

DECISION-MAKER:	SCRUTINY PANEL A
SUBJECT:	THE WELFARE REFORMS INQUIRY MEETING 4: LOCAL AND NATIONAL GOOD PRACTICE EXAMPLES SUPPORTING VULNERABLE PEOPLE
DATE OF DECISION:	10 JANUARY 2013
REPORT OF:	SENIOR MANAGER, CUSTOMER AND BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT
STATEMENT OF CONFIDENTIALITY	
None	

BRIEF SUMMARY

This report provides details for the fourth meeting of the Scrutiny Panel A's Welfare Reforms Inquiry. The Panel will first consider options for operating a Social Fund for Southampton to support people in need of emergency financial support.

Matthew Waters, Commissioner for Supporting People and Adult Care Services will also outline preventative costs of the Social Fund.

The following speakers will also outline local / national good practice that supports vulnerable people in the context of the Welfare Reforms:

- Liz Slater, Housing Needs Manager
- Julian Walker, Project Leader 60+
- Linda Haitana, Families Matter and Domestic Violence Manager
- Mike Carey and David Little, Housing income team
- Andy Tickner, Skills Manager
- Nigel Hughes, Executive Director SAFE
- Jonathon Cheshire, Chief Executive Wheatsheaf Trust
- Ian Woodland, Unite Union Representative

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- (i) The Panel is asked to consider the assessment of impacts and costs of the various options for delivery of the Social Fund alongside the national examples and agree recommendations to support emergency financial support for the city.
- (ii) The Panel is recommended to consider the information provided by the guests, alongside the appendices, as evidence in the Inquiry.

REASONS FOR REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

1. To enable the Panel to analyse the evidence in order to formulate findings and recommendations at the end of the inquiry process.

DETAIL (Including consultation carried out)

2. The fourth meeting of the Inquiry will outline local / national good practice that supports vulnerable people in the context of the Welfare Reforms
3. The Panel will first consider options for operating a Social Fund for Southampton to support people in need of emergency financial support.
4. The Welfare Reform Act (2012) abolishes the discretionary elements of the

Social Fund from April 2013 and therefore Crisis Loans and Community Care Grants will no longer be available. In future the Government will be referring people who need emergency financial assistance to local authorities. The Government will not place a new duty on local authorities in respect of new emergency provision so that there is flexibility to creatively re-design emergency provision to meet local needs. Although the financial settlement for councils in 2013/14 will include an element for emergency provision, the Government has decided not to ring fence this funding. There is also no guarantee of this funding beyond 2014/15.

5. At the Cabinet meeting on 16th October 2012 the Executive considered a report on the Social Fund Transition and agreed:
- i) To consider the work of the Scrutiny Inquiry on Welfare Reforms and multiagency local assessment on the impact of the Welfare Reforms on local residents and services in developing a way forward.
 - ii) To delegate authority to the Director for Environment and Economy, following consultation with Cabinet Member for Communities and Cabinet Member for Resources, to develop and implement a sustainable and holistic way forward that enables vulnerable residents to become more self reliant in the future.

The report on the Social Fund Transition: Local Support to Replace Community Care Grants and Crisis Loans for Living Expenses considered by Cabinet is attached at Appendix 1.

6. Crisis Loans provide financial support to meet immediate short-term need in an emergency or as a consequence of a disaster: for example, providing daily living expenses, rent in advance, board and lodgings, pre-paid meter fuel debts, and furniture and clothing in a disaster.

Community Care Grants (CCG) provide support for vulnerable people to return to, or remain in the community, or to ease exceptional pressures on families.

CCG	Applications	Number of Awards	Total Spend
2009/10	2040	960	£343,900
2010/11	2120	1020	£349,100
2011/12	1820	820	£333,800
Crisis Loans	Applications	Number of Awards	Total Spend
2009/10	9300	6990	£366,300
2010/11	6760	5420	£297,600
2011/12	5600	4430	£227,500

7. The total un-ringfenced funding for 2013/14 is £654,232. Four options will be outlined to the Panel, based on proportions of 100%, 50%, 33% and 0% of the Government allocation. The models proposed will consider the impact on vulnerable people and the organisations supporting them based on direct and indirect costs, advantages and disadvantages, impacts, outcomes and alternative pathways of each scheme.
8. Feedback from Adult Social Care indicates the impact of a reduced or no Social Fund could be significant. Each year, over the last three+ years

around 660 people have moved on from Supporting People services into the community. Of these an estimated 50% apply for Community Care Grants and get help towards the cost of setting up home. If this number failed to move due to the lack of help with furniture, cooking equipment etc, this would both slow up the process of move-on (reducing access), or stop it altogether. The impact of slowing-up and stopping move-on could also result in:

- Silting-up of supported housing
- Waste of resources focused on individuals no longer requiring support
- Backlog of homelessness
- Increase in rough sleeping

Matthew Waters, Commissioner for Supporting People and Adult Care Services will discuss the potential impacts of a reduced Social Fund.

9. Appendix 2 outlines the proposals for the Social Fund transition to local provision for the Core Cities including Birmingham, Bradford, Bristol, Coventry, Hull, Leeds, Liverpool, Middlesbrough and Portsmouth.
10. In addition, case studies of the financial implications on various client groups will also be discussed at the Panel meeting.
11. The Panel is asked to consider the assessment of impacts and costs of the various options for the delivery of a Social Fund alongside national examples and agree recommendations to provide emergency financial support to residents on benefits.
12. The second half of the meeting will include guest speakers highlighting impacts and good practice in the context of the Welfare Reforms.
13. Liz Slater, Housing Needs Manager will outline the impact of the benefit cap on homelessness levels in the city and potential actions / solutions. The Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee identified the potential impact of charging affordable rent in new housing developments. A report on the Use of Affordable Rent is attached at Appendix 3.
14. Julian Walker, Project Leader 60+ will highlight a project in partnership with the Job Centre Plus which brings together younger and older people through volunteering to build confidence and skills.
15. Linda Haitana, Families Matter and Domestic Violence Manager, has identified that people who are being supported by the Families Matter programme are likely to be disproportionately impacted by the Welfare Reforms, especially the benefit cap. She will outline how the project is prioritising support in this area.
16. Mike Carey, Income Services Manager, and Dave Little, Income Manager, will present an overview of the challenges being faced following the Welfare Reforms including the impact of under occupation and Housing Benefit, and the likely impact on arrears following the implementation of direct payments under Universal Credit. The information is based on the national demonstration projects. They will highlight actions currently being undertaken such as visits, a helpline, and road shows.
17. Andy Tickner, Skills Manager will highlight initiatives to support local job opportunities and training through:
 - Section 106 Employment and Skills (Appendix 4)
 - Community Learning (Appendix 5)
18. Nigel Hughes, Executive Director of SAFE, will outline projects underway to

prepare people on the journey towards building their confidence and employment, with particular reference to the Choices programme. The Choices Programme Annual Review for 2011 is attached at Appendix 6.

To find out more about SAFE go to www.safe.org.uk

19. The Wheatsheaf Trust is a charity working to promote social inclusion in some of the most disadvantaged areas. Their Employment Access Centres and training programmes support people who are unemployed or in low-paid work to find a job, or opportunities for training and re-skilling.

Their Chief Executive, Jonathon Cheshire, will outline the main projects that support people who will be affected by the Welfare Reforms.

To can find out more about their work go to www.wheatsheafttrust.org

20. Ian Woodland, Unite Union Representative will highlight concerns and impacts of the Welfare Reforms on people in work, especially low incomes. In particular he will highlight:

- Best practice examples of making work pay
- How unions support members to manage their finances and claim benefits
- What the council and its partners can do to raise awareness, support and maximise take up of benefits

A recent report from the Trade Unions Congress (TUC) '*Families First: Who Loses Most from Cuts in Public Services*' which provides analysis of the distributional impacts of public spending cuts is attached at Appendix 7.

21. The Panel is invited to have a discussion on the issues raised by those giving evidence around good practice to support the Welfare Reforms to formulate their findings and develop a final report and recommendations.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

22. None

RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

Capital/Revenue

23. Not applicable

Property/Other

24. Not applicable

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

Statutory Power to undertake the proposals in the report:

25. The duty to undertake overview and scrutiny is set out in Section 21 of the Local Government Act 2000 and the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007.

Other Legal Implications:

26. None

POLICY FRAMEWORK IMPLICATIONS

27. None

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SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Non-confidential appendices are in the Members' Rooms and can be accessed on-line

Appendices

1.	Social Fund Transition: Local Support to Replace Community Care Grants and Crisis Loans for Living Expenses
2.	Core Cities: Proposed Schemes to Replace Social Fund
3.	Use of Affordable Rent
4.	Section 106 Employment and Skills
5.	Community Learning Programme
6.	SAFE Choices Programme Annual Review 2011
7.	TUC Report: Families First; Who Loses Most from Cuts in Public Services

Documents In Members' Rooms

	None
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Integrated Impact Assessment

Do the implications/subject/recommendations in the report require an Integrated Impact Assessment to be carried out.	No
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Other Background Documents

Title of Background Paper(s) Relevant Paragraph of the Access to Information Procedure Rules / Schedule 12A allowing document to be Exempt/Confidential (if applicable)

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Integrated Impact Assessment and Other Background documents available for inspection at:

WARDS/COMMUNITIES AFFECTED:	All
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Report Tracking

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AMENDED BY:	Dorota Goble

FOR DEMOCRATIC SERVICES USE ONLY:

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CLEARANCE: [TYPE YES or NO]

Name: