

For: (x) <table border="1"> <tr> <td>Executive</td> <td>X</td> </tr> <tr> <td>CLMT</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> </table> Meeting Date: 4 th March 2013 Report of: Head of Revenues and Customer Service Report author: Arran Sharman	Executive	X	CLMT	<input type="checkbox"/>	Agenda Item Number: 13
Executive	X				
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Subject: Crisis Support Scheme (Localisation of the Social Fund) (For Executive Only) Lead Executive Member(s): Cllr Robin Harris Wards Affected: All wards	Consultations: Councillors Scrutiny Stakeholders Others	(x) <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
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Recommendations 1. That Executive approves: (i) The attached policy (Appendix A) for the delivery of Luton Borough Council's Crisis Support Scheme (formally part of the national Department for Work and Pension's Social Fund). (ii) The underpinning principles of this policy which are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Luton money for Luton people. • A cashless system offering goods and services to ensure the needs of the vulnerable persons are met. • To work closely with external agencies to allow and accept referrals. • To have a more holistic view of the services / support available for those in need and to give the right advice, support and guidance first time. • To reduce the requirement for applicants to visit the Town Hall while making the service accessible, i.e. telephone claims. • Very close monitoring of the scheme to ensure it meets the demands of Luton residents and that it is not overspent.

Background 2. The December 2010 a white paper titled "Universal Credit: welfare that works" set out the Government's reform plans for the Social Fund. The changes were to result in the abolition of the current system of discretionary payments under the Social Fund. In their place will be a combination of new locally-based provision that will replace Community Care Grants and Crisis Loans for general living expenses and a new nationally administered advance of benefit facility that will replace alignment Crisis Loans and Budgeting Loans. 3. The Social Fund was introduced in 1987-88 but since then welfare delivery has changed significantly. It has moved from locally-based offices that offered a face-to-face service and processed and maintained benefit claims on site, to remote processing and telephony centres. The remote administration of the benefit system no longer supports the application of the high levels of discretion that are needed to assess eligibility to Community Care Grants and Crisis Loans for general living expenses. This has led to criticism of the quality of decision-making and the poor targeting of support in the current scheme from both the National Audit Office and the Public Accounts Committee. 4. The intention is that the new locally-based assistance will be implemented from April 2013. At this point Community Care Grants and Crisis Loans will be withdrawn. The Government do not

expect that local authorities recreate Community Care Grants and Crisis Loans locally. Individual local authorities will be given the funding and flexibility to re-design the emergency provision for vulnerable groups according to local circumstances, in order to meet severe hardship in the way they think best. The Government have allocated 510k funding to deliver this scheme – 50k less than what the DWP spent on their crisis support funding for Luton citizens in 2011/12, and since which the number of benefit claimants has grown.

5. The Government in localising this element of welfare, anticipated that local authorities would want to develop a local system to reflect the needs of their community and build upon programmes and services that are already in place. Using and further developing existing partnership arrangements or developing new ones with, for example, furniture reuse services and food banks, to provide services for those in particular need.

The current position

6. The attached policy 'Crisis Support Scheme' has been created to best support the most vulnerable people in Luton Borough. It is largely based on the existing national scheme for Crisis Support Loans for Living Expenses and the Community Care Grants, but there are some areas where local changes have been made in order to deliver the maximum possible support through this fund without increasing the financial risk for Luton Borough Council.

Goals and Objectives

1. To deliver a Local Welfare provision Fund Scheme that is ready and administrable by April 2013.
2. To understand the applicants "real problem" and to provide them with the right advice and support to ensure they do not re-present with the same issues.
3. To provide support and advice to people in the event of a personal emergency.
4. To help vulnerable people live an independent life in the community.
5. If unable to provide the right support or advice, to signpost or refer to a 3rd party organisation / agency such as LAN.
6. To ensure the scheme is sustainable year on year and doesn't overspend.
7. To ensure that this is Luton money for Luton people.

Proposal

- That the Crisis Support Scheme policy becomes part of the Councils' Policy Framework enabling the scheme to be administered and in place from 1st April 2013.
- That the scheme be run as a pilot until more is known about the applicant demand and their needs, to be reviewed after 6 months of operation.
- That the scheme be amended as appropriate when more is understood about the applicant demand and their needs.

Key Risks

Risk	Mitigation
Failure to deliver a scheme that meets the needs of Luton residents, i.e. Vulnerable	Regular monitoring and review of the scheme/policy. As well as working with other discretionary funding.
Insufficient time to install / test new software	Ensure contract with supplier has penalty clauses in place. Additional / pooling of resources will have to be on 'standby' to ensure implementation date is achieved.

Unable to procure sufficient quantity of goods and services to meet demand at an affordable and sustainable cost.	Regular monitoring and reviewing of the scheme to understand the demand. Develop a procurement plan to provide resilience and value for money.
Insufficient budget to meet the demands, i.e. overspend.	The policy is tight in its eligibility criteria to ensure that only the most vulnerable can access the scheme. The spend will also be profiled and monitored monthly to make sure it is being spent correctly and remains on budget. The scheme will be flexible enough to “tighten up” further if so required.
Poor outcomes and consequences for unsuccessful applicants, i.e. poor health, increased debt etc	The scheme will be administered by the team who are highly trained in safeguarding of vulnerable people and have strong links in to support agencies. They are trained to identify applicant problems and in the event of a applicant not being entitled, they will be given alternative options where possible. A local discretion may also apply for those in need that do not necessarily fit the policy criteria.
Increased applicant demand, i.e. more face to face / telephone contact	Flexible use of the administrative resource that comes with the Crisis Support Scheme. Understanding of where the demand will hit and re-direct where possible to a more efficient and manageable access route. Understand the real needs of the applicant, to prevent them from re-presenting.
Applicant / partners / stakeholders confused over the delivery of the Crisis Support Scheme	Better joined up working. Detailed and carefully planned communications at target audiences. Clear sign posting.

Consultations

Luton Action Against Poverty group – 12th Feb 2013 (informal) – no disagreements and all parties were happy with the current scheme proposal, providing it is flexible enough to be adjusted if applicants’ needs change.

Appendices attached:

Appendix A – Crisis Support Scheme Policy (separately numbered)
Appendix B – Integrated Impact Assessment
Appendix C – Eligibility Criteria
Appendix D – Options for provision of goods and services

Background Papers:

Department for Works and Pensions Social Fund Guide

IMPLICATIONS

		Clearance – agreed by:
Legal	This is a discretionary scheme so is not governed by any legislation and there no official appeal process. Therefore, we may be open to challenge	Brenda Vale 14/04/13

	if certain “vulnerable” groups see the scheme as discriminating against those they support. In addition to this, there may be an increased use in the ombudsman for those that feel they have been unfairly treated, especially in the early days of the scheme as we learn about the applicants’ needs and demands.	
Finance	We have been provided with £110k and £98k to administer this scheme for 2013/14 and 2014/15 respectively. We have been provided with £510k to spend per year, for the next two years, compared to £560k spent in prior years. There will be a requirement to accurately review and monitor both aspects of this budget, in order to avoid any potential overspend, as there are concerns it may not be sufficient (see risks above).	Finance and Airport Client Manager on 14 th February 2013
Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) – Key Points		
Equalities/ Cohesion/Inclusion (Social Justice)	An integrated impact assessment has been completed and has found that on the whole, the impact of this policy is positive. It is providing money for those that are most vulnerable locally, irrespective of age, gender, religion, disability etc.	Maureen Drummond, Social Justice Adviser, 13 February 2013
Environment	The intention to use second hand or recycled goods will have a benefit to the environment. No other impacts have been identified.	Strategy & Sustainability Officer, 15 th February 2013
Health	The policy is to ensure applicants not only get access to the Crisis Support Scheme but that they are supported in the event of any other issues / problems that are identified. One of the key area’s to the scheme is to help those leaving care to resettle in the community or to offer support and assistance to those that otherwise would be in a hospital, hospice or care home. The wider scope of the scheme is to work with local agencies and partners to support those in need and to prevent a serious risk to the health and safety of the applicant and/or their household. In addition, those with mental health issues will be indentified and referred to the relevant social workers / agencies to ensure there is an improvement to their mental wellbeing.	Chimeme Egbutah 18/02/13
Community Safety		
Staffing		
Other		

FOR EXECUTIVE ONLY - Options:

Not to approve the Policy or request amendments

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