

Neighbourhood Fund Application

The following application is recommended for approval from the 2020/21 NF budget

Project Name	Organisation	Funding Requested
Lifeline	ELCAP (in partnership with Community Hub groups/organisations)	£5,000 (total cost £15,600)

Project Description

The Coalfield Lifeline project will be a development of the Hub that was established by the City Council and has operated during the COVID-19 crisis. The project will seek to rehabilitate the vulnerable and isolated back into society after five months of shielding through the provision of a befriending and shopping bus experience. Regular befriending and welfare calls have ensured that those most vulnerable know that they will receive contact at least once a week and the offer of shopping and other support has been available.

To reintroduce some to shopping for themselves a revised shopping bus service will be offered. Current social distancing restrictions would limit the number of passengers to four per bus which will allow the vulnerable to reacquaint themselves to the discipline of shopping but under the new requirements. The project will run for six months from October 2020 until the end of March 2021 and see an average of 48 people per week using the service.

The service will be a door to door service to a local retail park where there are a variety of shopping experiences available including cafes and coffee shops where people can socialise. Social distancing requires us to carry no more than four passengers at a time at the moment and due to the anxiety that most of the potential service users have each bus will have its driver in attendance around and about the retail park to offer advice and assistance as required for the 3 hours that will be spent there.

How it Reaches Coalfield Priority – Reducing Social Isolation

The COVID-19 pandemic has seen a significant rise in enforced social isolation which has only compounded the existing issue of social isolation. Whilst many of the socially isolated were known amongst the Hub partners the pandemic saw a significant rise in those becoming socially isolated as well as those who were socially isolated but were unknown to the Hub partners. The reasons behind the isolation are many and varied such as age, infirmity, mobility issues, family living at a distance, lack of confidence, anxiety and many other reasons that could be overcome through the provision of this Lifeline service. The weekly (often twice or three times weekly) welfare and befriending calls carried out by volunteers to residents right across the Coalfield area has been a lifeline to some.

There is a ready and waiting list of service users from those who previously used the Shopping Bus Service as well as local Lunch Club Members. There are those who have been supported through the Hub and need some assistance to regain some of that independence rather than have their shopping delivered to them and there will be the ongoing referral system from the Hub partners going forward. We expect the Lifeline Service will also become a signposting service to other community groups and activities within the Coalfields area such as Lunch Clubs; craft groups; social groups etc.

Partners involved

Whilst run by ELCAP this will be a Coalfield area project run in conjunction with the Hub partners such as the City Council; Gentoo; AGE UK; Sunderland GP Alliance's Social Prescribing team and our VCS partners such as New Dawn; SHARP; SPACE4; 3TBL; SNCBC, B Active etc.

The cost to run the Lifeline service will be £15,600. The anticipated fares of £4,992 from passenger contribution, along with restricted funding received from Sir James Knot Trust and the Joicey Trust, leaves a shortfall of £5,000. A contribution from the Area Committee would enable a greater impact. The real benefit will be the reduction in social isolation of both our new and existing service users.

Recommendation: Approve