of the Partnership Team's Grants to Voluntary Organisations process to ensure appropriate performance management and bi-annual reporting mechanisms are adhered to.

6.3 Executive consider the request for a representative to be nominated onto the Management Committee of DLC.

7 Decision Information

Is the decision a Key Decision? (A Key Decision is one which results in income or expenditure to the Council of £50,000 or more or which has a significant impact on two or more District wards)	No
District Wards Affected	
Links to Corporate Plan priorities or Policy Framework	Social Inclusion Corporate Aim

8 Document Information

Appendix No	Title
	Evidence based report on the need for preventative legal advice for people with mental health conditions(MHC) – January 2014 (including case studies)
Background Papers (These are unpublished works which have been relied on to a material extent when preparing the report. They must be listed in the section below. If the report is going to Cabinet (NEDDC) or Executive (BDC) you must provide copies of the background papers)	
Report Author	Contact Number
Wes Lumley – Joint CEO Pam Brown – Chief Executive’s and Partnership Manager	Ext 2499