

Epping Forest District Council - Community Support Engagement Officer

Grant determination FSF-01022018 – EFDC.

The grant total was £41,970 which was used to recruit and employ 1 full time officer in a 12-month post. Funds were used for staff costs including on costs, contract management, mobile/ICT, safeguarding protections, general office expenses, training and travel.

Introduction, Aims & Specified Requirements for the Partnership:

The Community Support Engagement Officer (CSEO) was created to engage people in the community who required additional support and help to move forward in their lives.

The aim was to engage 250 residents to help them start a customer journey that would lead them towards the labour market. The new role acted as a conduit between key service providers, to improve resident engagement, targeting the hardest to reach and most isolated groups.

The post utilised multi agency partnerships and fostered new relationships with community partners. Data was combined across boundaries, within legislative tolerance. Residents were encouraged to move forward in line with their personal capability, whether this be towards employment, training, volunteering or towards a constructive relationship with a relevant service provider.

The project tackled current issues facing Epping Forest District, including the consequences of homelessness, anti-social behaviour, cuckooing, the expansion of county lines and support for those accessing drug and rehabilitation programmes. Rural isolation in the north of the district, domestic abuse and residents with complex needs are also an ongoing priority.

Experience and findings were drawn on from the successful partnership of the Community Safety Partnership Team and the Council from previous work they had completed.

Primary Success Indicators:

Engage 250 residents with the view of helping them start a customer journey

Demonstrate 50% Social Justice Outcomes i.e.

- Moving into work
- Moving closer to work
- Self-development, personal resilience

- More effective management of aspects of their lives, contributing to their vulnerabilities e.g. substance misuse
- Improved health and wellbeing
- Improved skills and employability
- Volunteering
- Securing or retaining housing
- Increased attendance at school for those families with school age children
- Prevention of sexual exploitation of young girls (particularly) and prevention of being engaged with gangs
- A reduction in offending behaviour.

Management

The CSEO role was developed by Caroline Wiggins, Service Manager-Community Resilience, EFDC, working in partnership with Lauren Kilbey, Customer Service Leader, Community Engagement, DWP.

Seoni Vasishtha was the successful candidate.

The CSEO was line managed by Adrian Petty from Epping Forest District Council, Adrian was responsible for the post holder and all human resources.

A DWP Contract Manager, Sarah Newham, oversaw the day to day running of the contract and planned in monthly data sharing meetings with the CSEO at Loughton Jobcentre Plus. A working relationship with the EFDC Line Manager was maintained. The DWP Contract Manager evaluated performance against the contract minimum requirements of 250 engagements and 125 starts on programme in a 12- month period. Meetings also consisted of discussions around the role and the progress the CSEO was making.

The CSEO had a DWP HEO, Dawn Fountain, as a point of contact within Loughton Jobcentre Plus. Desk space was also provided. The CSEO worked alongside the Jobcentre Plus work coaches to complement the customer/resident journey. Additionally, the CSEO conducted outreach in the community with stakeholders/partners and utilised the knowledge of the teams within EFDC and DWP.

Delivery

The post commenced on the 5th of September 2018 and completed on the 1st of September 2019. Resident engagement ceased in July 2019 due to unforeseen circumstances, at this point all target expectations had been exceeded.

The CSEO was proactive and fully understood the requirements of the post. Strong relationships with her EFDC line manager and the management team in Loughton JCP supported the successful delivery of the role. All parties were clear on the aims of the grant award and strived to deliver the objectives. The CSEO built a strong rapport with Jobcentre Plus colleagues and external stakeholders. The CSEO was very much part of the Loughton Jobcentre team. During the DWP monitoring visits I could see that the CSEO was respected by the coaches and they clearly valued her approachable, helpful and knowledgeable nature. In return the CSEO was very mindful of her role and how it was set up to complement the Jobcentre Plus offer and not there as an additional coaching role or to mirror the JCP work coach. The work coaches were extremely complimentary of the CSEO, Seoni. In my view the relationships established helped identify the most appropriate customers/residents and achieve the referrals required for the project.

The CSEO was very thorough when capturing performance and submitting the evidence to support the DWP Combined Monitoring and Claim Form (CMCF).

Monthly meetings with the DWP Contract Manager demonstrated a clear data sharing route. The CSEO ensured participating residents had signed a consent form and those that did not wish to sign were encouraged to do so at each intervention. Data was scanned into EFDC secure storage and will be kept for 2 years.

The CSEO was able to provide detailed feedback to the DWP Contract Manager about each referral. Both parties discussed and explore potential route-ways for the resident if the case was not progressing.

Performance

The CSEO exceeded the 250 engagement target stipulated in the Grant, achieving 264 engagements (105.6%)

264 residents were engaged with 129 residents accepting an offer of support.

The CSEO achieved 129 starts on the programme against the target of 125 residents (103.2%)

The Grant required that 50% of residents would achieve a social justice outcome. A social justice outcome will demonstrate movement towards a positive change, for example engaging with a GP, attending debt management meetings, contacting a mental health support group. 177 social justice outcomes were achieved (141.6%)

49 residents did not consent to data sharing however the CSEO supported those individuals, data was not able to be disclosed to DWP. Although they were counted in as part of the 129 participating residents.

The following performance breakdown details the categories of the 129 consented residents.

The 129 known residents consisted of the following groups.

- 75/129 (58%) Female
- 54/129 (42%) Male
- 23/129 (18%) Lone Parents
- 24/129 (19%) Disabled Person
- 18/129 (14%) Aged 50+
- 19/129 (15%) JSA 6 months +

80 consented residents were in receipt of the following welfare benefits:

- Carers Allowance (2)
- DLA (1)
- Employed (2)
- ESA (4)
- Income Support (5)
- JSA (18)
- Pension Credit (1)
- PIP (4)
- PIP and UC (2)
- State Pension (3)
- UC (35)
- UC and Carers Allowance (3)

No data was discussed with DWP for the 49 residents who did not consent to data sharing.

Residents sought support for the following categories:

- Homelessness
- Mental Health
- Ex Offender
- Social Isolation
- Temporary Accommodation
- Physical Health/Mobility
- Debt
- Domestic Violence
- Rent Arrears
- PTSD
- Caring Responsibilities
- Asperger's
- PIP
- Gang Related
- Suicidal Thoughts/Threats
- Lone Parent Support

- Housing Register
- Failed Habitual Residency Test
- UC
- Eviction
- ADHD
- Budgeting
- Social Housing Issues
- Bereavement
- Sanctions
- Anxiety/Stress/Depression
- DHP
- APA (Alternative Payment Arrangement)
- Learning Difficulties
- Autism
- Help with opening a bank account
- ID
- Council Tax Support
- Dementia
- Alcoholism
- Drug Addiction Support
- Safe Guarding
- Backdating UC

The variation of resident need was vast. The CSEO strived to ensure she sourced a portfolio of partners and stakeholders with whom she could consult.

These partners included: (this list is not exhaustive)

- DWP Visiting Service
- DWP PIP
- DWP Work Coaches
- DWP Employer Advisers
- DWP Prison Advisers
- EFDC Housing Team
- EFDC Community Safety Partnership
- Mind
- Therapy for You
- CAB
- Action for Family Carers
- Legal Services
- Food Bank
- Open Road
- Family Solutions
- Aspire
- Age UK
- Alzheimer's Society

- Cruse Bereavement Care
- Dementia Adventure
- Peabody

Relationships were also built with the CSEO equivalents across Essex District. Good practice was shared and knowledge drawn upon at quarterly network meetings.

The total cost of the project resulted in an underspend of the grant award.

Feedback and additional comments

Caroline Wiggins, Service Manager- Community Resilience.

There are a number of successes linked to this project.

- Since being approached to host a CSEO Post in Epping Forest the relationship between Loughton Job Centre and the Community Safety Team has improved immensely, they are now a key Community Safety Partner.
- Dawn Fountain now represents the DWP on the Board of the Community Safety Partnership
- Seoni was a brilliant ambassador not only for DWP but also for EFDC and improved partnership working across a number of agencies in the district.
- Seoni's new role within Compliance at EFDC ensures there is a legacy from her role as a CSEO

Sources

Application

Terms and Condition Grant Award letter dated 23.2.2018

Start-up meeting September 2018

Partnership Meetings

Monitoring Meeting

DWP

Sarah Newham DWP Contract Manager