

## Report of Director of Resources and Deputy Chief Executive

### Report to Executive Board

**Date: 13<sup>th</sup> March 2013**

**Subject: Local welfare scheme**

Are specific electoral Wards affected? If relevant, name(s) of Ward(s):	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for Call-In?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? If relevant, Access to Information Procedure Rule number: Appendix number:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

### Summary of main issues

1. From April 2013 Crisis Loans for general living expenses and Community Care Grants are abolished and the budgets devolved to Local Authorities to administer. In November, the Executive Board agreed that Leeds would run a local scheme of support and approved a high level scheme subject to further development.
2. A Working Group consisting of frontline services and advice agencies currently responsible for identifying and supporting applications for Community Care Grants and Crisis Loans has further developed a proposed scheme along with the administration process. The proposed scheme is intended to provide direct support to families and vulnerable people, including families and people currently supported by s17 payments and grants from the Homelessness Prevention Fund.
3. Advice Agencies and frontline workers will continue to support applications under the proposed local scheme and will be provided with online facilities to make applications direct to Revenues and Benefits. This supported route is important in helping to filter priority claims for an award and, for Housing Support Service, provides a direct link between the Homelessness Prevention Fund and the local support scheme. Unsupported claims will be able to apply, as now, by telephone through the Contact Centre.
4. It is proposed that some of the devolved funding is earmarked to support initiatives aimed at improving the sustainability of the local support scheme and increasing the

level of debt and benefit advice to help deal with increased demand as a result of welfare reforms.

## **Recommendations**

Executive Board is asked to

- a) Approve the local welfare scheme as set out at appendix 1
- b) Approve the development of initiatives as set out in para 3.15 along with the earmarking of funds from the devolved funding to support the initiatives
- c) Approve a short pilot scheme which would see applicants referred for advice and support where this was felt beneficial
- d) Provide delegated authority for the Director of Resources to:
  - a. Vary the earmarked funding based on data provided from the first 3 months operation of the local welfare scheme; and
  - b. Allocate funding to approved initiatives with a requirement that Executive Board receives reports setting out progress and outcomes from funded initiatives.

## **1 Purpose of this report**

- 1.1** The report seeks approval for a proposed local welfare scheme to provide support for families and vulnerable people faced with unforeseen difficulties or emergency situations.
- 1.2** The report also seeks approval for a number of initiatives to be developed that are aimed at creating greater sustainability and increasing advice and support with the initiatives to be funded from within the overall devolved funding for local schemes.

## **2 Background information**

- 2.1** On 17<sup>th</sup> November 2012, the Executive Board considered a report on a local welfare scheme using funding devolved to councils as a result of the abolition of Community Care Grants and Crisis Loans for Living Expenses. The Board approved a scheme that would aim to:
  - allow people to return to or remain in the community without the need for extra care;
  - support the most vulnerable in urgent situations through signposting to appropriate support services, advice or through provision and access to goods;
  - engage individuals with appropriate support services where needed to prevent repeat applications and develop resilience;
  - support the most vulnerable in a holistic way which will have a positive effect and will minimise cash payments.
- 2.2** The key principles behind the scheme were:

- The scheme will develop arrangements with key partners, both internal and external to the Council, who advocate on behalf of clients for Community Care Grants or Crisis Loans funds to deliver elements of the scheme and make referrals for awards;
- The scheme will work closely with existing support schemes funded through the Homelessness Prevention fund and s17 payments to provide an overarching scheme of support accessed through a single route..
- The scheme will look to further develop the relationships with key partners in the 3<sup>rd</sup>, voluntary and public sector to create an integrated and sustainable local welfare provision across Leeds. This will include support and assistance in developing Food Banks and expanding Furniture Re-Use. It will over time support the creation of a clear map of local welfare provision across Leeds and the information and advice needed to access that provision. It will create clarity and reduce duplication.

The use of these resources is intended to create added value by working in partnership and supporting projects which are desirable, protect the environment and enhance the digitalisation of access to services.

- The council will work closely with Leeds City Credit Union, Post Offices Ltd and other appropriate providers to provide cash dispensing, pre-payment and financial services where required;
- The scheme will allocate funding to develop initiatives aimed at tackling fuel poverty, food poverty, financial exclusion and enhance budgeting and debt advice.

**2.3** The scheme will provide a service that is accessible, relatively simple and delivers assistance in a timely and effective manner.

**2.4** The Board approved a recommendation that a further report be brought back to the Executive Board with final scheme details following further work with relevant parties. Although, there is no specific requirement to consult on the development of a local scheme, a Working Group consisting of frontline workers from Housing Support, Mental Health support, Customer Services and Financial Inclusion as well as representatives from the Advice and Third Sector was established to provide a broad base of views about the scheme being developed in Leeds.

**2.5** A consultation exercise was also undertaken with elected members and, although there was a limited response to this, it has helped in the final design of the scheme.

### **3 Main issues**

**3.6** Leeds will receive £2,886,082 per annum scheme funding for 13/14 and 14/15. This equates to the 11/12 spend on Community Care Grants and Crisis Loans for Living Expenses by DWP in the Leeds area. It is expected that demand on the fund is likely to increase following the implementation of welfare reforms planned

for 13/14 and beyond. These reforms include changes to Housing Benefit rules affecting tenants renting in the social rented sector which will see many tenants having to pay extra rent where they are deemed to have too many bedrooms; the reforms also include changes to Council Tax Benefit which sees local schemes with less Government funding replacing national schemes and, in Leeds, will mean most working age customers getting 19% less support with their Council Tax than in previous years.

**3.7** The reduction in Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support is expected to lead to more people falling into arrears and into debt. The introduction of Universal Credit later in the year, which is built around monthly payments and tenants taking responsibility for paying their rent directly, also creates a potential for households to face difficulties as a result of budgeting pressures. Because of this and in order to both focus spend on priority groups as well as support key initiatives aimed at providing future sustainability, it is proposed that the Leeds scheme does not mirror the current DWP scheme of Crisis Loans and Community Care Grants.

**3.8** The current Community Care Grant and Crisis Loans for Living Expenses scheme operated by DWP is a cash based system. The majority of applications for Crisis Loans come from single men (54%) with the most common cause of claims relating to lost or spent benefit payments (72%). Community Care Grants are much higher in value than Crisis Loans (£492 on average compared to £50 on average for Crisis Loans). Only 22% of Crisis Loans go to families with dependent children with this figure rising to 30% for Community Care Grants.

#### *Direct Provision*

**3.9** The proposed Leeds scheme (appendix 1) will focus on providing goods instead of cash. Specifically, the goods that will be provided under the proposed scheme are:

- Basic household goods
  - Cooker
  - Fridge
  - Washing Machine
  - Beds and Bedding
  - Clothing (where need related to disability)
  - Removal costs where supported by Homeless Support Team
  - Travel costs related to Domestic Violence cases or connected to welfare of children
  - Curtains where connected to a move
- Emergency provision
  - Food
  - Baby provisions
  - Items resulting from loss due to a disaster

**3.10** White goods will be delivered and installed where required and there will be schemes with the major supermarkets for the provision of store cards to deal with food, baby provisions and clothing. In exceptional circumstances, cash can be provided but this is expected to be very rare.

- 3.11** The focus for the proposed scheme will be on supporting families, people with disabilities, people with mental health issues and people leaving care, facing homelessness or needing help with resettlement from prison. This includes people identified by Housing Support workers, Mental Health workers and Family First workers as requiring help and will include those groups currently supported through s17 payments and the Homelessness Prevention Fund. This focus will not only help to ensure funding goes to priority groups but will also help contain costs and provide funding for initiatives aimed at delivering a more sustainable provision. There was clear support from Elected Members from the consultation undertaken for supporting the groups identified as priority groups within the policy.
- 3.12** The scheme proposes that single people would not normally be supported under the scheme unless they fell into one of the priority classes. Single people affected by disability, mental health issues or facing homelessness would be supported as would single people leaving care or being resettled from prison. The majority of responses from Elected Members supported this approach but some Elected Members disagreed or were uncertain. It is proposed that single people remain outside the scheme but that the issue is reviewed once there is more information about applicants and applications following the launch of the scheme.

#### *Administration*

- 3.13** A key principle of the scheme is that it should be straightforward to access and deliver speedy decisions. Many applicants claiming a Community Care Grant are currently supported to do so and this approach will continue under the proposed scheme. Housing Support Workers, Mental Health Team workers, Advice Agencies and Third Sector organisations will be given access to an online service to make 'supported' applications. For people wishing to make claims independently a telephone service will be available through the Council's Contact Centre.
- 3.14** All applications will be channelled to Revenues and Benefits staff who will be able to carry out checks around benefit information provided, look at the history of any previous claims and make a decision. In emergency situations decisions can be made the same day but it is expected that decisions will normally be made within 1/3 days. Although there is no legal appeal route, a process will apply which will see more senior officers review decisions on request.

#### *Supporting initiatives*

- 3.15** It is proposed to allocate scheme funding to support initiatives aimed at improving the longer term sustainability of provision and/or increasing advice and support to deal with the likely increase in demand for advice following the roll out of welfare reforms. Unfortunately, there is limited data on the scheme currently provided by DWP and this makes it difficult to accurately gauge the impact of moving away from a cash based scheme or focusing support on key priority groups. It is proposed, therefore, that initially £500k of the £2.8m devolved funding in 13/14 and a similar amount from 14/15 devolved funding is earmarked to support key initiatives across the city and that the Director of Resources is given the delegated authority to vary this amount based on a review of the scheme after the first 3 months of operation.

**3.16** The areas identified as helping to provide longer term sustainability are::

- Increasing the provision of debt and benefits advice across the city with particular emphasis on specialist advice around disability benefits;
- Supporting the growth of furniture re-use schemes in Leeds working with the Furniture Re-use Group and the Household Waste Centres;
- Promoting the use of Leeds City Credit Union to encourage bank account ownership and deliver practical budgeting support solutions.
- Supporting the Third Sector to establish sustainable Food Banks where required and to develop a network of support arrangements at a local level that

**3.17** There is currently an exercise underway to commission advice services for the city and this is likely to be completed towards the end of the calendar year. The intention is that funding from the local welfare scheme should increase provision over and above that which would be provided through the commissioning exercise.

**3.18** Approval is also sought to run a short pilot to measure the effectiveness of a referral process to an advice agency for those applicants who it is felt would benefit from additional support and advice. The pilot would provide useful information that would help inform future delivery options for the local scheme as well as identifying alternative support for those who are not deemed to be a priority under the Leeds scheme.

**3.19** If approval is provided for supporting the above initiatives, officers will work with Advice Leeds Network, Furniture Re-use, Leeds City Credit Union and Third Sector Leeds to agree schemes, desired outcomes and success measures. It is further proposed that the Director of Resources is given delegated authority to allocate funding to the schemes with the requirement that Executive Board receives updates on progress and outcomes from supported initiatives.

## **4 Corporate Considerations**

### **4.1 Consultation and Engagement**

4.1.1 There is no specific requirement to carry out a public consultation exercise. The nature of the current DWP scheme and the proposed scheme is such that most people engage with the scheme infrequently and this would make a more public consultation exercise difficult. Instead, and in common with many other councils, the scheme has been developed in consultation with advice agencies and frontline staff who currently identify and support the majority of Community Care Grant applications. Elected members were also invited to comment on scheme proposals and the views of those who responded are recognised in this report.

### **4.2 Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration**

- 4.2.1 An equality screening document is attached at appendix 2. The scheme focuses on people in need irrespective of ethnicity, religion, sexuality or gender and prioritises people in need who also have a disability or a mental health issue. A locally-delivered system is deemed to be better able to identify the most vulnerable people in the area in part because of other related services already being provided and offer appropriate assistance accordingly.

#### **4.3 Council policies and City Priorities**

- 4.3.1 The proposed scheme focuses on providing support to families and vulnerable people and contributes to tackling child poverty, homelessness and debt

#### **4.4 Resources and value for money**

- 4.4.1 The scheme costs will be contained with the funding devolved from DWP to the council with the costs of administering the scheme covered by new burdens funding.

#### **4.5 Legal Implications, Access to Information and Call In**

- 4.5.1 The council is under no legal requirement to set up a scheme of local welfare assistance although there is an expectation from Government that councils will use the funding to provide flexible help to those in genuine need.

#### **4.6 Risk Management**

- 4.6.1 The Executive Board will be aware that the Government has announced funding for 2013/14 and 2014/15 only and, as a consequence, a letter has been issued to the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions seeking assurances about ongoing funding. A response is still awaited. It is proposed that elements of the scheme funding are used to develop Advice Sector and 3<sup>rd</sup> Sector provision to help meet demand from 15/16 onwards should funding reduce. The operation of the scheme, particularly in the first year, will provide detailed information on demand, needs and causes that can be used to inform ongoing and future provision.

### **5 Conclusions**

- 5.1 The Government's decision to abolish the Social Fund from April 2013 and devolve funding related to Community Care Grants and Crisis Loans to local councils, places an expectation that councils will use the funding to deliver local welfare assistance
- 5.2 The current Social Fund scheme meets a need at the moment and the proposed scheme recognises this need as well as recognising the opportunity to fund initiatives aimed at addressing some of the causes of the need. The local welfare assistance scheme also provides an opportunity to bring together different funding streams to create a coherent arrangement of support to people in need.

### **6 Recommendations**

Executive Board is asked to

- a) Approve the local welfare scheme as set out at appendix 1

- b) Approve the development of initiatives as set out in para 3.15 along with the earmarking of funds from the devolved funding to support the initiatives
- c) Approve a short pilot scheme which would see applicants referred for advice and support where this was felt beneficial
- d) Provide delegated authority for the Director of Resources to:
  - a. Vary the earmarked funding based on data provided from the first 3 months operation of the local welfare scheme; and
  - b. Allocate funding to approved initiatives with a requirement that Executive Board receives reports setting out progress and outcomes from funded initiatives.

Background documents<sup>1</sup>

None

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<sup>1</sup> The background documents listed in this section are available to download from the Council's website, unless they contain confidential or exempt information. The list of background documents does not include published works.



## Appendix 1

### **Leeds City Council Local Welfare Support Scheme**

#### **1. Purpose of the Scheme**

- 1.1 The scheme will seek to assist vulnerable people in meeting their needs for subsistence or financial support where they are unable to meet their immediate short term needs or where they require assistance to maintain their independence within the community.
- 1.2 The aims of the scheme are:
  - To allow people to return to or remain in the community without the need for extra care.
  - To support the most vulnerable in urgent situations through signposting to appropriate support and advice services, and/or through a Local Welfare Scheme Award.
  - To engage individuals with appropriate support services where needed to prevent repeat applications and develop resilience;
- 1.3 The key principles behind the scheme are:
- 1.4. The scheme will consider applications for awards under two types of need
  - a) Assistance with basic needs to establish or maintain a home in the communityAnd
  - b) Emergency support
- 1.5 The scheme will develop arrangements with key partners, both internal and external to the Council, who advocate on behalf of clients who are in need of assistance to make appropriate applications for awards.
- 1.6 The scheme will work closely with existing support schemes funded through the Homelessness Prevention fund and s17 payments to provide an overarching scheme of support accessed through a single route.
- 1.7 The scheme will look to develop the relationships with key partners in the 3<sup>rd</sup>, voluntary and public sector to deliver support and advices service and create an integrated and sustainable local welfare provision across Leeds.
- 1.8 The scheme will allocate funding to develop initiatives aimed at tackling poverty, financial exclusion and enhance budgeting and debt advice; food banks and expanding furniture re-use.

- 1.9 It will over time support the creation of a clear map of local welfare provision across Leeds and the information and advice needed to access that provision. It will create clarity and reduce duplication.
- 1.10 The use of these resources is intended to create added value by working in partnership and supporting projects which meet the needs of vulnerable people, protect the environment and enhance the digitalisation of access to services.
- 1.11 The scheme will provide a service that is accessible, relatively simple and delivers assistance in a timely and effective manner.

## **2. Eligibility**

- 2.1 Applicants must be aged 16 or over, be a resident of Leeds and not be a person subject to immigration control who has no recourse to public funds. Applicants must also be on a low income and without access to sufficient funds (including savings) to meet their immediate needs – see below.
- 2.2 The Local Welfare Support Scheme is to help the most vulnerable people in Leeds. People who are perceived to be vulnerable are
- Families or vulnerable people under exceptional pressure
  - Homeless people or rough sleepers
  - Vulnerable older people
  - People fleeing domestic violence
  - Young people leaving care or living independently
  - People moving out of institutional or residential care into the community
  - Ex- offenders leaving prison or detention centres
  - People with disabilities

‘Exceptional’ means something greater than the normal range of pressures experienced by most people.

## **3. Income and Savings:**

- 3.1 Applicants must be entitled to one of the following benefits, except for those outlined in paragraph 3.2:
- Income support
  - Income based Jobseekers Allowance
  - Income based Employment and Support Allowance
  - Pension Credit
  - Housing Benefit
  - Council Tax Support

- 3.2 Where an application is being made as a result of a disaster such as a fire or flood and these benefits are not in payment an additional assessment will need to be made to take into account an individual's financial circumstances.
- 3.3 Any award will be reduced by any savings in excess of £750.
- 3.4 An application for emergency provision will not be accepted where there is access on application to other income or savings to meet the needs arising from the emergency.

#### **4. Supported applications**

- 4.1 There will be some supported applications which will automatically be accepted as a priority. These cases of vulnerable people will be deemed to have the highest priority to receive support from the Local Welfare Support Scheme. These are claims supported by:

Housing Options: Homeless people who have obtained a tenancy. Applicants are likely in this case to have the majority of their basic household items (paragraph 9) met subject to need and personal resources.

Support Workers: People who are moving into independent living. Applicants are likely in this case to have the majority of their basic household items (paragraph 9) met subject to need and personal resources.

Families First: Families under exceptional pressure and where children are at risk. Applicants are likely in this case to have the majority of their basic household items (paragraph 9) met subject to need and personal resources.

Leeds City Council Domestic Violence Team: People fleeing domestic violence. Applicants are likely in this case to have the majority of their basic household items (paragraph 9) met subject to need and personal resources.

#### **5. Goods and services**

- 5.1 The scheme will consider applications for awards under two types of need
- a) Assistance with basic needs to establish or maintain a home in the community
  - And
  - b) Emergency support
- 5.2 Awards from the Local Welfare Support Scheme for assistance with basic needs to establish or maintain a home in the community will be limited to:
- Cooker/Microwave
  - Fridge
  - Washing Machine
  - Dryer
  - Bed
  - Bedding
  - Clothing on the grounds of the effects of disability
  - Seating
  - Floor covering

- Removal costs where it is linked to the Homelessness Prevention Fund and approved by the Homeless Support Team/Housing Options
- Travels costs on the grounds that it is linked to avoiding domestic violence or in the welfare of children
- Curtains

- 5.3 Awards from the Local Welfare Support Scheme for emergency support may include
- Food to sustain basic living
  - Essential items associated with infants/children
  - Essential items related to a major upheaval or disaster
  - Emergency travel costs
  - Essential medical related costs (where not provided by the NHS or another body)
  - Essential fuel costs for pre-payment meters where the emergency supply does not adequately meet the need arising from the emergency.
- 5.4 Local Welfare Support Scheme is part of a menu of support. It should not be seen as the sole means of meeting basic needs and people are expected to apply to other departments or agencies such as Jobcentre Plus or charities for support. Applications will not be supported where there is another suitable more appropriate option.
- 5.5 In some instances it may be more appropriate to apply to Jobcentre Plus for a hardship payment where benefit has been sanctioned or for a budgeting loan or advance payment where there will be a delay before benefit is awarded. Matters relating to rent arrears, rent deposits or advance payments should be dealt with through Discretionary Housing Payments or the Council's Bond scheme administered by Housing Options. Other departments may have a duty to provide support or assistance, such as Children's or Adult Services.

## **6. Frequency of awards**

- 6.1 Applicants will only receive one award from the Local Welfare Support Scheme unless there are exceptional circumstances.
- 6.2 Repeat applicants will be directed to support for budget advice, debt advice services and/or other support.

## **7. Discretionary scheme.**

- 7.1 The scheme is discretionary. There is no right to a payment. Meeting the eligibility criteria to apply is no guarantee of an award. Awards are subject to the availability of funding. Therefore applicants may have to prioritise between items. Applicants should have choice in deciding their priorities. Applicants in paragraph 4 will take priority. Applications from customers with dependents and applications from householders will, where necessary, be prioritised over applications from non-householders and customers without dependents.

- 7.2 Scheme funding is limited and this will require that scheme spend is monitored on a monthly basis. The amount of funding remaining will need to be reflected in the prioritisation of awards.

## **8. Applications and assessment**

- 8.1 An application for an award under Local Welfare Support Scheme should be made on line or by telephone. A supported application would be encouraged in order to shorten processing times and enable applicant to receive additional relevant advice. Applicants are therefore encouraged to use existing sources of support within the council and within the community. These include
- Adult Social Care and Children's Services
  - Families First
  - Domestic Violence Team
  - Probation Service
  - Housing Options
  - ALMO and HA Housing Officers
  - Advice Leeds agencies
- 8.2 Calls will be taken by Customer Services staff on a designated local telephone number. Applications will be screened in order to reject inappropriate applications. The final assessments and decision-making will be undertaken by Leeds Revenues and Benefit Service. Applications for emergency provision will be prioritized with service standards in place for quick and accurate decision making, payment of awards and review processes
- 8.3 The intention is to complete the process for an award of for assistance with basic needs from receipt of application to delivery or installation within seven working days. An application for emergency provision, if successful, should be made by the next day at the latest.

## **9. Methods of Payment**

- 9.1 The Local Welfare Support Scheme Awards will be made by the following methods:
- Standard food basket packs delivered direct to the applicant
  - Pre-payment card for food
  - Payments to suppliers of suitable goods or services
  - Pre-payment cards for goods
- 9.2 Cash payments will only be considered where the above arrangements are not possible.
- 9.3 Awards for assistance with basic needs will be subject to a maximum value.
- 9.4 Higher values may apply for supported applications aimed at tackling or preventing homelessness, in exceptional circumstances.

- 9.5 Award values will be at the discretion of the Council but will be based on standard prices for items required to include the cost of delivery and installation.
- 9.6 Payment will be made direct to the supplier for goods and pre-payment cards.
- 9.7 Pre-payment cards awarded will be collected from One Stop Centres. Applicants will need to provide proof of identity.
- 9.8 Where possible an award for food will be made using the applicants preferred delivery method from those available in paragraph 9.1.

## **10. Review/Appeals**

- 10.1 An applicant can ask for the decision to be looked at again if:
- They are not satisfied with the decision
  - There has been a factual error in the decision making
  - There has been an omission or oversight in the decision making
  - There is new evidence since the application which was not put forward at the time.
- 10.2 The review request will need to be sent/logged within 14 working days of the date of decision and will involve a re-assessment by a more senior officer than the original decision maker. Their decision will be final. If the applicant remains dissatisfied they will retain the right to make a complaint to the Local Government Ombudsman or seek a Judicial Review.

## **11. Monitoring**

- 11.1 As the scheme will be expected to be self-financing regular reviews will monitor the pattern of spending and put a limit on spending where necessary.
- 11.2 The scheme will be closely monitored and will be subject to monthly and quarterly reporting providing data and information on the
- Number of applications and reasons
  - Number successful/unsuccessful
  - Value of awards
  - Speed of awards and appeals
  - Remaining funding and implications for scheme
  - Quality of decision making
  - The effective use of the budget will be supported by ensuring that alternative available sources of assistance are applied for in the first instance.
- 11.3 The Revenues and Benefit Service will also monitor a number of cases where a request has been refused to ensure decisions are being made fairly and consistently. This is in line with our general equality duties in the exercise of our functions to have due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations.

- 11.4 Where funding is allocated to support community initiatives aimed at tackling financial exclusion, debt, fuel poverty and food poverty, additional reports will be provided in order to detail the effectiveness of the initiatives.

### **Continuing Jobcentre Plus Discretionary Social Fund from April 2013**

Elements of the Social Fund will continue to be provided by Jobcentre Plus from April 2013. These are:

**Budgeting Loans:** Applications can be made for the following:

Furniture and household equipment

Clothing and footwear

Rent in advance and/or removal expenses to secure fresh accommodation

Improvement, maintenance and security of the home

Travelling expenses

Expenses associated with seeking or re-entering work

Maternity or funeral expenses

HP and other debts for expenses associated with any of the above.

Applicants will need to have been in receipt of a qualifying benefit for a period of 26 weeks.

Under Universal Credit the name will be changed to Budgeting Advances.

### **Short – term Advances:**

When someone makes, or is about to make, a new claim to benefit, they can sometimes encounter a period of financial need before receiving their first payment of benefit. Short-term Advances of benefit will help claimants through that period by providing an advance of their future benefit award, which will then be recovered from subsequent payments of benefit.

Short-term Advances will also be available:

for claimants who have experienced a change of circumstances that will increase the amount of benefit to which they are entitled;

where the first payment of benefit is made in respect of a period shorter than that in respect of which subsequent payments will be made (e.g. the first payment is made in respect of a week and the next payment is due to be paid in two weeks' time and will be made in respect of those two weeks); or

In cases where it is impractical for benefit to be paid on the due date (e.g. due to a technical problem in processing the claim or payment).

## Equality, Diversity, Cohesion and Integration Screening



As a public authority we need to ensure that all our strategies, policies, service and functions, both current and proposed have given proper consideration to equality, diversity, cohesion and integration.

A **screening** process can help judge relevance and provides a record of both the **process** and **decision**. Screening should be a short, sharp exercise that determines relevance for all new and revised strategies, policies, services and functions. Completed at the earliest opportunity it will help to determine:

- the relevance of proposals and decisions to equality, diversity, cohesion and integration.
- whether or not equality, diversity, cohesion and integration is being/has already been considered, and
- whether or not it is necessary to carry out an impact assessment.

<b>Directorate: Resources</b>	<b>Service area: Revenues &amp; Benefits</b>
<b>Lead person: Shaun Kelly</b>	<b>Contact number: x 27537</b>

<b>1. Title: Local Welfare Support</b>			
Is this a:			
<input checked="checked" type="checkbox"/>	<b>Strategy / Policy</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Service / Function</b>
		<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Other</b>
<b>If other, please specify</b>			

<b>2. Please provide a brief description of what you are screening</b>
<p>This screening relates to the development of a Local Welfare Support scheme from April 1<sup>st</sup> 2013.</p> <p>The need to develop a Local Welfare Support scheme follows on from the abolition of Community Care Grants and Crisis Loans for Living Expenses by section 70 of the Welfare Reform Act 2012.</p> <p>The scheme is to be funded by a settlement from the DWP which will be paid for years 2013/14 and 2014/15. The funding arises from savings made by the abolition of Community Care Grants and Crisis Loans for Living Expenses from the national Discretionary Social Fund.</p> <p>The Local Welfare Support scheme is not intended to replace or replicate Community Care Grants or Crisis Loans for Living expenses. In line with the Government's wider localism agenda, funding will not be ring-fenced, enabling local</p>



authority's greater freedom to deliver and dovetail with existing services as they see fit according to local needs. The remoteness of the discretionary social fund administration opened it up to high levels of misuse and did not focus on supporting those that needed it the most.

The scheme in Leeds will meet the need for basic household goods and emergency provision in a crisis for the most vulnerable in Leeds. As it develops it will support initiatives to meet the impact of welfare reform and begin to map out all the local welfare services available to the citizens of Leeds.

### 3. Relevance to equality, diversity, cohesion and integration

All the council's strategies/policies, services/functions affect service users, employees or the wider community – city wide or more local. These will also have a greater/lesser relevance to equality, diversity, cohesion and integration.

The following questions will help you to identify how relevant your proposals are.

When considering these questions think about age, carers, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation and any other relevant characteristics (for example socio-economic status, social class, income, unemployment, residential location or family background and education or skills levels).

Questions	Yes	No
Is there an existing or likely differential impact for the different equality characteristics?		X
Have there been or likely to be any public concerns about the policy or proposal?	X	
Could the proposal affect how our services, commissioning or procurement activities are organised, provided, located and by whom?		X
Could the proposal affect our workforce or employment practices?		X
Does the proposal involve or will it have an impact on <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Eliminating unlawful discrimination, victimisation and harassment</li> <li>Advancing equality of opportunity</li> <li>Fostering good relations</li> </ul>	X	

If you have answered **no** to the questions above please complete **sections 6 and 7**

If you have answered **yes** to any of the above and;

- Believe you have already considered the impact on equality, diversity, cohesion and integration within your proposal please go to **section 4**.
- Are not already considering the impact on equality, diversity, cohesion and integration within your proposal please go to **section 5**.

<p><b>4. Considering the impact on equality, diversity, cohesion and integration</b></p>
<p>If you can demonstrate you have considered how your proposals impact on equality, diversity, cohesion and integration you have carried out an impact assessment.</p>
<p>Please provide specific details for all three areas below (use the prompts for guidance).</p>
<p>• <b>How have you considered equality, diversity, cohesion and integration?</b></p> <p>Equality and diversity has been and will continue to be considered throughout all aspects of the delivery of the Local Welfare Support scheme. Consideration has been given by;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attendance and participation at Social Fund reform workshops between DWP and Local Authorities. Meetings of Core Cities Welfare Reform Sub Group.</li> <li>• Consideration of Equality Impact assessment of Locally delivered support to replace Social Fund Community Care Grants and Crisis Loans for general living expenses DWP March 2011</li> <li>• Consideration of Community Care Grants and Crisis Loans s for Living Expenses awards 2011/12</li> <li>• A Working Group consisting of frontline services and advice agencies currently responsible for identifying and supporting applications for Community Care Grants and Crisis Loans have met on a regular basis in order to develop the proposed scheme.</li> <li>• Consultation with Councillors.</li> </ul>
<p>• <b>Key findings</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The abolition of Community Care Grants and Crisis Loans for Living Expenses will impact upon the citizens of Leeds. However, the application of the Local Welfare Support Scheme policy will be available to all those who meet the criteria whatever their characteristics.</li> <li>• A locally-delivered system would be better able to identify the most vulnerable people in the area in part because of other related services already being provided and offer appropriate assistance accordingly.</li> <li>• The continuing development of a locally-delivered system will support the creation of an integrated and sustainable resource of local welfare support across Leeds available to all in need whatever their characteristics.</li> <li>• The continuing support for communities in the development of financial advice, furniture re-use and food banks will help to create resilience across all communities in Leeds at a time of personal financial constraint..</li> </ul>

- As Local Welfare Support will be a new and developing service the scheme will need to be closely monitored and will need to be subject to monthly and quarterly reporting providing data including information on the characteristics of applicants.

- **Actions**

- Continue to consult as the scheme develops.
- Monthly and quarterly reporting providing data including information on the characteristics of successful applicants.
- Monitor that the scheme continues to be administered fairly and that the characteristics of unsuccessful applicants are identified.
- Ensure that the policy and procedure remains flexible to be able to respond to exceptional cases which are outside the priorities.
- Ensure that the Local Welfare support scheme policy is part of an integrated local welfare support including Discretionary Housing Payments, Section 17 payments and third sector support.
- Earmark some of the devolved funding to support initiatives aimed at improving the sustainability of the local support scheme by increasing the level of debt and benefit advice to help deal with increased demand as a result of welfare reforms. Monitor that these initiatives will support all citizens in Leeds whatever their characteristics.
- Earmark some of the devolved funding to support initiatives aimed at improving the sustainability of the local support scheme by supporting the development of food banks and encouraging the use of furniture re-use to help deal with increased demand as a result of welfare reforms. Monitor that these initiatives will support all citizens in Leeds whatever their characteristics.
- Provision of information about the services that are or could be available to those who do not qualify for support from the Local Welfare Support scheme.
- In the longer term to develop a single source of reference to all local welfare services available to all the citizens of Leeds.

<b>5. If you are <b>not</b> already considering the impact on equality, diversity, cohesion and integration you <b>will need to carry out an impact assessment</b>.</b>	
Date to scope and plan your impact assessment:	
Date to complete your impact assessment	
Lead person for your impact assessment (Include name and job title)	

<b>6. Governance, ownership and approval</b>		
Please state here who has approved the actions and outcomes of the screening		
<b>Name</b>	<b>Job title</b>	<b>Date</b>

<b>7. Publishing</b>	
This screening document will act as evidence that due regard to equality and diversity has been given. If you are not carrying out an independent impact assessment the screening document will need to be published.	
<b>Date screening completed</b>	14 <sup>th</sup> February 2013
<b>If relates to a Key Decision send to Corporate Governance</b>	
<b>Any other decision please send to Equality Team (equalityteam@leeds.gov.uk)</b>	