



Subject:	Advice Sector Support for Welfare Reform
Date:	22 June 2018
Reporting Officer:	Nigel Grimshaw, Strategic Director City & Neighbourhood Services Department
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Restricted Reports	
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?	
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Some time in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>

Call-in	
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues
1.1	The purpose of this report is to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">i. Present DfC's update on the implementation of the Evason Report recommendations relating to Advice and the Welfare Reform Support Projectii. Present for consideration the DfC's Letter of Variance to the Community Support Programme (CSP) 2018/19, specifically relating to additional funding for Advice Sector Support for Welfare Reform and Universal Credit Implementation.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	The Committee is asked to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">i. Note the contents of this report relating to DfC's update on the Evason Report Recommendations.

	ii. Consider and agree the amendments and variations to the Contract for Funding detailed in the Letter of Variance
3.0	Main report
3.1	<p><u>Evason Report Update</u></p> <p>Members will be aware that as part of the Fresh Start agreement the Executive agreed to establish a small Working Group under the leadership of Professor Eileen Evason, to bring forward recommendations to the NI Executive on how the impact of Welfare Reform could be mitigated.</p>
3.2	The report acknowledged that access to skilled, independent advice will be of critical importance in managing and helping people to negotiate all of the changes in the legislation and proposed an Advice Strategy with three Strands.
3.3	<p>STRAND 1:</p> <p>An SSA contract with the independent advice sector to deliver a centralised NI-wide Freephone service. This contract should not displace/replace other SSA funding for advice services e.g. benefit uptake- £250,000 per annum (£1m over 4 years)</p>
3.4	<p>STRAND 2:</p> <p>Additional funding delivered through local Councils for Northern Ireland-wide “front-line” face-to-face independent advice and representation. This funding should not require match-funding from Councils, should be ‘ring-fenced’ specifically for the purposes of welfare reform, should not displace/replace other Council funding for advice services and thus should increase capacity at the frontline and increase the digital capacity of the frontline. £1.25m per annum (£5m over 4 years)</p>
3.5	<p>STRAND 3:</p> <p>Additional funding delivered through the Regional Infra-structure Support (RISP, Advice) contract to cover additional welfare-reform related activity including ICT infra-structure, increasing the digital capacity of the advice sector, training, specialist support, information, publications, social policy and should not displace/replace other RISP funding for advice services.- £500,000 per annum (£2m over 4 years)</p>
3.6	An update on the implementation of the Evason recommendations relating to Advice and the £8m funding committed to the provision of additional independent advice services to support citizens through the introduction of Welfare Reform has been provided by DfC Officials and is contained in APPENDIX 2 attached to this report.

Amendments to the CSP Contract

- 3.7 Members will recall in March, Committee considered a report which provided information on pending developments in relation to support for generalist advice services and Welfare Reform which form an integral part of the Evason Report recommendation on Advice
- 3.8 The report outlined that at the time DfC were reviewing a regional advice services contract. This contract with this regional provider that has not been renewed for 2018/19. The related funding is essential to support frontline advice provision particularly in relation to **welfare reform**. DfC Officials had indicated their preferred option was to request support from local councils to administer this funding in 2018/19.
- 3.9 Council has now received a Letter of Variance to the Community Support Programme (CSP) 2018/19, specifically relating to additional funding for Advice Sector Support for Welfare Reform. The LoV for consideration is contained in APPENDIX 1.
- 3.10 In summary, this is an additional allocation of £268,373.72 and does not require match funding from Council. Although this is a variance to the current CSP funding contract it is ring-fenced for a specific purpose to support Welfare Reform and Universal Credit implementation. It includes:
- £191,525.88 to employ 10 Frontline Advisers (6 in Citizen Advice Offices and 4 with Independent Advice centres)
 - £32,000 towards Additional Support (e.g. staff training)
 - £10,800 Training package for five advice offices in West Belfast.
 - £34,047.84 Digital Support package for five advice offices in West Belfast.
- 3.11 **Please Note** Funding for the Training and Digital support packages are aligned with the roll-out of Universal Credit which went live in the Falls Road and Shankill Road on 13 June 2018 and will go live in Andersonstown on 27 June 2018. It is expected Council will receive a subsequent Letter of Variance detailing further support packages when Universal Credit is rolled-out in the other parts of the city starting in September.
- 3.12 DfC officials have indicated they will conduct all monitoring for this specific funding allocation.
- 3.13 **Financial & Resource Implications** There are no specific financial and resource implications. Council are not required to match fund this allocation.

3.14	<u>Equality or Good Relations Implications</u> There are no relevant equality considerations associated with this report.
4.0	Appendices – Documents Attached
	Appendix 1 - Letter of Variance Appendix 2 - Evason Report Update