Strategic Commissioning Group – 6/12/23

VASLan presented to the HSCP Strategic Commissioning Group on 6/12/23, with a view to getting all the arrangements around the next cycle of the Integrated Care Fund approved. The following was agreed;

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1. That the funding allocation be confirmed at £1.3m (£650k p/a) for the period April 2024 to March 2026
2. The priorities for the fund are approved, and the range of voices and opinions heard at Locality Networks were factored into the decision making (360 feedback below)
3. The process for the next funding round from the timeline for applications (within the deadlines we are operating within) to the improved and more proportionate evaluation process

Community Feedback from the Third Sector

VASLan facilitate Locality Networks in each locality, where local third sector organisations take the lead and convene local organisations to explore deeper partnership and collaboration. Supported by the Health and Social Care Partnership, amongst other priorities, we (1) facilitate and support an increase in community engagement related to health and care initiatives, and (2) test local views on what matters in health and care.

Through the Locality Networks, VASLan held consultation events on the future of the ICF. VASLan also carried out similar activity with current grant holders, and the Chief Officers Group. Part of VASLan’s role is to facilitate the range of voices and views from across the third sector, and ensure this is heard by policy shapers and decision makers. Below is a highlight summary of the points made, and the response from the HSCP;

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| **Third Sector Voices** | **Summary of HSCP Response** |
| Multi-year agreements, eg 3 years plus, allows us to be better plan, have a high performing workforce, and better deliver on the outcomes of the fund. | Agreed. After this 2 year cycle there will be a further 2 year funding round from 1st April 2026 to 31st March 2028. This will then allow us to align with the new Strategic Commissioning Plan and enter 3 year funding cycles. |
| Inflationary uplifts would allow us to meet our increase in direct costs and focus on quality project delivery. | Agreed. We accept that with funding remaining static, it is a real terms reduction. Therefore, we acknowledge we will get less services with the same envelope. |
| Supply and demand isn’t matching up, we are empathetic to public sector efficiencies having to be found, but this is increasing demand on third sector services, without any additional (or often reduced) resources | We acknowledge with the c£33m funding gap we have for 24/25 that more than ever we need to work in partnership with the third sector. The excellent report from current grant holders demonstrated the impact of the projects and justified no requirement for efficiencies or savings. |
| A desire from many colleagues to see the fund focus in particular on the ‘greater emphasis on early intervention, prevention and inequalities’ priority – some very keen to ensure this is open to activity with children and young people. | We have 4 priorities in line with the Strategic Commissioning Plan, happy for you to apply based on which most appropriate to the people you support. Up to the applicant to identify the client group, whilst avoiding any duplication. |
| Other find the priorities overall unclear and would welcome more clarity as to what that may look like in a third sector context | We will ask VASLan to give examples to make this clearer, in the fund guidance. |
| Can we forward plan better so we can have longer application process and timelines | Yes, see above re alignment with Strategic Commissioning Plan |
| ICF funding should be directed towards activity that is already proven to be making a difference, as opposed to looking at ‘new ideas’ | You do not have to come up with a new idea, happy to receive applications from projects with evidence of impact, and from innovative new ideas. |
| Mixed views on application limits, some viewing that we should have more successful organisations allowing smaller organisations to get involved, others feeling we should have less successful organisations so we maximise impact with a bit of scale | As below, we like the principles set out in the Communities Mental Health and Wellbeing Fund approach, and would like to adopt much of this process. |
| Contribution towards all associated staff and building costs should be eligible, not solely volunteer costs | Happy to receive proportionate budgets in applications to include contributions to staff and building costs. Keen to see resource directly allow for service delivery. |
| Positive feedback from current holders re evaluation, focus on case studies and speaking to beneficiaries directly, asking for further support from VASLan | We are happy to streamline the evaluation approach, outlined below. |
| It would be beneficial if the partnership panel could provide feedback to unsuccessful applicants | The panel will provide feedback to unsuccessful applicants. |

ICF Background

The remainder of this paper sets out some of the information supplied to HSCP which led to the next ICF cycle being approved.

The Third Sector Integrated Care Fund (ICF) was first approved in April 2016. Following this initial approval, the fund has had three rounds of a full application process and a number of project extensions as shown in the table.

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| April 16 – March 18 | March 18 – June 18 | June 18 – Sept 19 | Sept 19 – March 20 | April 20 – June 21 | July 21 – March 24 |
| Round 1 | Extension Period | Round 2 | Extension Period | COVID-19 Extension Period | Round 3 plus Extensions |

To date as a result of various factors, we haven’t been able to align ICF funding rounds with Strategic Commissioning Plan cycles. Various extensions to current projects, as a result of factor delaying decision making, hasn’t resulted in best use of resources. Third sector organisations have done a fantastic job and delivered excellent results, but the lack of ability to plan due to delayed decision making has impacted our collective ability to maximise the output from the investment.

Evaluation of Project Contribution

Over the period July 2021 to March 2024 (ongoing) funded projects have been monitored, quarterly reporting has focused on evidencing outputs, outcome and financial control.

Examples of cases studies, comments and evidence clearly demonstrate where Third Sector organisations in South Lanarkshire can justifiably claim they are significantly achieving some of the National Health and Wellbeing outcomes. The detail shows that many have mature systems in place to gather robust evidence of their impact, which is realising many benefits for South Lanarkshire residents.

Appendix 1 is our ICF Report for July 2021 to June 2023, which includes the following highlights;

* 6,865 people supported across 6 priority areas
* 1,254 people benefitting from group or 1 to 1 befriending support, reporting that they have safely re-engaged in their community, now feel less lonely and isolated, and have made new social connections
* 1,708 people are now able to identify their own wellbeing needs, building confidence, community resilience and independence
* 465 people have benefited from non-medical care pathways, with non-clinical community based supports preventing hospital admission or re-admission
* 1,525 people provided with local support to tackle poverty, unemployment and financial uncertainty
* 2,180 people have been asked ‘what matters to you’ and have been supported to achieve things that are important for their own mental health and wellbeing
* A range of impressive case studies

The following benefits have been extracted from quarterly ICF reports and case studies.

ICF avoids costs

* 10 general medical hospital admissions avoided @£1,508 each (2019/20 cost)
* 50 general psychiatric hospital admissions avoided @£3,180 each per week (2019/20 cost)
* Total cost avoided for 60 people = **£174,080**

Case study 1 – conversation with one women facilitated health screening and her cancer was identified at a treatable stage.

Case study 2 - suicidal thoughts before interacting with the service, none since began interacting

ICF early intervention to avoid costs

* 4,134 people’s physical health improved – assume 413 avoided GP appointments @ £34 each = **£14,042**
* 5,516 reduced isolation/improved wellbeing – assume 552 avoided GP appointments @£34 each = **£18,768**
* 908 reduced anxiety – assume 91 avoided mental health care contacts @£216 each = **£19,656**

Case study – increased mobility from exercise classes, now able to walk home when could not have previously.

ICF maintains daily living for people in need

* financial gain = **£233,423** *(income generated)*
* food distribution/vouchers – 395 not requiring food bank @ £59 per week = **£23,246**

Case study – reduced stress for an existing mental health service user.

ICF facilitating transitions:

* **18** people moving into education/training/work @£74.35 per week in benefits
* Back to school for school refusers, **2** moving into work instead
* Annual saving of **£77,324** in benefits not needed for **20 people**

Case study – supported with health & wellbeing issues to gently progress into placements and on to education/training/work.

ICF attracting volunteers

* 382 volunteering - not yet costed

ICF improving environments

* Various environmental projects and responding to a range of requests for intervention – not yet costed

**TOTAL COSTS AVOIDED IN 2022/23 = £317,116**

**TOTAL INCOME GENERATED IN 2022/23 = £381,818**

Proposed Process: April 2024 to March 2026

Within the current tight timescales already available, collectively we want to avoid any further factors delaying decision making, and in turn any required project extensions. To allow us to align with the next Strategic Commissioning Plan, we need to follow the proposed timeline below;

* 29th November 2023 – process approved
* 6th December – funding allocation confirmed
* w/c 11th December 2023 to 31st January 2024 – application process
* 1st February 2024 to 28th February 2024 – assessment via partnership panel
* 1st March 2024 – organisations awarded / rejected
* 1st April 2024 – new projects begin
* 31st March 2026 – new projects end
* 1st April 2026 to 31st March 2028 – further 2 year funding round
* 1st April 2028 to 31st March 2031 – alignment with new Strategic Commissioning Plan, move to 3 year funding cycle

The 4 fund priorities, in line with the Strategic Commissioning Plan, are as follows;

* Early intervention and prevention
* Addressing mental health and addictions
* Improving unscheduled care and optimising intermediate care
* Supporting carers

In terms of fund guidance and how to apply, the Health and Social Care Partnership have been the local signatory for our approach to the Communities Mental Health and Wellbeing Fund (CMHWF). Colleagues have also been part of the partnership panel and embedded themselves as part of our managed fund process. Through this process, Health and Social Care colleagues have shared their view that the ICF in future, in terms of fund guidance, should be shaped on the principles and practices developed over the past few years with the CMHWF).

A dedicated website page with all specific ICF information would be designed, example as follows: [Welcome to Community Mental Health and Wellbeing Fund | Community Mental Health and Wellbeing Fund (vaslan.org.uk)](https://www.vaslan.org.uk/cmhwf/). The ICF would follow the same principles in terms of our general information, application guidance notes, and how to apply.

An example of our general information pack, which we will follow the principles of therein, can be found here: [CMHWF 23/24 (vaslan.org.uk)](https://www.vaslan.org.uk/cmhwf/sites/default/files/Complete%20-%20CMHWF%202023%20General%20Information.pdf). The primary difference will be with regards to the levels of grant funding available, as follows, with all decisions being made by a partnership panel with the Health and Social Care Partnership holding accountability over the final decisions made;

* Micro grants of up to £2,000 aimed at un-constituted organisations
* Small grants (1 priority) - £2,001 to £7,500
* Medium Grant (1+ priorities) - up to £20,000
* Large Grant (2+ priorities) – up to £50,000

In terms of evaluation requirements of successful grant holders, it is proposed that we move to a more proportionate model. It is proposed that we form a learning community between the organisations, coming together to share best practice. Monitoring and reporting returns will move to bi-annually, and we will co-produce a set of consistent evaluation tools to further demonstrate the impact being delivered in our communities via the ICF resource.

Looking Ahead

We acknowledge the economic challenges faced by HSCP colleagues, and the difficult decisions re resource allocation that lie ahead. The Sustainability & Value Programme will support best use of available funds to support South Lanarkshire residents and deliver upon the Strategic Commissioning Plan. It has been widely acknowledged that some of the difficult decisions that lie ahead will lead to increased demand on third sector services. It is then essential that existing levels of community capacity are at worst maintained, if not built upon to mitigate. It is recommended based on the economic climate that the £650k remains static, acknowledging that in itself is a real terms reduction.

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7.12.23