

Public Health
222 Upper Street, London, N1 1XR

Report of: Acting Director of Public Health

Date: 9 February 2023

Ward(s): All

Reason for urgency

Islington Council was successful in its bid to the national Health Determinants Research Collaborative (HDRC) initiative, announced in October 2022. The HDRC is a national initiative to develop research in local government to address important factors that promote health and reduce inequalities. As a result of the successful bid, the council is now due to receive significant income to support the programme over a six-year period, which is in excess of the financial thresholds that are ordinarily able to be approved by officers. As a result, the decision is reserved for the Executive. However, to comply with the programme timeline, the decision must be taken as soon as possible. The decision cannot wait until the next meeting of the Executive and it is not possible to provide 28 clear days' notice of the decision. As a delay to the decision could result in a loss of funding and the council not being able to benefit from the programme, the decision is to be taken under the urgency provisions at Procedure Rule 92 of the Council's Constitution.

Subject: Health Determinants Research Collaborative contract award to Islington Council

1. Synopsis

- 1.1. Islington Council was successful in its bid to the national Health Determinants Research Collaborative (HDRC) initiative, announced in October 2022. The HDRC is a national initiative to develop research in local government to address important factors that promote health and reduce inequalities.

- 1.2. As a result of the successful bid, the council is now due to receive significant income to support the programme over a six-year period. This report seeks approval for the receipt of the income related to the programme, as well as associated expenditure on the programme.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1. That the contract for the Health Determinants Research Collaborative (HDRC) award issued by the National Institute for Health and care Research (NIHR) be approved.

3. Background

3.1. **Nature of the Health Determinants Research Collaborative award**

- 3.1.0. The National Institute for Health and care Research (NIHR) is a major supporter of research in the UK, working closely with the NHS, academia and others. The Institute has a long track record of support for research in health inequalities, and wants to support the development of more research opportunities working with local government to tackle health inequalities and wider health determinants through a Health Determinants Research Collaborative (HDRC) initiative.
 - 3.1.1. For Islington, there is a strong strategic fit with the priorities and focus on tackling inequalities, ensuring that communities' voices are heard, and the development of data and insight to assess and make positive differences to local people's lives and needs.
 - 3.1.2. The Institute has committed £50 million to fund 13 Health Research Centres in local government across the UK. Following a very competitive process, Islington's HDRC bid was recommended for funding, subject to some additional development work to be conducted over the coming year. This will entail addressing a number of actions which need to be met to ensure Islington is ready to progress to a full HDRC from October 2023.
 - 3.1.3. The team that directly put the local proposal together involved Public Health, academic partners from University College London and London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, and HealthWatch Islington, and drew on and liaised with many other stakeholders in its development.
 - 3.1.4. Becoming an HDRC has significant potential to support and strengthen several initiatives that are underway. Local partnership and history of integrated working is well-developed in Islington, meaning that Islington is particularly well-placed to exemplify the local authority leadership and role of 'place' in future integrated care system working. Core to the local proposal is working with VCS organisations and residents. There are also well-established links with Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) who have supported the development of this successful bid. The HDRC proposal will provide an excellent opportunity to build on, accelerate and expand these existing partnerships focused around research and evaluation.

3.1.5. **Outline of approved proposal and new development year activities**

- 3.1.6. The broad aim of Islington's HDRC is to increase research capacity and collaboration at a local level and embed a sustainable research culture across the council, working with partners and the community. This will aim to reduce health inequalities and improve the health and wellbeing of Islington residents. As a 'health determinants' approach, it is not simply focused on public health as a department but encompasses the breadth of local authority functions and the work of other partners that contribute to health and wellbeing in the borough.
- 3.1.7. Any contract for services requirement which follow subsequent to receipt of this funding will be carried out in accordance with the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 and the Council's Procurement Rules. Specific implications as required will be provided on a case-by-case basis. The London Living Wage will apply.
- 3.1.8. Islington's HDRC bid is based around three core pillars:
- 3.1.9. **Data systems.** A key element of the proposal is intended to focus on the development and enhancement of Islington's data systems, integrating health and non-health data and working to improve data quality and accessibility. Islington's HDRC proposal further strengthens and enhances our ambitions to be a centre of excellence for data and insight focused on improving the wellbeing of, and reducing inequalities experienced by, Islington's residents. This additional resource will enhance the development of the council's data insight function.
- 3.1.10. **Resident & VCS engagement.** The initiative aims to develop engagement with residents in generating and using evidence to support action on health inequalities. Building on close working with existing mechanisms and partners, the HDRC seeks to widen participation and provide new ways and opportunities for residents to be part of the evidence and evaluation processes. This includes training and empowering community members in the skills to undertake community research to feed into strategic planning or evaluations.
- 3.1.11. **Training and infrastructure.** Essential to achieving the goals of the HDRC, enabling staff, residents, and other partners to develop and use the skills needed to create, use and disseminate evidence in support of action, services and plans to tackle health inequalities.
- 3.1.12. The NIHR feedback on Islington's HDRC submission recognised and noted many strengths. This included:
- the application was from a strong and enthusiastic team with the desire to embed a 'spirit of enquiry' across the local authority, and working with partners
 - the potential timing of the HDRC was optimal for Islington with changes in place across the council to deliver against the long-term commitment to reduce health inequalities.
 - the Islington HDRC team recognised the potential barriers to cultural change, such as time and resources, but identified the role of a proposed delivery board in mitigating against these risks and as a mechanism to enact change.

- the team's plans for collaborations that would be developed under the HDRC with academia, local authority and community partners in the development and use of research, building on strong relationships and existing networks.
- the overarching desire and plans for meaningful co-production with the community and plans to use existing mechanisms for dissemination and sharing learning in Islington and with other councils and academic audiences.
- the plans to build on previous experience of designing and recruiting to community champion, community engagement and similar initiatives, working with the Voluntary Community Services (VCS) and HealthWatch Islington to ensure reach into underserved communities and enable the HDRC to reach the diverse range of community health voices within Islington.
- plans for the use of non-traditional research data collection approaches and the investment in the community to build research and evaluation skills among residents and communities, including different levels of research capacity building.
- the intention to address significant health inequalities early on, in response to some of the most significant challenges in Islington including cost of living and debt and housing.
- the investment in a data platform to co-ordinate siloed data sets.
- **Development Year**
- The areas identified with the NIHR for the development year (Oct 22-Sep 23) are as follows: further development of some aspects of strategic leadership, governance and operating model for the local HDRC; developing a monitoring framework to measure annual and on-going progress on the full HDRC; co-produce the strategy for community engagement and dissemination activities with residents and VCS groups, and widen engagement and awareness with elected members; and undertake pilot work on the data challenges including the ethical and practical considerations of the use of data in research and data linkage.

3.2. **Value of the contract award**

3.2.0. The HDRC award covers two periods: a development year, and a five-year full HDRC programme. The costs of the programme are fully covered by the award budget including backfill to enable existing staff roles to contribute protected time to the HDRC, as well as additional funding for other roles and activities necessary to fulfil the objectives of the programme.

3.2.1. For the development year, there is an award of £233,888.86. For the full programme, there is an award of a total of £4,999,663.74 over the five-year period, with the award contingent on satisfactory completion of the development year objectives outlined above. Therefore, the total value of the award to Islington council is £5,233,552.60. As per the general terms of the HDRC contract, future funding levels would have an adjustment for inflation.

3.3. **Timetable**

- 3.3.0. The development year runs from October 2022 to the end of September 2023. Reports will be made at the end of March 2023 and August 2023 on progress against the development objectives. Subject to the outcome of the August 2023 progress report, NIHR would determine whether Islington proceeds into a full HDRC. The full HDRC would run from October 2023 for five years to September 2028, with anticipated quarterly and annual reviews on development and progress with the NIHR team responsible for the national scheme.

4. Implications

4.1. **Financial Implications**

- 4.1.0. The HDRC grant will run from October 2022 to September 2028. The funding is spread over an initial development year at £233,888.86 and then 5 programme years totalling £4,999,663.74. The total sum to be received over the full 6 years is £5,233,552.60.
- 4.1.1. The department has identified the expenditure to utilise this money in full in each financial year. Any unutilised money will need to be returned. The table below identified the expenditure and income profile over the 6 years of the HDRC grant.
- 4.1.2. Table 1: Planned expenditure and income (£)

Project Cost	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	Total
Total Research Costs	233,888.86	669,529.32	1,125,273.30	1,106,897.91	1,100,070.94	997,892.27	5,233,552.60
Income (NIHR Fund)	-233,888.86	-669,529.32	-1,125,273.30	-1,106,897.91	-1,100,070.94	-997,892.27	-5,233,552.60
Difference	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

- 4.1.3. The contract has provisions to deal with inflationary risks throughout the lifetime of the grant. Additional grant will be provided for inflation pressures in consultation with HM Treasury.
- Planning for the future is built into the application, from year 3 onwards reviews of staff posts and continued service provision, ensuring exit strategies exist to reduce potential liabilities and risks post 2028.

4.2. **Legal Implications**

- 4.2.0. The funding received will be used in accordance with the Work Programme contained in the NIHR Health Determinants Research Collaboration Contract. There are no specific Legal Implications at this time. As stated in Paragraph 4.1.8 above, any contract for services requirement which follow subsequent to receipt of this funding will be carried out in accordance with the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 and the Council's Procurement Rules. Specific Legal Implications will be provided on a case-by-case basis.
- 4.2.1. The decision in this report is to be taken in accordance with Procedure Rule 92 of the Council's Constitution, which allows for a General Exception notice to be issued

where it has not been possible to provide 28 days' notice of a key decision.

4.3. **Environmental Implications and contribution to achieving a net zero carbon Islington by 2030**

4.3.0. There are no environmental implications.

4.4. **Equalities Impact Assessment**

4.4.0. The council must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation, and to advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations, between those who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it (section 149 Equality Act 2010). The council has a duty to have due regard to the need to remove or minimise disadvantages, take steps to meet needs, in particular steps to take account of disabled persons' disabilities, and encourage people to participate in public life. The council must have due regard to the need to tackle prejudice and promote understanding.

4.4.1. An Equalities Impact Assessment is not required in relation to this report. It describes an overall research and development plan and a number of actions to develop the plan over the coming year. Actions that require an Equalities Impact Assessment will be assessed accordingly as part of their development and implementation.

5. Conclusion and reasons for the decision

5.1. The council has been successful in its bid for the Health Determinants Research Collaborative, which includes significant income to achieve the objectives of the programme over a six-year period. To comply with the programme timeline, the contract award must be signed as soon as possible.

Authorised by:

Acting Director of Public Health

Date: 1 February 2023

Background papers:

- None

Report Author: Jonathan O'Sullivan, Acting Director of Public Health
Email: Jonathan.osullivan@islington.gov.uk

Financial Implications Author: Tom Cooksey, Finance Manager
Email: Thomas.Cooksey@islington.gov.uk

Legal Implications Author: Mark Ferguson, Senior Commercial Contracts and Procurement
Lawyer
Email: Mark.Ferguson@islington.gov.uk