

**DERBYSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL**

**MEETING OF CABINET MEMBER – HEALTH AND COMMUNITIES**

**08 March 2018**

Report of the Strategic Director – Commissioning, Communities and Policy

**PROTECTING VULNERABLE PEOPLE IN DERBYSHIRE FROM SCAM MAIL COMMUNICATIONS**

**(1) Purpose of Report** To seek the Cabinet Member's approval to enter into an agreement with, and pay a one-off grant of £25,000 to, Outreach Solutions to support victims of scam mail communications and to raise awareness amongst the public at large, partner organisations and other agencies about the potential harm from scams as part of the Derbyshire Scam Watch initiative.

**(2) Information and Analysis** Derbyshire Trading Standards Service (DTSS) currently supports local vulnerable people who are at risk from the activities of rogue traders and in particular those that promulgate scam mail. Although a potential breach of the Consumer Protection from Unfair Trading Regulations 2008 (CPR), the persons responsible for sending scam mail are usually based abroad and thus it is very difficult for individual local authorities to bring the perpetrators to Court. As such, for many years, DTSS has sought to raise awareness about the potential harmful effects of scam mail to local residents.

A relatively recent development has been an agreement between the Metropolitan Police, the Royal Mail and the National Trading Standards Scams Team (NTSST) to intercept mail from UK residents thought to be in response to an approach from the fraudsters. The fraudsters typically use UK 'Post Office Box' Addresses. Any monies or bank or credit card authorisations sent by a UK resident in response to one of the scammers is collated by NTSST and then forwarded, by written agreement, to the relevant local authority trading standards service. This then enables the Local Authority to arrange for the return of the mail to the local resident and also, hopefully, to arrange for a meeting to explain that the correspondence is likely to be misleading.

As well as CPR legislation, local authorities have a duty to enforce the provisions of the Care Act 2014. This requires the local authority to consider whether local people might be victims of abuse – including financial abuse – and includes theft, fraud and internet scamming; and to ensure that local services work together to facilitate appropriate support.

DTTS works closely with Adult Care and other partners to consider the needs of local residents who may be victims of mail fraud. As well as a history of awareness raising events including an annual 'Scamnesty' event with Corporate Communications Team and Derbyshire Library Service, DTTS entered into an agreement to receive and respond to referrals from the National Trading Standards Scams Team. A programme of visits was instigated and in April 2015 the Division entered into a partnership with North East Derbyshire CAB to set up Derbyshire Scam Watch (DSW) to both raise awareness amongst Derbyshire residents and stakeholders and to conduct visits to local residents.

The DSW partnership was supported by a £25,000 grant from the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC). This money was used to pay for a part-time coordinator hosted by North East Derbyshire CAB to recruit and help train volunteers to carry out home visits. Some 100 visits were made by CAB volunteers during the course of the 12 month project. This is in addition to 71 visits by Trading Staff in 2015-16 and 84 visits in 2016-17. Approximately 140 visits have been made by Trading Standards staff so far in 2017-18 and there are currently some 260 referrals still to process. It should be noted that the some of the referrals received from the National Scams Team relate to potential victims – as well as actual victims - and the intelligence can be several years old. This means that a relatively high proportion of residents have either moved address or have died.

Last year Derbyshire County Council were approached by Outreach Solutions Ltd (OSL) from Glossop, Derbyshire seeking to enhance the support for local victims of scams. OSL are owned by three charities; Age UK, Volunteering Matters and a private company the CEL Group and was set up 10 years ago to help with the 'digital switchover' from analogue to digital television. They have since broadened their focus to include raising awareness and supporting victims of scams and have run programmes in a number of other local authority areas including Nottinghamshire and Leicestershire.

OSL have raised funds from the private sector and are seeking match-funding of £25,000 to support the Derbyshire Scam Watch initiative. Specifically, OSL are offering the following:

***What will the Outreach Solution programme look like on the ground?***

*Working with local voluntary and community sector (VCS) organisations we will reach and engage the target audience through:*

- *Embedding messaging into 186 existing community events*
- *375 one to one discussions providing more support to those who are particularly vulnerable*

- *250 embedded one to one discussions - during home visits or via existing services to reach the most socially isolated, and consequently most vulnerable individuals*
- *Awareness raising through placing materials and posters in 310 relevant community locations*
- *Cascade of messaging through volunteers into the wider community*

*OSL provide complete Project and Programme Management in phase 1 and 2 of the Tackling Fraud programmes including:*

- *Commission delivery partners*
- *Due diligence work*
- *Contracting*
- *Comprehensive training –*
  - *on the topic*
  - *bespoke for needs*
  - *stakeholder training*
- *Provide a comprehensive delivery partner toolkit*
- *Provide all required ongoing delivery support*
- *Provide all programme collateral*
- *Inception press release and follow up*
- *Continue to develop funding streams and contributions*
- *Develop local partnership activity*
- *Monthly reporting and contract management*
- *Monthly 'View from the Ground'*
- *Monthly info and update re fraud trends and news for delivery partners*
- *Collation of anecdotal evidence*
- *Final report, finding and recommendations*

It is understood that OSL can enhance the existing DSW programme by increasing voluntary sector engagement, comprehensive training for volunteers, improved project planning and reporting.

In addition to these targeted communications, the communications team would work closely with OSL to disseminate a wider message regarding the initiative to all residents and employees through the Derbyshire Now residents' magazine, residents' e-newsletters, staff and partner communications, the media and social media. There would be no additional direct cost for this publicity.

**(3) Financial Considerations** Derbyshire Trading Standards Service is planning a restructure in 2018-19 to deliver required savings. The service currently devotes approximately two full time equivalent officers to support mail scam activities. The required match funding was the subject of a growth bid to support vulnerable people which was approved by Council on 07 February 2018. It is understood that at least 65% of the funds raised by OSL to support the project will be provided to the voluntary sector to deliver the programmes detailed in the main body of the report.

**(4) Other Considerations** In preparing this report the relevance of the following factors has been considered: legal, prevention of crime and disorder, equality and diversity, human resources, environmental, health, property and transport considerations.

**(5) Key Decision** No

**(6) Call-In** Is it required that call-in be waived in respect of the decisions proposed in the report? No

**(7) Background Papers** Held on file within Commissioning, Communities and Policy. Officer contact details – Robert Taylour, extension 39830.

**(8) OFFICER'S RECOMMENDATION** That the Cabinet Member approves:

Entering into an agreement with Outreach Solutions, including the payment of a one-off grant of £25,000, to support victims of scam mail communications and to raise awareness amongst the public at large, partner organisations and other agencies about the potential harm from scam communications as part of the Derbyshire Scam Watch initiative.

**Emma Alexander**  
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