

DERBYSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

CABINET

16 July 2013

Report of the Deputy Chief Executive and Strategic Director for Health and Community Safety

**Derbyshire Unemployed Workers Centre and the Trade Union Safety Team
(Health and Communities)**

1. Purpose of the Report

To consider requests to provide grant funding to support the work of the Derbyshire Unemployed Workers' Centre (DUWC) and the Trade Union Safety Team (TRUST) for 2013/14.

2. Information and Analysis

Background

Derbyshire Unemployed Workers Centre

Derbyshire Unemployed Workers' Centre was established in 1983 as part of a larger network of Trade Union Council (TUC) Unemployed Workers' Centres. The Centre's objectives are:

- To offer welfare rights advice and representation to unemployed, under-employed and unwaged workers and those in receipt of, or entitled to benefits;
- To relieve poverty amongst unemployed people, those in receipt of, or entitled to benefit and other disadvantaged people in Derbyshire;
- To promote the rights of unemployed workers in particular and all workers in general to secure improvements in benefits and other factors that relieve poverty and deprivation;
- To work towards full employment and provision of quality jobs;
- To provide an information and resource service for unemployed, under-employed and unwaged workers and those in receipt of, or entitled to benefits;
- To conduct research on issues affecting poverty and disadvantage within the communities of Derbyshire;
- To recruit and train volunteers from amongst the local communities to:
 - Increase their skills and confidence;
 - Assist the work of the Derbyshire Unemployed Workers' Centres in the relief of poverty.

The county council contributed to the core costs of the organisation for many years. However, during 2010 the Derbyshire Partnership Forum (DPF) undertook at Total Place Review of Advice Services which identified that people in

Derbyshire living in similar circumstances do not have equal access to services. In response to this the county council agreed to stop funding DUWC and the Trade Union Safety Team from April 2011 and re-distributed this funding, which has been used to commission specialist Employment Advice services through Citizens Advice Bureaux in South Derbyshire, Derbyshire Dales, Erewash and Amber Valley. This service is now embedded and working effectively.

During 2011/12 year, DUWC dealt with 8385 enquiries at Centres and outreach locations across North Derbyshire. The majority of these enquiries originated from Chesterfield, Bolsover, North East Derbyshire and Amber Valley. Enquiries originating from the rest of Derbyshire made up just 4% of the total enquiries received. DUWC offers advice at 15 locations across north Derbyshire and it is estimated that more than £2.3m was brought into the local economy during 2011/12 as a result of support received. The Unemployed Workers Centre represented 326 individuals at Appeals Tribunals during 2011/12 and has continued to campaign on the take up of benefits through the provision of information and road shows for residents.

DUWC employs six paid staff who offer specialist advice and guidance and has many volunteers who are recruited and trained to assist in the delivery of services. The training of volunteers is one of the greatest pressures on resources, particularly since this is no longer undertaken by the County Council's Welfare Benefits Information and Advice Team. There is a recognised link between highly trained staff and the quality of advice given, and DUWC wish to ensure that all volunteers receive high quality training. However, increased demand for services, and subsequently the need to train more volunteers has made the provision of training difficult to resource.

DUWC has continued to work in partnership to deliver services. They work directly with the county council's Welfare Benefits Information and Advice Team, through the provision of services to clients contacting Call Derbyshire or the Benefits Helpline, with support to fill in forms. County council officers have supported tribunal cases on behalf of DUWC. As a member of the Advice Derbyshire consortium, DUWC have contributed to joint work to deliver benefit take-up campaigns, to build capacity and raise quality standards, and to provide a strategic voice for independent advice provision.

DUWC anticipate that many elements of welfare reform, particularly the introduction of Personal Independence Payments and changes to the Disability Living Allowance scheme will have a disproportionate effect on the users of their service. The subsequent effect of this will be an increase in the number of enquiries and requests for support. Similar changes to the benefits system in the past have seen a fourfold increase in the numbers of clients, which would be unmanageable with current funding levels.

Trade Union Safety Team

The Trade Union Safety Team (TRUST) provides help and support to anyone diagnosed with an industrial disease throughout Derbyshire. They undertake

diagnostic testing for Industrial Deafness and Vibration White Finger to underpin benefits and civil compensation claims. TRUST work closely with DUWC and refer clients for benefits advice when necessary. TRUST run support groups for anyone diagnosed with Tinnitus and asbestos related diseases, bringing people who have been diagnosed with the same condition together for mutual support.

Recently, TRUST have seen an increase in the numbers of people accessing their services, and expect this to continue to increase. During 2011/12 more than 700 enquiries were dealt with by staff, either over the phone, at the office or in client's homes, and an increased number of complex cases has brought additional challenges.

Requests for Funding

The demand for services provided by both DUWC and TRUST has increased significantly over recent years, and this is anticipated to continue. DUWC have recently approached the county council to request a contribution of £39,750 towards core costs, whilst TRUST has requested £5,763. Given the increased pressures on communities, particularly as austerity measures bite, it would seem reasonable to consider these requests. The work undertaken by DUWC and TRUST supports the Council's priorities to tackle poverty, support communities during hard times and support community-based advice services. Given the challenges outlined above and the likelihood that the numbers of people requiring support and assistance will increase, it is recommended that the funding requested for the 2013/14 year be provided.

In line with other grants to Voluntary and Community Sector organisations it is recommended that the grant is subject to a Service Level Agreement (SLA) which will set out expectations and requirements on both DUWC and TRUST and the county council in relation to the grant award. Six monthly monitoring will ensure both the quality of the service and accountability for the funding.

DUWC have recently taken the decision to concentrate on advice and representation services. Any campaigning in relation to political policies, and the organisation of protest, will be taken on by a new body. Assurance has been given to the council that any grant funding provided will be used solely for the purposes of supporting the advice function of the centre and not for political activities. This will be reflected in the Service Level Agreement.

3. Financial Considerations

The proposed grants would be met from departmental underspends.

4. Legal Considerations

The Director of Legal Services will advise on the terms of the proposed Service Level Agreements.

5. Other Considerations

In preparing this report the relevance of the following factors has been considered: prevention of crime and disorder, equality of opportunity, environmental, health, personnel and property.

6. Key Decision – No

7. Call-in

Is it required that Call-in be waived in respect of the decisions in the report? No

8. Background Papers

Held on file in the Policy & Research Division

9. OFFICER'S RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:

1. Grant funding totalling £39,750 be provided to Derbyshire Unemployed Workers Centre to cover the core costs associated with the delivery of advice services in 2013/14.
2. Grant funding totalling £5,763 be provided to the Trade Union Safety Team to cover core costs associated with the delivery of services in 2013/14.
3. Service level Agreements be developed in conjunction with Derbyshire Unemployed Workers Centre and the Trade Union Safety Team, and these be monitored on a six monthly basis in line with other Voluntary and Community Sector grant agreements.

David Lowe
Deputy Chief Executive
Strategic Director for Health and Community Safety