

## LOCAL WELFARE ASSISTANCE

**Cabinet Member** Cllr Neal Davey  
**Responsible Officer** Benefit Manager

**Reason for Report:** Update on provision of Local Welfare Assistance scheme.

**Matter for Consideration:** To note the assistance provided during 2013/14 & that the funding from DWP will end 31 March 2015.

**Relationship to Corporate Plan:** The scheme aims to support the reduction for welfare dependency and provides assistance to those in financial crisis.

**Financial Implications:** None

**Legal Implications:** None

**Risk Assessment:** As the funding is limited any overspend would be a cost to the General fund

### 1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 From April 2013 the government devolved funding to upper tier authorities to create a Local Welfare assistance scheme. Devon Local Government Steering group agreed the funding would be administered by the District Councils.
- 1.2 The aims of the scheme were to
  - I) increase self-reliance and resilience
  - II) provide quick and effective support for those with high priority, short term needs
  - III) Help people to establish themselves in, or remain in the community
- 1.3 The guidelines for administration of the scheme in Mid Devon were approved by Community Well Being PDG on 26 March 2013
- 1.4 Due to timescales we were only able to offer limited assistance when the scheme commenced assistance with referrals for food parcels and second hand furniture with money advice
- 1.5 There are no cash payments.

### 2.0 Review

- 2.1 Initially some customers withdrew their request when they realised that we were only able to offer help with food parcels or second hand furniture and not give them cash.

- 2.2 As the customers problems came to light we have gradually introduced more forms of support. e.g. Electricity and gas key meter top ups, removal costs, rent deposits and rent arrears, Debt relief orders
- 2.3 Most people approach us because they have no money to buy food, pay for gas or electricity or keep up with payments of rent /council tax. This is usually due to their other benefits being sanctioned or delayed or they have used the money to pay other unexpected demands. In these instances a referral to the food bank or a top up to their electric or gas key has been enough until their next payment is received. Decisions regarding immediate help are normally made on the same day.
- 2.4 Food parcels are supplied by CHAT (Churches Housing Action Trust) Tiverton, People Matter, St Andrews Church, Cullompton and Crediton Congregational Church. One off grants from the LWA fund were given to each food bank and Turntable, Exeter who provided second hand furniture.
- 2.5 Every applicant is asked why they have needed to apply for help and whether they have tried other solutions. They are also asked to provide supporting evidence and offered Money Advice. As we have access to DWP and Tax credit information we are able to verify their payments
- 2.6 Money Advice is provided by Wessex Resolutions , 'Money£wise' team Where a customer accepts money advice an appointment is made to discuss their situation in more detail either in the council offices or in their home. This support is ongoing help will be given with budgeting, and where appropriate liaising with creditors, utility companies, social workers and health workers.
- 2.7 We have extended availability to provide weekly outreach surgeries in Cullompton and Crediton where 'drop in' and appointments are available. We are looking to work with other external partners for additional surgeries or contact points in other areas
- 2.8 In total we received 661 applications for help and the help provided has evolved A summary of the applications and assisted provided is shown in Appendix A
- 2.9 We have worked closely with our Benefits, Council Tax, Housing and Homeless teams, the Job Centre, Social Services and other voluntary and community groups providing a holistic approach to a customer's problems.

### 3.0 Future

- 3.1 We have an underspend from 2013/14 of £46K (see Appendix A) which has been brought forward into 2014/15 to be used with this year's grant.

- 3.2 As the funding from DWP will not go beyond this financial year any underspend will be used to establish ongoing support.
- 3.3 Ongoing support will be particularly relevant for provision of Money advice for existing clients beyond 31 March 2015.
- 3.4 We continue to meet with internal and external partners, to review the help provided. With them we continue to find ways of working effectively, reducing duplication and preventing misuse across all schemes.

**Contact for more Information:** Dawn Harris, Benefit Manager 01884 234372  
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**Circulation of the Report:** Cllr Neal Davey, Management Team

**List of Background Papers:**

**LWA guidelines agreed by CWB 26 March 2013**

<http://www.middevon.gov.uk/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=19330&p=0>

**LWA Activity 2013/14**

<b>Number of Referrals</b>	<b>661</b>
<b>Number of Closed cases</b>	<b>585</b>
<b>Ongoing @ 31 March 2014</b>	<b>76</b>

**Reason for Request**

<b>Debts/financial Crisis</b>	<b>325</b>
<b>Benefit Delay/Sanction</b>	<b>134</b>
<b>Resettlement</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>Other</b>	<b>186</b>

**Assistance**

<b>Food parcel</b>	<b>247</b>
<b>Fuel top up (Electric /Gas</b>	<b>82</b>
<b>Resettlement</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>Furniture</b>	<b>75</b>
<b>Rent arrears/Advance</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Electrical goods</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Removal costs</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Debt Relief order</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Money Advice</b>	<b>112</b>

**Income 2013/14**

<b>Grant from DCC</b>	<b>£121,653</b>
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**Expenditure 2013/14**

Moneywise Administration of Scheme	£47,000
Grants - Food banks & Furniture	8,000
Electrical goods	1,177
Romovals	670
Debt Relief Order	215
Furniture (secondhand)	4,780
Fuel- Elec/Gas top ups	1,504
Printing- leaflets & advice pack	2,200
Outreach project	4,045
Hire of rooms for surgery Cullompton	220
Food vouchers	300
Searches	4
Postal order/postage	25
MDDC employee recharges	8,610

<b>Underspend rolled into 2014/15</b>	<b>£42,903</b>
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