

Equality and Diversity Case Studies

Directorate: Resources

Service: Partnerships

Title: Ensuring equality with third sector grant decommissioning and introduction of new grant schemes

Introduction:

Following local government reorganisation Cheshire West & Chester Council inherited a number of Third Sector grant agreements from the predecessor authorities. To ensure stability for the Third Sector during reorganisation the new council agreed to honour all grants for a further 12 months to all organisations in receipt of funding to allow time for the council to restructure its Third Sector grant arrangements. The Council restructured its grant funding to ensure that funding was applied for and awarded in an open, transparent and consistent way

Challenges:

One of the major challenges was ensuring we understood the implications to the organisation and also the service users of the organisations if their grant was reduced or removed. An additional challenge was ensuring all organisations had the opportunity to respond to new arrangements.

How the challenges were overcome:

The Third Sector Assembly and affected organisations were involved throughout the changes to funding. This included a 12 week consultation on the new funding schemes during which the Council attended a number of Third Sector network events and also direct correspondence with all organisations that were in receipt of funding at that time.

In addition to the wider consultation an equality impact assessment was carried out with every organisation that received funding and would be affected by the changes. The purpose of this process was to identify organisation's that if funding was lost would have a detrimental effect on the organisation and also the clients they worked with. As a result of this

process one local charity providing services for people with disabilities retained all of its grant funding. Where organisations were to lose their current funding we ensured that we acted in line with our Compact commitments and gave a minimum of 3 months notice.

Outcomes:

As well as consulting on the introduction of the new funding schemes the council also consulted on the grant purpose, criteria and also application process and timescales to ensure that we were not introducing unnecessary barriers. This resulted in changes being made to the purpose and criteria and also changes were made to the application timescales making them shorter than the council proposed to fit in with the needs of the organisations. In order to ensure that the grant applications were assessed in a consistent and fair way a scoring matrix was developed based on the funding purpose and the assessment process was conducted by a panel of four council officers.

When planning the process of the grant review and possible decommissioning, a guidance note was produced this detailed all parts of the process to be followed. This was then circulated to all managers of grants or contracts with the 3rd sector to ensure that good practice was followed across all departments.

What we could have done better:

On reflection it would have been useful to inform the groups who had contributed to the consultation what changes were made as a result of this and what were the final outcomes.

In addition we could maybe consider publishing the overall scores for each application to the grant schemes to demonstrate an open and transparent process.