

Report



meeting

CABINET

date

3rd MAY 2006

agenda item number

REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR SOCIAL SERVICES

LINK-AGE PLUS PILOT

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 This report is to inform Cabinet of recent developments and seek approval for Nottinghamshire County Council to engage with the government 'Link-Age Plus' initiative on modernised and improved services for older people. This is likely to involve the receipt of Government funding over two years for the County as an invited pilot area; the total funding received may be more than £1 million.
- 1.2 This report is a key decision as it is seeking Cabinet approval to bid for a grant of over £1 million and was first published in the Forward Plan in April 2006.

2. Information and Advice

- 2.1 In 2004, the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), in collaboration with other government departments and the Local Government Association, developed a Link-Age model to meet the government's 2001 manifesto commitment to provide better integration of welfare benefits, housing, social care and health for older people.
- 2.2 The three key elements of the Link-Age model are:
 - **Joint Visiting Team** - integrated visiting service that offer older people full personal care, welfare benefits, heating and housing check-up
 - **Alternative Offices** - enables an older person to make claims for welfare benefits through local voluntary sector organisations such as Age Concern. An older person would be able to show their birth certificate or bank book to the organisation so they do not have to post precious documents to The Pension Service

- **The Partnership Fund** – is grant aid for not-for-profit organisations to pilot projects aimed at improving the take-up of welfare benefits, particularly targeting excluded groups.
- 2.3 The government document “*Opportunity Age: meeting the challenges of ageing in the 21st century*” (2005) agreed that government will build on, and go beyond, the existing integrated service provided by Link-Age and pilot a “Link-Age Plus” service to provide more integrated access to services. Link-Age Plus will expand the principles of joined up working still further, and look to provide access to a wide range of services, including social care and housing, as part of a seamless service which would:
- involve a programme of pilots that integrates services for older people designed to meet the needs of each local area
 - build on effective links between central government, local authorities and other organisations, driven by the needs and aspirations of older people, who will be involved throughout.
- 2.4 Nottinghamshire County Council is one of eight local authorities which have been invited to submit plans for these Link-Age Plus pilots. A diverse selection of eight authorities have been invited, ranging from urban to rural, district, county and unitary authorities. It is a reflection of the confidence which government departments’ have in the approaches and partnership working which there has been in Nottinghamshire, which has resulted in the invitation to develop a proposal.
- 2.5 The Link-Age Plus initiative will last for two years and a total of £10 million pounds will be available for the programme over those two years, currently ending with the financial year 2007/08, although all participants have urged DWP to seek an extension into the following financial year.
- 2.6 A Nottinghamshire proposal has been developed in conjunction with older people and statutory and voluntary organisations. This bid builds upon the successful Nottinghamshire Invest to Save and Best Value review projects with older people. This process has inevitably had to be very quick; Nottinghamshire was invited to send a partnership group to a seminar in London in February 2006 and then work up a proposal for submission by the end of March 2006; the proposal was shaped in consultation with other organisations and older people as far as possible in the time available.
- 2.7 The Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) have been clear that they are interested in identifying developments which reflect older people’s wishes and needs, which are effective in prevention and improving well being and which will make the most of the partnership. The pilot programme will be subject to rigorous evaluation, with the aim of identifying what works and looking apply these lessons to service development and policy expectations for the country as a whole.

- 2.8 The funding is released for the financial year 2006/07, but scheme proposals will ultimately be subject to ministerial approval, expected at the end of May 2006, and it can be expected that there will be some delay before schemes are up and running.
- 2.9 The DWP have also been very clear that the funding for this programme is time limited, for example once the programme stops, there will be no more specific government funding for services which have been developed in the pilot area. In the light of experience, more funding may be given nationally by government to such services for older people, but this cannot be expected. In this context there has been a dilemma in putting forward proposals where there is currently no certainty that the service will be funded beyond March 2008; the opportunity of the grant provides the benefit of creating and evaluating the services. If the department submits a proposal and receive funding, it will be very important to evaluate the services as far as possible in the time available, seek longer term funding based on cost effectiveness and accept that some services which are part of the pilot may not continue beyond the end of the pilot period, if their long-term benefits are not established. The DWP intention is that the pilot areas will also learn from each other, so there may be learning which can be brought in from other authorities.
- 2.10 The purpose of the bid is to develop a joined up approach to access, information, services and opportunities across a wide range of partner agencies through a quality assured service with a common branding. This will be supported by investment in low level but vital services. The pilot project will be used to test the value and sustainability of particular approaches and to plan for mainstreaming effective services where possible.
- 2.11 There are six distinct but interdependent priorities to the proposal:
- **better access** to information, advice and advocacy through a first contact signposting scheme, expansion of the role of joint teams and new community outreach advocates who will reach otherwise isolated people
 - the piloting of a **streamlined assessment** through the use of a common first stage assessment resulting in the identification of need and an exchange of information between statutory agencies. This service would be piloted in one district of the County
 - the development of a **network of services** across the County by developing practical services with the voluntary sector, statutory agencies and the private sector such as a shopping service, home handyperson services and an approved trader's register
 - involving the voluntary sector to develop services which older people have told us they need in order to live independently
 - **promoting volunteering** through recruiting and supporting older people in ways which recognise and value their contribution to their communities

- **monitoring and evaluation** to demonstrate value for money, efficiency and effectiveness.

2.12 Older people have been involved at every stage in the development of this proposal. A copy of the full bid is attached as an **Appendix**.

3. **Statutory and Policy Implications**

3.1 This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of finance, equal opportunities, personnel, crime and disorder and those using the service. Where such implications are material, they have been described in the text of the report. Members' attention is, however, drawn to the following:

3.1.1 Personnel Implications

This project would require the appointment of:

- a temporary (12 hours) monitoring and evaluation officer on scale SO1/2
- a temporary part time (18.5 hours) performance review officer on scale SO1
- a temporary part time administrative officer on scale 4.

The establishment of these posts would be the subject of a further delegated decision report.

3.1.2 Financial Implications

The total budget for the proposed Link-Age Plus project is £1,241,276 over two years. This funding would be provided by central government with no contribution required by Nottinghamshire County Council. During April 2006 and May 2006 the DWP will be considering proposals from the eight authorities it has approached, against the budget available for the programme, so any allocation to Nottinghamshire may be different. If less funding is secured from the DWP than has been bid for, the project budget will be reduced accordingly. A breakdown of the total budget for the proposed project is detailed below:

Activity	2 Year Total	Outcomes
First Contact	£186,500.00	5,000 checklists, 10,000 referrals, 800 staff/ volunteers trained in holistic working
Community Outreach Advocates	£139,156.00	1,260 hard to reach including BME and faith groups. 315 each worker
Website Project	£158,000.00	100 computers in separate community based venues linked to the web and 96 champions trained
Practical Services	£405,000.00	750 cases for minor adaptations, 100 referrals to other agencies through 1 st Contact Signposting Scheme

<u>Activity</u>	<u>2 Year Total</u>	<u>Outcomes</u>
Transport	£70,000.00	
Post intermediate care support	£52,000.00	
Senior Peer Mentoring	£64,000.00	250 people in 1 to 1 or groups
Volunteering development	£96,620.00	
Evaluation monitor (p/t post)	£48,000.00	
Administrative worker (p/t post)	£22,000.00	
<u>TOTAL</u>	<u>£1,241,276.00</u>	

This breakdown is presented in more detail on pages 14 and 15 of the appendix.

3.1.3 Equal Opportunities Implications

This projects aims to maximise social inclusion specifically amongst people who are hard to reach.

3.1.4 Implications for Service Users

This project aims to pilot the provision of modern, integrated preventative services for older people.

4. Recommendations

4.1 It is recommended that:

- (a) Cabinet agree that Nottinghamshire should become part of the Link-Age Plus pilot initiative, subject to ministerial approval
- (b) every effort is made to ensure that any initiatives resulting from the project are sustainable after the end of the project, without committing the Council at the stage to pick up the cost of the project once the grant from the DWP has ended. Where continued funding is indicated, this will be incorporated into the budget planning process for 2008/09.

5. Legal Services' Comments (DLS 07/04/06)

- 5.1 The proposals are within the authority of the Cabinet carrying out the responsibilities of the Social Services Committee. There are no other legal issues arising from the report that require specific comment.

6. Director of Resources' Financial Comment (DW 05/04/2006)

- 6.1 The financial implications are contained within the body of the report.

7. Background Papers Available for Inspection

7.1 None.

8. Electoral Division(s) Affected

8.1 Nottinghamshire.

**COUNCILLOR DICK ANTHONY
Cabinet Member for Social Services**

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