

**Name of meeting:** Cabinet  
**Date:** 15 December 2020  
**Title of report:** COVID 19 Community Champions Grant Scheme

**Purpose of report:**

This report seeks approval for the Council to establish a Community Champions grant scheme to support the Community Champions Fund (MHCLG). On 22 October 2020 the Minister for Equalities announced that the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) would provide up to £25m of funding to support those communities who have been shown to suffer disproportionately from COVID 19.

The grant scheme will provide a range of funding options that will enable our communities to provide additional capacity and support to our existing Integrated COVID 19 response.

The activity provided would have the most impact for our residents, particularly those disproportionately affected by COVID 19

<b>Key Decision - Is it likely to result in spending or saving £250k or more, or to have a significant effect on two or more electoral wards?</b>	Yes
<b>Key Decision - Is it in the <u>Council's Forward Plan (key decisions and private reports)?</u></b>	<b>Key Decision - Yes</b> The Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee has agreed to the addition of this item to the Agenda for Cabinet having not been previously included on the Forward Plan.  <b>Private Report/Private Appendix - No</b>
<b>The Decision - Is it eligible for call in by Scrutiny?</b>	No. The Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee has waived the right to Call In period on this matter due to urgency of implementation.
<b>Date signed off by <u>Strategic Director</u> &amp; name</b>  <b>Is it also signed off by the Service Director for Finance?</b>  <b>Is it also signed off by the Service Director for Legal Governance and Commissioning?</b>	<b>Mel Meggs / Richard Parry – December 2020</b>  <b>Eamonn Croston – December 2020</b>  <b>Julie Muscroft – December 2020</b>
<b>Cabinet member <u>portfolio</u></b>	<b>Councillor Cathy Scott and Councillor Paul Davies – Portfolio Holder for Harnessing Community Capacity</b>

## **Electoral wards affected: All wards**

**Ward councillors consulted:** Ward councillors have not been consulted as a result of the need to establish the scheme as soon as possible.

**Public or private:** Public.

**Has GDPR been considered?** Yes. As an emerging programme this will be reviewed in line with programme development.

## **Page 2 of the report**

### **1. Summary**

- 1.1 On 22 October 2020, the Minister for Equalities announced that the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) would provide up to £25m of funding to support those communities who have been shown to suffer disproportionately from COVID 19, through a new scheme called 'Community Champions. Kirklees was one of the identified areas to apply for this funding as an area that has very diverse communities with a range of complex and individual needs
- 1.2 The Government's expectation is that Local Authorities will work collaboratively both with the Voluntary and Community Sector and with other critical local authority partners in their vicinity. Recognising that local authorities, their partners and local people are best placed to decide the right approach for their communities, it is intended to be designed locally, to respond to the needs of a specific place and should consider passporting funds to VCS groups in their areas
- 1.3 In order to deliver the outcomes of the Community Champions scheme in Kirklees, a Community Champions grant scheme will be established to ensure funding can be provided to support those areas and communities facing the greatest challenges.
- 1.4 If an amount of funding is allocated to Kirklees, this will not be confirmed until following the appraisal of the MHCLG Expression of Interest submission on the 9<sup>th</sup> December 2020.
- 1.5 This report seeks Cabinet approval to establish a grant scheme, including the eligibility criteria for applicants and the indicative grant amounts to be awarded.

### **2. Information required to take a decision**

#### **Background**

##### *Context*

- 2.1 Since Public Health England released their review of disparities in risks and outcomes in June 2020, the Government has been focused on taking action to improve the support and protection for those communities and groups who have been shown to be most at risk from COVID 19.

- The review highlighted that some communities are disproportionately impacted by COVID-19, both in transmission rates and in mortality - most notably Pakistani and other South Asian communities, wider Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities and people with disabilities. Death rates from the virus are higher for Black and Asian ethnic groups when compared to White ethnic groups.
- While disproportionate transmission, morbidity and mortality rates will relate to wider social and economic factors - including occupation/employment; multigenerational households; residential overcrowding; deprivation – evidence shows that working through trusted community stakeholders and other local actors can help to identify and overcome barriers which prevent people from following public health guidance.

2.2 Full details of the report are set out here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/COVID-19-review-of-disparities-in-risks-and-outcomes>

### **Community Champions Scheme**

3. Government has asked Local Authorities to fund practical solutions that will make a real difference. The prospectus and guidance can be found here (**Appendix 1**). £25m has been allocated for delivering the Community Champions programme, supporting local authorities and the VCS organisations. Funding will be allocated relative to the size and scale of each local authority area and the level of ambition shown in their Expressions of Interest.

There is a need for the funding to be committed by 31 March 2021 and it is anticipated very few awards will exceed £500,000 per individual area.

- 3.1 The guidance provided is broad and leaves considerable opportunity to deliver the Community Champions Scheme according to what Local authorities and their community partners think will work in their area.
- 3.2 The Community Champions Scheme prospectus offers the following guidance.
- *Increasing available outreach and engagement through one-to-one/focused contact to raise awareness of local support and promote public health guidance and programmes for residents disproportionately impacted by COVID 19, particularly those with disabilities and/or from BAME communities.*
  - *Local areas will be able to build upon, increase or improve existing activities to work with residents who are most at risk of COVID 19 - helping to build trust and empower at-risk groups to protect themselves and their families.*
  - *Development and delivery of practical solutions, including but not limited to the recruitment and appointment of community champions networks, to increase uptake and community ownership of COVID 19 guidance, particularly amongst disabled people and/or people from BAME communities.*

**Kirklees Community Champions Grant scheme – proposed operating model and eligibility criteria**

- 3.3 As yet it remains unclear how the system of Local COVID 19 Alert restrictions will be operated from 16 December 2020. As such it is very likely that the Community Champions scheme, when launched in early December, will need to be able to respond to both the fast-changing landscape of COVID 19 Alert restrictions, and the requirements of mass testing and vaccinations.
- 3.4 There is a heightened sense of urgency both in terms of MHCLG timeframes for this funding but also in relation to responding to the need to improve the support and protection for target communities.
- 3.5 All allocated funds need to be committed by 31 March 2021. In light of these short timescales the MHCLG has indicated the requirements for monitoring, evaluation and reporting will be 'intentionally' light touch. The priority is enabling the activity to happen quickly and effectively.
- 3.6 In this context it is proposed that the Community Champions grant will need to follow a key principle of enabling our partners to be innovative, flexible, and supporting local grassroots activity. This may include ensuring the funds can be used by local partners in the most direct and meaningful ways as decided upon by target groups themselves.
- 3.7 The Council will hold funds to support grassroots activities in communities that respond to the following priorities:
- Scale up and expand existing approaches, working with partners - building on our existing work with community anchors, Mutual Aid Groups, our Community Engagement Hubs and our partnerships with the VCS and other health partners.
  - Provision of a range of passport funding to enable VCS partners to provide, Micro grants, infrastructure support, paid community champions.
  - Furthering our reach into and support of grassroots community organisations, including through listening and coproduction approaches
  - Reach out to those group who may face additional barriers to engagement (including those with disabilities) and ensure funding supports overcoming any barriers they face in carrying public health messages.
  - Actively seeking out and using the lived experiences of our residents and communities most impacted by COVID 19 to guide our engagement offer
  - Share learning – locally, regionally, and nationally

#### Target Communities

- BAME
  - People with physical disabilities and learning disabilities, and unpaid carers
  - Other groups particularly at risk and insights relating to the barriers they face
- 3.8 All funded activities will need to demonstrate how they:
- Respond to the urgency to enable community champions to support those communities most at risk from COVID 19 and overcome the barriers which prevent people from following public health guidance

- Align with our ward based Integrated COVID 19 Response, balance both the need to build and extend existing activities, as well as develop new approaches.
  - Deliver flexible interventions that can respond to different modes of delivery; informal, formal, online, and direct delivery in communities.
  - Build additional capacity to be able to respond to the immediate needs of both mass engagement (testing and vaccinations) and deep engagement (to target cohorts)
  - Contribute to local, regional, and national learning and practice development networks.
- 3.9 The Scheme will be promoted and managed by the Council's Cohesion team as part of their role in the Integrated COVID 19 Response.
- 3.10 The grant scheme will be launched as soon as possible, subject to Cabinet approval. Detailed local guidance will be promoted via Council Integrated COVID-19 response teams and partners. It is expected that applications will be accepted via an application form.
- 3.11 Applications will be developed in partnership with Council Integrated COVID 19 response teams and/or VCS partners.
- 3.12 Decision making on applications to the scheme will be made by the Integrated COVID 19 Response Board. Details of the board membership can be found at Appendix 2. Applications made to VCS micro grant will be made within agreed procedures they set up to support community champions in identified areas.
- 3.13 Successful applications will work to a grant agreement (proportionate to the nature of the community champion activity) detailing level of funding, alignment with the priorities and outcomes of the scheme and meets the needs of the overarching memorandum of understanding between the MHCLG and the Local Authority. Where the VCS make further grants they will make available the details of these awards as part of the overall scheme monitoring and evaluation.
- 3.14 It is proposed that the grant scheme will operate on the basis of single payments on completion of an agreed proposal.
- 3.15 There will two key strands to the grant scheme, a small investment strand (up to £800 for individuals, and up to £10,000 for constituted community groups) and a larger investment strand (of up to £100,000).
- 3.16 Applicants will be expected to provide supporting information which may include:
- Companies House and/or Charity Commission registration
  - bank statements and supplier invoices
  - certified accounts/management accounts
  - activity and expenditure detail
  - Named contact for monitoring and learning purposes.

## Options

- 3.17 The Council could have chosen not to make an application to the MHCLG Community Champions Scheme. This would generate potential reputational risks for the council for not maximising the financial support available for its communities.
- 3.18 The Council could choose to apply to the Community Champions scheme and not make a proportion of any award available to the VCS individuals. This would not create the additional capacity required to respond to the urgent needs facing our target communities and generate potential reputational risks as the Council would not be able to achieve the MHCLG Community Fund outcomes.
- 3.19 Potential reputational risks for the Council as the Community Champion scheme emphasizes the need to bring together local community leaders, public health providers, voluntary groups and others to meet the longer-term outcomes of the fund (building stronger relationships, increased coordination, visibility, understanding and access to information and effective messaging across and between National government, local public health providers and local communities). Not doing so would also not be in keeping with Kirklees Council commitment to working with partners to achieve the most effective sustainable outcomes in our communities.

### **Costs**

- 3.20 The Government has yet to allocate an award from the Community Champions scheme to Kirklees.
- 3.21 Council officers will manage any award made via the proposed scheme in this Report to ensure that only eligible individuals / businesses/charities apply, and that appropriate evidence is provided by applicants. Council officers will also work alongside VCSE partners in respect of any awards they make as part of this overall scheme. The operation of the scheme will be subject to regular review by the Council's Section 151 Officer.
- 3.22 The Council will undertake proportionate pre-payment checks to confirm eligibility in relation to the criteria set out in this report.

### **Expected impact/outcome/benefits**

- 3.23 The outcomes/benefits of the scheme will be to meet the immediate / medium-term needs of improving reach and engagement to improve messaging and remove barriers people experience to following public health guidance. It will also provide longer term benefits of developing the existing community infrastructure to identify the issues and concerns of communities and how communities can be supported to address them, developing longer term resilience and ongoing improved relationships.
- 3.24 Reducing the financial impact on charities and community groups of the lockdown and related impacts of COVID 19. It is acknowledged that implementing this scheme will provide additional financial capacity within the VCSE sector will also contribute to economic recovery.

### **Risks**

3.25 There are a number of risks associated with the scheme, including:

- applicants may seek grant support for ineligible activity
- need/demand may strip the funding available
- reputational risks for the Council in relation to the amount of support available or the sectors eligible for grant funding.
- Outcomes are not achieved due to tight timescales of funds.

3.26 These risks will be managed and mitigated through the operation of the grant scheme. Council Officers will put in place appropriate mechanisms, to ensure that only eligible activities are funded, and suitable evidence of expenditure is provided. The scheme will be open for applications for a defined period to be agreed. It is considered that the positive reputational benefits of providing access to financial support for the activities proposed by MHCLG Community Champions scheme to improve outcomes for communities disproportionately impacted by COVID 19 outweigh the negative reputational impacts of the proposals.

#### **4. Implications for the Council**

##### **Working with people**

4.1 The proposals will support the Council's efforts to work together with people and communities to find shared solutions. The Council has drawn on learning from the implementation of the various Government grant support schemes and this will inform delivery of the Community Champions Scheme. The operation of the scheme will be kept under regular review in response to community feedback.

##### **Working with Partners**

4.2 The proposed Community Champions Scheme has been developed by the Government in response to feedback from Public Health England, Local Authorities, and evidence from SAGE. The Council will work with local partners including VCSE partners, other West Yorkshire Local Authorities, West Yorkshire and Harrogate Health and Care Partnership "supporting vulnerable groups" network and West Yorkshire learning network to support the development of community-based approaches to the COVID 19 response

##### **Place Based Working**

4.3 A key principle of the scheme is to build upon the existing Integrated COVID 19 Response which is premised on place-based working. The scheme will support those businesses and charities including those in some of the area's most deprived communities. Ward Councillors will be fully engaged in the process to encourage eligible businesses and charities to apply for support.

##### **Climate Change and Air Quality**

4.4 The grant scheme will support those community groups/ businesses/ charities with ongoing costs that have been most affected by COVID 19. There is some evidence to suggest that the changes in behaviour brought about by the lockdown have reversed the decline in air quality and improved emissions during this period. Whilst the implementation of the Community Champions scheme is unlikely to have a significant

impact on climate change, the Council will ensure that the climate emergency and opportunities for low carbon growth are central to the recovery planning process.

### **Other (legal/financial/human resources)**

4.5 Financial matters are addressed in section 3 of the report.

4.6 The scheme will be operated in accord with State Aid guidance.

The United Kingdom left the EU on 31 January 2020, nonetheless under the withdrawal agreement State Aid rules continue to apply at least up to and including the end of the transition period (23:00 31 December 2020). The Council is required to ensure that all relevant conditions are met and to monitor and report on the amount of State Aid it has provided. Although the Council will endeavour to ensure compliance, at law the risk of non-compliant State Aid rests with the aid recipient, who may be required to repay any unlawful aid together with compound interest. Recipients must be an undertaking performing a commercial activity for State Aid to apply. State Aid will not apply if there is no distortion of competition and or no affect on inter-state trade. Depending on the facts, grants to local VCS and others which may be to geographically specific bodies and the beneficiaries purely local may potentially not be caught by state aid rules.

If State Aid may be an issue, applicants will be awarded aid based on the De Minimis rules (200,000 euros over a rolling 3 fiscal year period) although it is possible that some awards will be granted under the UK Covid-19 Temporary Framework. The Council will write to all successful applicants advising them of the State Aid compliance route that has been applied and requiring them to certify their eligibility for aid as a condition of receipt of the grant.

4.7 The proposed grant scheme will be administered by existing Council Officers. To ensure the scheme can be implemented quickly, significant officer capacity has been re-purposed to support delivery of the scheme. The Council must comply with its duty of Best Value under the Local Government Act 1999. In terms of decision-making, the Council must when exercising its discretion act fairly, transparently and reasonably when awarding grants which is rational, for the proper purposes having regard to relevant and ignoring irrelevant considerations. The council has legal powers to accept and award grants under the 'General power of Competence' under section 1 of the Localism Act 2011.

4.8 An Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) has not been undertaken for the proposals as a result of the short timeframe for implementing the scheme in response to COVID 19 pandemic. An IIA will be undertaken during the first three months of implementation.

4.9 The Council will be required to provide regular reports to MHCLG on the implementation of the grant scheme.

4.10 The application of the Council's Contract Procedure Rules and procurement law must be considered when entering into any contracts for good, services and works which may be supplied back to the council which relate to the scheme. Financial procedure Rules 4.7.4.10 governs application for Government grant and Service Directors must comply with FPR 20.8 when awarding grants.



- 4.11 The Guidance goes on to state that whichever way the Council uses the funding, including where the Council works in partnership with others “it should consider all State Aid issues”.

## **5. Consultees and their opinions**

- 5.1 Engagement with stakeholders including Third Sector Leaders, West Yorkshire Public health networks and other groups will continue as the scheme is implemented and it will be shaped in response.

## **6. Next steps and timelines**

- 6.1 Subject to an award being made to the Council by MHCLG, and approval by cabinet, the Community Champions Grant scheme will be launched as soon as practicable following the Cabinet meeting on 15<sup>th</sup> December. The Council will work with key local partners to publicise the scheme and target eligible applicants.
- 6.2 The Council will promote detailed scheme guidance and application forms as soon as the scheme is launched. The Council will put in place a streamlined process to ensure the rapid turnaround of applications for support.
- 6.3 The Council will keep the operation of the scheme under review, including the period during which it will be open for applications.

## **7. Officer recommendations and reasons**

1. Cabinet notes the content of this report and approves the establishment of the Community Champions Grant, including the proposed eligibility criteria for applicants and the grant amounts to be awarded set out in section 3 of the report, noting the short timescales for the establishment and operation of the scheme.
2. Cabinet delegates authority for implementation and monitoring of the Local Authority Discretionary Grant Fund scheme to the Strategic Director for Children’s Services in consultation with the Service Director Finance and relevant cabinet members, including the authority to make further changes to the scheme to ensure equity and achievement of the objectives noted above.
3. Cabinet delegates authority to the Strategic Director Children’s Services in consultation with the Service Director (Finance) and relevant cabinet members, including Harnessing Community Capacity lead members, to vary the eligibility criteria for the Community Champions Grant scheme.

### **Reasons**

1. To enable Cabinet to approve the Community Champions fund for Kirklees to extend financial support available to those businesses and charities that can achieve the outcomes of the scheme as soon as practicable.
2. To ensure the grant schemes are being implemented in a coordinated manner.

3. To enable rapid and efficient implementation of the grant scheme in accordance with the scheme of delegations.
4. To enable the identification and implementation of additional measures, where required, to complement the approved grant scheme, in accordance with the scheme of delegations.

## **8. Cabinet Portfolio Holder's recommendations**

The Cabinet Portfolio Holders supports the recommendations, which have been developed as a matter of urgency to ensure that the Council can take advantage of the national scheme to provide support to local communities.

### **Contact officer**

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## **9. Background Papers and History of Decisions**

MHCLG Community Champions Prospectus – see appendix 1

## **10. Service Director responsible**

Jill Greenfield, Service Director Customers and Communities  
Eamonn Croston, Service Director Finance.

## Appendix 1.

# Community Champions

The 'Community Champions' scheme, administered by the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government, provides up to £25m funding to support people shown to be most at risk from Coronavirus (COVID 19) including those from an ethnic minority background, disabled people and others to follow safer behaviours and reduce the impact of the virus on themselves and those around them.

Funding is available for selected local authority areas, to support: activity and interventions to reduce the disproportionate impact of the virus on certain communities; engagement strategies and outreach work in the most at-risk places, with the most at risk groups; new and existing networks of grassroots advocates or 'champions' from impacted communities; and voluntary and community groups and other national or local actors who specialise in working with communities shown to be most at risk from COVID 19.

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## Introduction

Since Public Health England released their review of disparities in risks and outcomes in June 2020<sup>1</sup>, the Government has been focused on taking action to improve the support and protection for those communities and groups who have been shown to be most at risk from COVID 19-19.

The review highlighted that some communities are disproportionately impacted by COVID 19-19, both in transmission rates and in mortality - most notably Pakistani and other South Asian communities, wider Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities and people with disabilities. Death rates from the virus are higher for Black and Asian ethnic groups when compared to White ethnic groups<sup>2</sup>.

While disproportionate transmission, morbidity and mortality rates will relate to wider social and economic factors - including occupation/employment; multigenerational households; residential overcrowding; deprivation – evidence shows (see Annex A) that working through trusted community stakeholders and other local actors can help to identify and overcome barriers which prevent people from following public health guidance.

Government is keen to work with local authorities and their partners, who know their areas best, to support the communities at risk in those places and learn what works (and what doesn't work) and apply these lessons to future central and local government efforts to tackle the virus elsewhere.

### **Community Champions – tackling the disproportionate impact of COVID 19-19.**

On 22 October 2020, the Minister for Equalities announced that the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) would provide up to £25m of funding to support those communities who have been shown to suffer disproportionately from COVID 19 19<sup>3</sup>, through a new scheme called 'Community Champions'.

The Community Champions scheme will provide targeted help to those areas and communities facing the greatest challenges. Recognising that local authorities, their partners and local people are best placed to decide the right approach for their communities, it is intended to be designed locally, to respond to the needs of a specific place. Participating areas will be able to increase resources for both existing and new activities.

## Section 1

### **What we are looking for**

Government is keen to fund practical solutions that will make a real difference. Local areas will be able to build upon, increase or improve existing activities to work with residents who are most at risk of COVID 19-19 - helping to build trust and empower at-risk groups to protect themselves and their families. The broader aim is to reduce the impact of the virus on all communities, beyond just the target areas that we will work with through this scheme.

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<sup>1</sup> 'COVID 19-19: Review of disparities in risks and outcomes', Public Health England, June 2020

<sup>2</sup> Disparities in the risks and outcomes of COVID 19-19, Public Health England August 2020.

<sup>3</sup> Quarterly Report on progress to address COVID 19-19 health inequalities, Cabinet Office Race Disparity Unit, October 2020.

We are therefore looking to fund a wide range of local authorities where there is a need for:

- **Increasing available outreach and engagement through one-to-one/focused contact to raise awareness of local support and promote public health guidance and programmes for residents disproportionately impacted by COVID 19-19, particularly those with disabilities and/or from BAME communities.**
- **Development and delivery of practical solutions, including but not limited to the recruitment and appointment of community champions networks, to increase uptake and community ownership of COVID 19-19 guidance, particularly amongst disabled people and/or people from BAME communities.**

### **Working with local people and places**

We are keen to work in partnership with local authorities and their partners in those areas facing the greatest challenges. We have identified a number of areas which we are now inviting to take part in the scheme.

Within the selected areas, we are keen to work with local authorities alone or partnerships of local authorities and other appropriate local groups, organisations and individuals. Where a partnership approach is adopted, the local authority will act as the 'lead partner' and main point of contact for MHCLG and other government departments working with us on this scheme.

As we want to share the learning and knowledge generated by the scheme, all participating local authorities and their partners will be expected to participate in regular forums and webinars during delivery of the programme, to aid the dissemination of knowledge, case studies and practical resources to other areas (including those outside of the Community Champions scheme) facing similar challenges.

### **What funding is available**

Funding of up to £25 million is available in 2020/21 to support good quality proposals which meet the scheme's objectives. Funding is currently only available for the 2020/21 financial year.

Funding will be allocated relative to the size and scale of each local authority area and the level of ambition shown in their Expressions of Interest (see below). Due to the need for the funding to be committed in 2020/21, we would expect very few awards to exceed £500,000 per individual area. We will not accept any funding requests for more than £750,000 per individual area.

### **Applications must be received no later than 23:45 on 09 December 2020**

#### **Section 2**

##### **Aims**

The areas that we are inviting to take part in the scheme are all lower tier and unitary local authorities. Participating local authorities will be expected to work collaboratively with all neighbouring councils or other critical local authority partners in their vicinity (especially where we are funding a lower tier authority as the lead partner) – and, in particular and where relevant, Directors of Public Health and other appropriate local health partners – to support disproportionately impacted communities to:

- **Have an increased sense of personal ability to follow safe behaviours.**
- **Have increased trust in public health messaging.**

- Have an improved awareness of who or where to go to for help or advice.
- Have an improved awareness of pathways and services to effect positive change and alleviate hardship.
- Have an improved awareness of who their local Community Champions are and have opportunities to take part in the activities that the Champions offer or facilitate.
- Have an increased feeling that they are being understood and that insights are fed into local and national response.

This may be achieved by recruiting dedicated individuals or teams to undertake the role of 'Community Champions' to connect with residents and support them to follow safer behaviours and navigate people towards available support and services. There is scope for the expansion of existing projects, or the development of new initiatives if feasible within the timeframes outlined in this prospectus.

#### What do we mean by 'Community Champions?' <sup>4</sup>

- **There is no 'one-size-fits-all' model for Community Champions.** Different communities and local contexts will require different approaches. Recognising local authorities are best placed to decide the right approach for their communities, we want local authorities and their partners to create their own strategies - either building upon and improving what they are already doing to support at risk groups and reduce the disproportionate impact of the virus, or undertaking new activity. This may also involve developing broader communications campaigns co-produced with communities to support direct engagement.
- **Community Champions should encourage wider social connection and integration of different groups of people, whilst seeking to improve the health and wellbeing of residents, particularly disabled people and/or people from BAME communities.** They will motivate and empower people to get involved in available services, conduct health promoting activities, create groups to meet local needs, and navigate people to relevant support and services.

*The Community Ambassador scheme is delivered as part of the 'Our Community, Our Future' social integration programme, which aims to empower local people to take a lead on projects and help build a stronger community. The 12-week programme is delivered in partnership with voluntary sector organisations and explores the multicultural make-up of the borough, develops an understanding of community development and builds leadership and project management skills to help residents set up their own social action projects. Community Ambassadors have been active during the pandemic, one Community Ambassador who works as a catering manager in a local school, persuaded managers to support them in providing nutritious meals for vulnerable residents across the borough. Through the networks they had developed in the programme, and the support of their school, they became part of a co-ordinated response providing hot food to residents most in need.*

-Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council (Integration Area Programme 2019/2020)

<sup>4</sup> "The role of Community Champion networks to increase engagement in the context of COVID 1919: Evidence and best practice" Presented to SAGE 23 October 2020

- **Community Champions reflect their local communities** and vary by socio-demographic factors including age, ethnicity, gender, health status and education. They will improve the local authority's understanding of disabled and BAME residents and may be present on local social media groups providing a trusted voice, countering misinformation and raising awareness of local support.

*The Health Project at Friends, Families and Travellers has been running since 2003, funded by various bodies. The project paved the way for health trainers, by using peer education and support as its focus. The scope consists of small projects, which address different health issues in different settings. For example, we are currently working on a suicide awareness project with Traveller men, which is funded by the 'better together' funding from Brighton and Hove CCG. The project has contributed towards health improvement in the East Sussex Gypsy/Traveller population, including improved knowledge and skills/confidence on around healthy lifestyles and increased confidence in accessing services and discussing health improvement with peers.*

*The most important factor for the success of our work is that we are a trusted organisation with the support of the community it serves.*

-Friends, Families and Travellers Health Project (PHE practice examples May 2018)

- **Community Champions may contribute in different ways** from relatively passive involvement, such as sharing information, to more active involvement including designing practical tools and having shared decision-making power in the planning, design, implementation and evaluation of their LA response and communication strategies.

*Health and Wellbeing is improving overall in Redcar and Cleveland and people are living healthier and longer lives. Unfortunately, not everyone is enjoying these benefits and some communities have an average life expectancy of 13 years less than others. We know that greater ill health in our poorest communities is linked to inequalities in life chances, wealth and income. We also know that people in our poorest communities are our greatest asset for improving health and wellbeing.*

*We want to ultimately shift culture in relation to health by utilising champions' circles of influence (self, family and friends, clients, customers and the wider community) as a strategy to improve health and well-being. Our ambition is to build the borough's capacity to empower communities to improve their own health and well-being and make 'every contact a health improvement contact'...Health Champions are allocated a named contact from the Health Improvement team who is responsible for keeping them up to date with information such as local campaigns, collecting monitoring information, being on hand to answer queries and support any further development of their role.*

*Promotional materials were developed, and key stakeholders promoted this through their networks... Providing an infrastructure which enables and supports people to make public health activities happen in their communities is a sound investment. Overall, we have started to build capacity to address health issues within local communities. We have seen the early benefits and we want to build on this model.*

-Redcar and Cleveland Council, (PHE practice examples August 2016)



- **Participating local authorities will be actively encouraged to share learning and practical solutions**, such as communication tools devised, with all local authorities so those areas not being directly funded will positively benefit from Community Champions funding.

*The Migrant Access project in Wakefield was a partnership project between Wakefield Council and Touchstone, a Leeds based third sector organisation. The aim of the project is to facilitate better access to council services by migrant groups across Wakefield. This was done by recruiting 20 volunteers from 14 different countries to train as Migrant Community Networkers (MCN) giving them the knowledge and skills to become community leaders and to act as a bridge between the council and their communities. During lockdown MCNs have provided an effective bridge between the Council and local migrant communities by translating and sharing key messages. Some MCNs are currently working with Public Health as COVID 19-19 Community Champions and continue to deliver key messages to previously hard to reach sections of the community.*

-Wakefield Council

## Outputs

Defined outputs will be designed in collaboration with each local authority, positively building upon current community engagement and outreach schemes. The following outputs are intended as examples of what could be considered in local proposals:

- **A community connection, outreach and engagement strategy, with a steering group**, which involves bringing together local community leaders, public health providers, voluntary groups, and other relevant organisations. This could be an existing or new governance arrangement.
- **Community Champions**, ideally from within the disproportionately impacted BAME and disabled groups or local hard to reach communities, to undertake engagement, drive safer behaviours and counter misinformation.
- **Engagement activities** with residents from disproportionately impacted groups in greatest need of support across the programme.
- **Creation and delivery of practical sustainable tools** to increase outreach, communication and engagement which are tailored, appealing, visual and multi-language messages to reach diverse populations, who may be digitally excluded, and mobilise local communities.

## Outcomes

The key aims and outcomes of this programme are both immediate and longer term:

### Immediate

- **Build stronger relationships** and engagement between communities, groups and local authorities where there may be tensions, mistrust or negative connotations exacerbated by the pandemic.
- **Increase capability to interact and communicate** information and guidance from Government and local authorities to diverse at-risk communities, facilitating community ownership and the following of safer behaviours and making of informed choices.
- **Build open, transparent dialogue** over any local testing or vaccine deployment programmes within communities to address any misconceptions about efficacy and safety, counter misinformation, fill real knowledge voids and provide clarity on vaccination roll-out to build support and promote take up.



## Longer term

- **Increased coordination and dialogue with public health providers (ideally working through Directors of Public Health)** by local authorities to create more cohesive and trusted messaging.
- **Increased access to guidance, vaccination programmes and public health services**, through outreach and practical tools to improve health and wellbeing of residents, especially those from disproportionately impacted groups, and their families.
- **Increased access to guidance and awareness of Council and local support services** through outreach and practical tools to improve access to economic support and alleviate hardship to support longer term positive economic impacts.
- **Increased access to guidance and awareness of Government support mechanisms, for example Universal Credit**, to increase access to employment, education and/or volunteering opportunities.
- **Increased understanding by both central government and local authorities of local populations' needs and provision of practical tools** to aid accessibility to improve social connection, digital inclusion, civic engagement and integration with wider local area.
- **Increased visibility of Community Champions, volunteers and community groups** to encourage more mutual aid and volunteer provision able to support local authority delivery.
- **Build strong links** between Government and places where COVID 19 -19 has impacted most significantly to develop resiliencies and improve and increase mechanisms for outreach, communication, engagement within the area.
- **Informing Government through feedback from Community Champions** on what the issues and concerns of local communities are and how to address them, which will help to shape and inform future relevant policy/communications work.

## Monitoring and Evaluation

Participating local authorities will be expected to provide short (1-2 pages) monthly progress reports over the course of the programme. To ensure the burden placed upon local authorities is as minimal as possible, MHCLG will provide templates for these reports which will be simple and easy to complete. As we are keen to understand local contexts there will be free text options should any local authorities choose to add additional comments, feedback and/or examples of best practice.

We will work with a smaller number of areas to gather additional best practice examples and case studies which we will share more widely across central and local Government. This will involve attending meetings and other feedback sessions – most likely all virtual/online at this stage – to discuss and share what we are learning through the scheme, to apply this to future work.

Participating local authorities will be encouraged to share knowledge, resources and practical solutions with non-funded local authorities to ensure other areas and their local communities benefit indirectly from the Fund.

## Section 3

### The role of MHCLG and other government departments

MHCLG, alongside our colleagues from other government departments working on COVID 19-19 and public health, will work with successful local authorities to support and learn from the delivery of their proposals on the ground.

We will provide regular forums and webinars to share good practice for community engagement and community centred approaches to support and promote public health messaging, for example from National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE)<sup>5</sup>, NHS England and Public Health England<sup>6</sup>.

We will also use these opportunities to enable local authorities and their partners to record best practice from their activities and learn from others in overcoming challenges and obstacles – and then share this with other participating areas and beyond, to maximise the reach of the Community Champions scheme.

Access to central government teams leading on public health messaging will be available across Government - including access to communications materials and core messages/scripts that can be tailored locally.

### Payment

Successful local authorities will be required to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Department which will set out the expectations of both the recipient and the Department with regards to milestones, monitoring and evaluation and the funding amount to be awarded. Funding will be paid directly to the local authority (the de facto lead partner in any local consortium or partnership) using powers under section 31 of the Local Government Act 2003.

### Governance arrangements

Governance arrangements of the scheme will sit with the successful local authorities and their partners. MHCLG will seek light-touch assurance that appropriate arrangements will be in place. The Department's primary relationship will be with the local authority to which funding is being awarded, which is also the local authority that the Department will hold responsible for the correct use of the funding, successful implementation of the project and achievement of outcomes.

The Department will also hold the local authority responsible for ensuring their own propriety and making sure that they do not bring the scheme or Department into any form of disrepute. Local authorities will be responsible for ensuring due consideration is given to any state aid or procurement compliance implications when implementing the undertakings outlined in their proposal.

### General Data Protection Regulations

Participating local authorities will be responsible for ensuring all data pertaining to residents engaged with through the scheme is collected, controlled and retained in compliance with data protection regulations.

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<sup>5</sup> Community engagement: Improving health and wellbeing and reducing health inequalities, NICE guidelines NG44, 04 March 2016.

<sup>6</sup> A guide to community-centred approaches for health and wellbeing, Public Health England, 15 February 2015.

## Section 4

### Application process

Invited eligible local authorities must submit an Expression of Interest (Eosin) within the application window using the supplied short form attached to this prospectus outlining their current outreach, communication and engagement activities, additional activities they wish to undertake to help to reduce the disproportionate impact of the virus on at-risk groups, or similar and all associated costs.

This is a not a competitive bid process and all applying eligible local authorities will be supported by MHCLG officials to receive some support. Officials will assess the applications, using knowledge and evidence of similar schemes delivered through current and previous departmental programmes, against two criteria:

- **Deliverability of proposal** – How the proposal will increase support of residents disproportionately impacted by COVID 19-19 and meet the desired aims, outputs and outcomes of the Community Champions Fund as above.
- **Financial viability of proposal**- Whether the costings provide sufficient detail, offer value for money and are deemed reasonable and appropriate to meet the proposal's delivery requirements within the timescales outlined above.

Where any weaknesses or risks are identified, officials will collaborate with the eligible local authority to revise proposals where appropriate, and ensure plans are robust and costings are appropriate, to deliver the programme aims in the timescale required.

### Funding levels

Applicants are invited to state the total amount of funding they are requesting in 2020/21 to implement their projects at pace. The funding period runs from December 2020 – March 2021. We are therefore eager to see initial activities - such as network building or community mapping, for example - begin within December 2020.

Funding will be allocated relative to the size and scale of each local authority area and the level of ambition shown in their Expressions of Interest (see below). Due to the need for the funding to be committed in 2020/21, we would expect very few awards to exceed £500,000 per area. We will not accept any funding requests for more than £750,000 per area.

### Integration Area Programme

Any area in receipt of funding through MHCLG's Integration Area Programme in 2020/21 which is also invited to participate in the Community Champions scheme will have their proposal and costings assessed in conjunction with the Integration Area Programme to avoid any duplication of Departmental funding.

### Key Dates

Expression of Interest period closes	09 December 2020
Applying local authorities will be contacted to discuss next steps by	14 December 2020
Funding agreed	January 2021
Delivery commences	January 2021

## Completed Expression of Interest applications must:

- Be sent via email to [Community.Champions@communities.gov.uk](mailto:Community.Champions@communities.gov.uk)
- Include the subject line “Community Champions Fund’ and the name of your local authority.
- **Be received no later than 11.45pm on 09 December 2020**

**Please note it is the responsibility of each local authority to make sure that Expression of Interest forms have been received by the Department in time.**

## Annex A List of resources on community champions schemes and community engagement

### SPI-B/SAGE advice papers

The Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (SAGE) is responsible for ensuring that timely and coordinated scientific advice is made available to decision makers to support UK cross-government decisions. The Scientific Pandemic Insights Group on Behaviours (SPI-B) and Ethnicity Subgroup are sub-groups of SAGE. SPI-B provides behavioural science advice aimed at anticipating and helping people adhere to interventions that are recommended by medical or epidemiological experts. The Ethnicity Subgroup advises, in the broadest sense, on the risks to and impacts from COVID 19-19 upon minority ethnic groups.

The following paper was prepared by SPI-B and endorsed by SAGE on the role of Community Champions networks in increasing engagement in the context of COVID 19-19. This was put together by independent SPI-B academics with expertise in this area.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/role-of-community-champions-networks-to-increase-engagement-in-context-of-COVID-19-19-evidence-and-best-practice-22-october-2020>

### Additional papers include:

SPI-B: Consensus on BAME communication

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/spi-b-consensus-on-bame-communication-22-july-2020>

SPI-B: Consensus statement on local interventions

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/spi-b-consensus-statement-on-local-interventions-29-july-2020>

Ethnicity Subgroup: Evidence summary of impacts to date of public health communications to minority ethnic groups and related challenges

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/evidence-summary-of-impacts-to-date-of-public-health-communications-to-minority-ethnic-groups-and-related-challenges-23-september-2020>

## **Public Health England resources**

A guide to community-centred approaches for health and wellbeing

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/health-and-wellbeing-a-guide-to-community-centred-approaches>

Practice examples on community champions and community-centred approaches

<https://phelibrary.koha-ptfs.co.uk/practice-examples/caba/>

## **Appendix 2**

### **Integrated COVID Response Board Membership**

#### **Chair: Strategic Director Children's Services**

#### **Members:**

Service Director Environment

Service Director Communities and Customers

Head of Democracy

Head of Local Integrated Partnerships

Head of Public Protection

Head of Health protection

Chief Operating Officer KNH

Head of Strategic Communications

Head of Business and Skills

Kirklees Place Director