



Derby City Council

COUNCIL CABINET
3 August 2016

ITEM 12

Report of the Leader of the Council and Cabinet
Member for Strategy and Policy

Single Discretionary Award Scheme

SUMMARY

- 1.1 On 8 December 2015, Council Cabinet agreed
- the content of the Welfare Strategy for Derby and
 - to publicly consult on the Single Discretionary Award Scheme Policy.
- 1.2 The Single Discretionary Award Scheme brings together the application process for Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) Council Tax Hardship (CTH) and the Local Assistance Scheme (LAS).
- It also introduces the integration of a person centred and needs tailored programme of support. The support programme will focus on the needs of the customer and include money advice, digital skills support, housing advice, affordable banking and ethical lending, benefits advice and better off calculations, education and training and towards work support.
- 1.3 The public consultation included both the content of the Welfare Strategy for Derby and the Single Discretionary Award Scheme policy, along with the proposed changes to the application and award processes (please see Appendix 4 for the proposed Policy)
- 1.4 The twelve week public consultation on the Strategy and Policy ran from 24 February 2016 to 23 May 2016, with 17 responses being submitted via both online and paper questionnaires.

RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 To note the consultation report and corresponding responses in Appendices Two and Three of this report
- 2.2 To agree an implementation date of 30 August 2016 for the introduction of the Single Discretionary Award Scheme Policy and service.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION

- 3.1 To highlight the consultation responses and to demonstrate that they have been taken in to consideration.
- 3.2 The proposed Single Discretionary Award Scheme Policy has been amended to reflect consultation feedback.
- 3.3 To start the delivery of the Welfare Strategy for Derby and to ensure available funding supports the most vulnerable.



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Date

Report of the Chief Executive

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 4.1 The consultation communication was designed to reach as many Derby residents as possible and included the following actions:
- Included in Derby Homes rent notification letters which was sent to over 10,000 households
 - Promoted the consultation across social media
 - Posters were placed in libraries, children centres, Council House and local housing offices
 - A press release issued
 - Easy read version

Despite these actions we received 17 consultation responses which are included in Appendix Two. We also involved members of our Diversity Forum in the Equality Impact Assessment

- 4.2 On the whole respondents felt that combining the application process for discretionary payments was a positive step to reducing duplication. The majority of respondents also agreed with the proposal to offer additional support, providing the customer is fully informed regarding what support services they are being offered and that the team or organisation being referred to has the capacity to deliver the required services. Please see the comments and mitigation on combining the application and introducing support services at Appendix Three
- 4.3 Responses around data sharing were largely neutral with the additional comments asking further questions as opposed to disagreeing with data sharing in principle. Please see the comments and mitigation on data sharing at Appendix Three.
- 4.4 The proposal to amend the priority groups, to offer additional support was included in light of further welfare reform changes. Working with the proposed groups will also allow us to prioritise the most vulnerable people impacted by the scheduled reforms, with a restricted budget. This amendment allows us to work with the appropriate groups to enhance their prospects of moving closer to and in to work. Moving people closer to and in to work will encourage improvements to health and wellbeing as well as financial circumstances. Please see the comments and mitigation on priority groups at Appendix Three.

- 4.5 Having a person centred approach to the delivery of the support programme will allow us to work with customers to remove the barriers personal to them. The Single Discretionary Award Scheme will work with customers to identify what barriers and priorities they have and what the appropriate and reasonable steps might be to remove them and move on.
- 4.6 Support programmes will be designed with the customer, to significantly improve the prospects of engagement through ownership of targets and goals. By not having a more detailed conversation and understanding of their underlying needs, we currently make awards which do not necessarily address customers' issues. Please see the comments and mitigation relating to engagement at Appendix Three.

OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

5.1 Do nothing

This is not an option, as responses to public consultations must be taken in to consideration

This report has been approved by the following officers:

Legal officer Financial officer Equalities officer Human Resources officer Estates/Property officer Service Director(s) Other(s)	Emily Feenan – Principle Lawyer Toni Nash – Head of Finance Ann Webster – Lead for Equality NA NA Martyn Marples Director of Finance Bernard Fenton – Head of Customer Management
For more information contact: Background papers: List of appendices:	Kate Green 01332 640560 Kate.Green@derby.gov.uk Draft Welfare Strategy for Derby – Cabinet Paper 9 December 2015 Appendix One – Implications Appendix Two – Single Discretionary Policy Consultation Report Appendix Three – Consultation comments and mitigation responses Appendix Four - Single Discretionary Award Scheme Policy Appendix Five – Equality Impact Assessment

IMPLICATIONS

Financial and Value for Money

- 1.1 The Single Discretionary Award Scheme will help to ensure that the funding available will be directed to our most vulnerable customers. Helping to move customers closer to and into work will create a more sustainable way of addressing the impact of welfare reforms.

Legal

- 2.1 The proposed Policy meets the legal requirements of the Council in respect of all three services.

Personnel

- 3.1 The Single Discretionary Award Scheme was taken in to consideration when the 2016 Derby Direct restructure was developed. The new Welfare Reform Team will be taking on the work for this area and recruitment has taken place with staff due to move across in to their new roles early July 2016.

IT

- 4.1 The development of the customer facing combined application form and case management system is underway with a completion date, inclusive of extensive testing being agreed to enable a service launch date of 30 August 2016.

Equalities Impact

- 5.1 An Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA) has been carried out with The Diversity forum. The EIA produced two recommendations from the group. The first recommendation set out that the Council should produce a paper based application form to make the service more accessible to equality groups. The second recommendation related to adding carers to the priority groups within the policy.

Health and Safety

- 6.1 NA

Environmental Sustainability

- 7.1 NA

Property and Asset Management

8.1 NA

Risk Management and Safeguarding

- 9.1 The proposed schedule of welfare changes during 2016 and 2017 will create challenges for Derby City Council and residents of Derby. Working in the proposed way will help to mitigate the pressure on services that the reforms will create. The proposed changes are also a responsible step to ensuring our residents are prepared for any associated welfare reform changes and avoid crisis and accessing services when they take effect.

Corporate objectives and priorities for change

- 10.1 The Welfare Strategy for Derby and the Single Discretionary Award Scheme Policy help to deliver the Council's pledges described in the Derby 2030 plan

Single Discretionary Award Consultation Report

June 2016

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Single Discretionary Award Policy Consultation Results Report

1. Background

- 1.1 Derby City Council currently provides support to those residents most in need through three separate discretionary payment schemes; Local Assistance (LAS), Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) and Council Tax Hardship (CTH). These three schemes have been partially funded by the Department of Work and Pensions through funding which the Council has to use to support those residents in need.
- 1.2 In the Government's Emergency Budget July 2015 changes to the thresholds for Benefits' Caps and reductions in welfare expenditure were announced as well as an earlier roll out of the new Universal Credit system and a commitment to helping people back into work.
- 1.3 The Council are proposing changes to our Discretionary Hardship Payment, Council Tax Hardship and Local Assistance Policies to achieve:
 - A single Discretionary Policy covering the Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP), Local Assistance Scheme (LAS) and the Council Tax Hardship scheme (CTH) with a single needs assessment
 - An individual programme of support to help people move closer to and ultimately into work where possible
 - a more co-ordinated approach to advice, education and support to provide a packaged approach to those most in need
 - Develop a programme of financial and digital inclusion to help prepare residents for Universal Credit
 - engender understanding that working and local/national government financial support are not mutually exclusive
 - create financial resilience by investigating other sources of funding and commitment to spend over a longer period for this strategy
 - Make best use of discretionary funds to reduce the welfare burden on the Council

2. Methodology

- 2.1 A 12 week consultation on the proposals for the Single Discretionary Award Policy and the Welfare Strategy for Derby ran from 29 February 2016 to 24 May 2016.
- 2.2 A questionnaire detailing the proposals was made available online with paper questionnaires provided on request. An Easy Read version of the questionnaire was also created and sent to respondents who requested this.
- 2.3 An FAQ factsheet was published along with the questionnaire.
- 2.4 Promotion of the consultation was undertaken in the following ways:
 - Through the 'Your City Your Say' pages of the Council website

- Via the Council's Facebook page
- Via the Council's Twitter account
- Through a press release
- Email sent to Reach Out panel members relating to consultation
- Posters at libraries, children's centres and through Derby Home
- Cascaded through Community Action Derby by raising awareness at meetings
- Cascaded through the operational and strategic steering groups for Universal Credit
- Promoted through the Derby Homes rent increase letters
- Awareness through the Universal Credit Steering Group
- Derby Direct message signposting the Consultation.

3. Summary of results

- 3.1 In total there were 17 responses to the consultation, 16 online responses and 1 Easy Read response.
- 3.2 This summary section outlines the proposals where respondents agree, neither agree nor disagree and disagree with the proposals outlined in the consultation.
- 3.3 Table 1 outlines where respondents stated they agree or disagree to the proposals.

Table 1. Agree or disagree to proposal in the Single Discretionary Award Policy

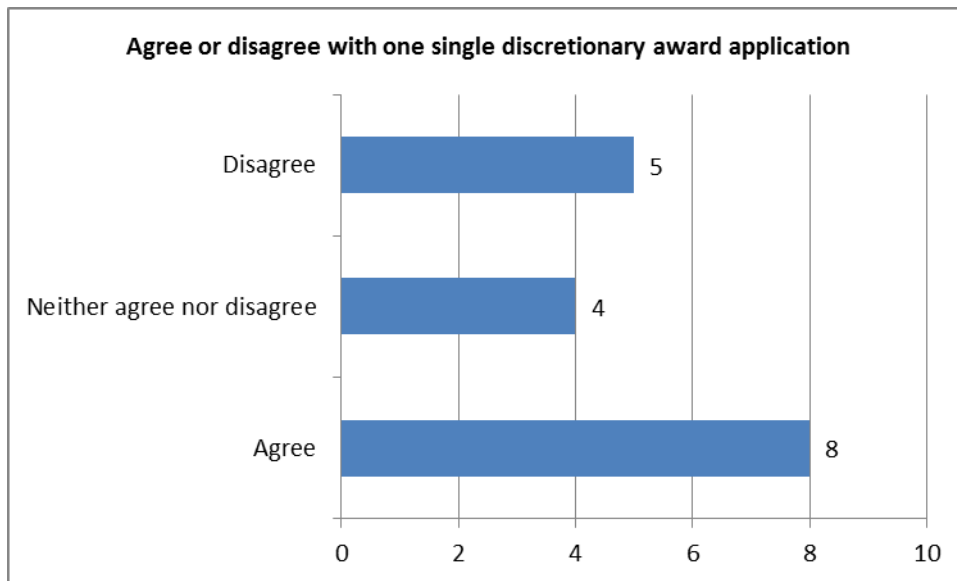
	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Don't know
One single discretionary application	8	4	5	
Providing additional support packages	9	6	2	
Sharing data with other partners	3	7	6	1
Applying a requirement to engage	2	5	10	
Removing people affected by more than one welfare reform	2	5	9	1
Reduction to length of second award	2	3	12	

Base: 17

4. Main Findings

- 4.1 **Do you agree or disagree with the proposal to combine the application process for all discretionary payments into one Single Discretionary Award application?**
- 4.1.1 8 respondents said they agree with the proposals to combine the application process for all discretionary payments.

Figure 1. Respondents who agree or disagree with combining the applications for discretionary payments into one award



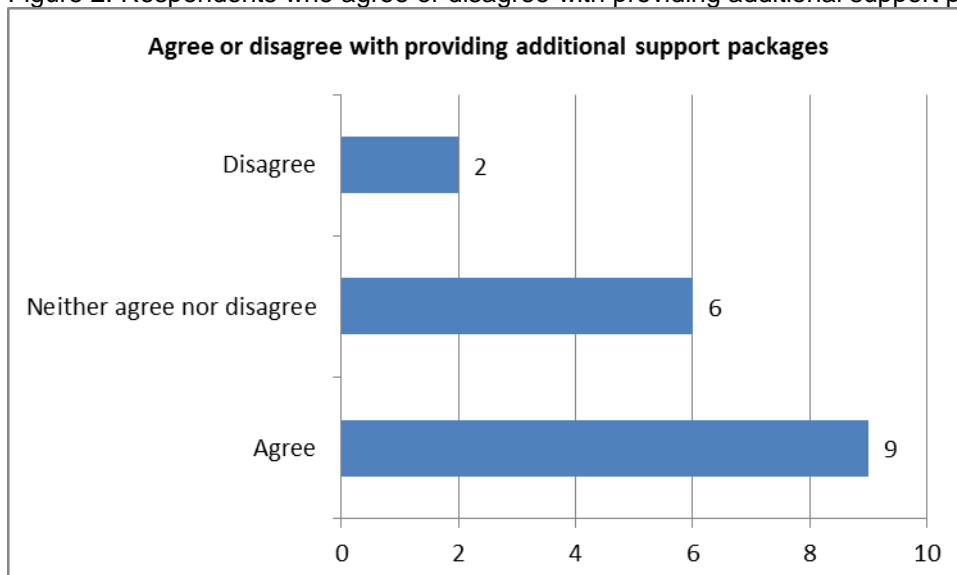
Base: 17

4.1.2 10 respondents made a comment about the proposal to have one single discretionary award application. Please see Appendix Four for all comments and mitigation responses

4.2 **Do you agree or disagree with the proposal to provide additional support packages to meet the needs of individuals who apply through the Single Discretionary Award application?**

4.2.1 9 respondents agree with the proposal to provide additional support packages, 6 respondents said they neither agree nor disagree.

Figure 2. Respondents who agree or disagree with providing additional support packages.



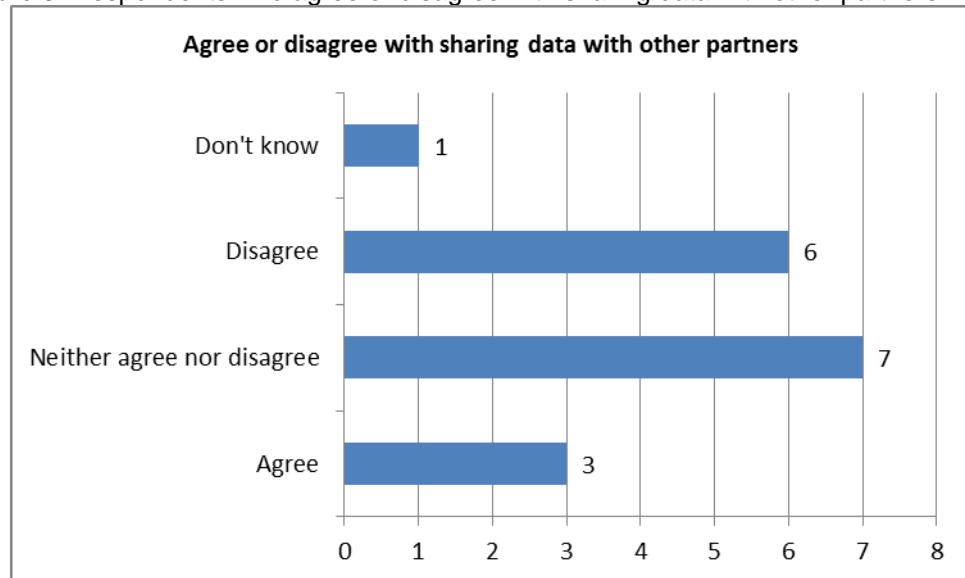
Base: 17

4.2.2 7 respondents made a comment about the proposal to provide additional support packages Please see Appendix Four for all comments and mitigation responses

4.3 **Do you agree or disagree with the proposal to share information with other partners so they can offer applicants additional services?**

4.3.1 7 respondents said they neither agree nor disagree with the proposal to share data with other partners, 6 respondents disagree and 3 respondents agree.

Figure 3. Respondents who agree or disagree with sharing data with other partners



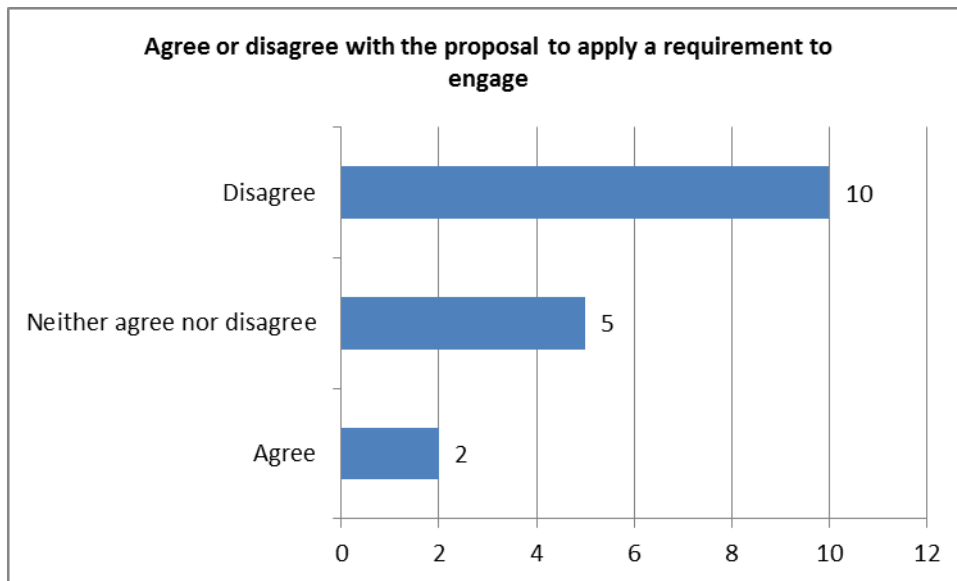
Base: 17

4.3.2 7 respondents made a comment about the proposal to share data with other partners. Please see Appendix Four for all comments and mitigation responses

4.4 **Do you agree or disagree with the proposal to apply a requirement to engage with additional services in order to qualify for further awards?**

4.4.1 10 respondents said they disagree with the proposal to apply a requirement to engage.

Figure 4. Respondents who agree or disagree with the proposal to apply a requirement to engage



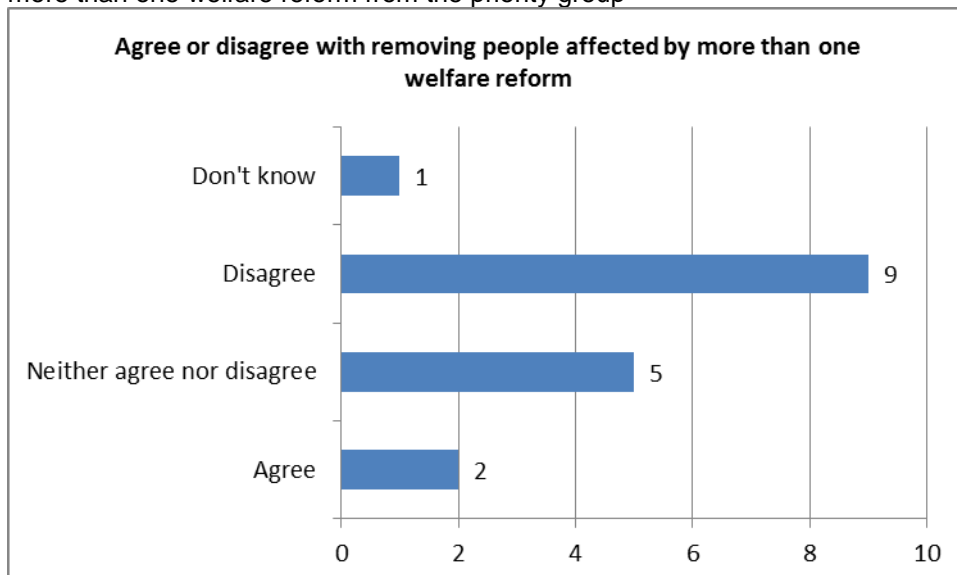
Base 17

- 4.4.2 11 respondents made a comment about the proposal to apply a requirement to engage with additional services. Please see Appendix Four for all comments and mitigation responses

4.5 **Do you agree or disagree with removing people who are affected by more than one welfare reform from the priority group category so that we can offer them additional support?**

- 4.5.1 9 respondents disagree with the proposal to remove people who are affected by more than one welfare reform from the priority group category.

Figure 5. Respondents who agree or disagree with removing people who are affected by more than one welfare reform from the priority group



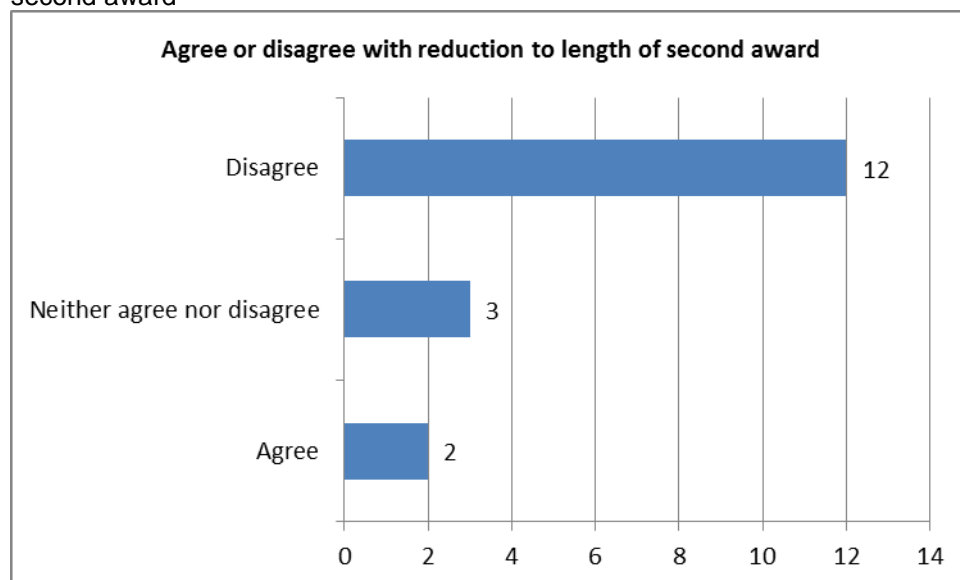
Base: 17

- 4.5.2 8 respondents made a comment about the proposal to remove people who are affected by more than one welfare reform from the priority group. Please see Appendix Four for all comments and mitigation responses

4.6 **Do you agree or disagree with the proposed reduction to the length of any second award for those who no longer fall in to the priority group category from 6 months to 3 months?**

4.6.1 12 respondents disagree with the proposal to reduce the length of a second award to those who no longer fall in to the priority group.

Figure 6. Respondents who agree or disagree with the proposed reduction to the length of a second award



Base: 17

4.6.2 9 respondents made a comment about the proposal to reduce the length of the second award to those who no longer fall in to the priority group. Please see Appendix Four for all comments and mitigation responses

5. Who took part?

5.1 The demographics of respondents are in the tables below, please note a number of respondents chose not to provide this information.

Table 2. Gender of respondents

	Count
Male	4
Female	9
Prefer not to say	4

Base: 17

Table 3. Age of respondents

	Count
25-34	3
35-44	2
45-54	5
55-64	2

Base: 17

Table 4. Ethnicity of respondents

	Count
White - English / Welsh / Scottish / Northern Irish / British	8
Prefer not to say	9

Base: 17

Table 5. Disability of respondents

	Count
Yes	4
No	6
Prefer not to say	5

Base: 15

Appendix Three

Do you agree or disagree with the proposal to combine the application process for all discretionary payments into one Single Discretionary Award application?	
Comments on combining the application process	Response/Mitigation
Whilst it will make it easier for clients to claim I would like to know where all this support is going to come from. If it is merely signposting then it will not be suitable for vulnerable clients. Also not everybody has access to the internet or indeed are computer literate.	The SDAS will have a formal partnership arrangement to deliver services. All three discretionary awards are online applications only, and we will continue with this approach ensuring customers can get help to make their SDAS application.
Needs to be a facility available to assist applicants who have difficulty with on line forms - exceptions/alternatives need to be made for vulnerable groups	There is currently a self service offer available which will continue to be available under the SDAS. We will also be offering people the opportunity to attend basic courses on digital skills if someone has limited or no digital skills.
Absolutely ludicrous. They are different awards for different things/circumstances. It should not be changed. Instead cut cost by hiring less people with Derby City Council and instead hire and train people who can do more than one thing. Also how about cutting Ranjit Banwait overpriced salary along with other councillors who not only get a massive wage but unnecessary extra expenses free lifestyle.	The three discretionary financial awards will continue to be delivered. The application process is being simplified but awards for individual needs will still be made.
The current system is too long and complicated for service users. They are also not always aware that they can claim under all three provisions and miss out causing more problems down the line.	Nothing to add
A need for local assistance could arise at a time different to the point at which someone applies for the other discretionary schemes. Local assistance can be needed in emergency situations so people need to be able to apply for this separately.	We have considered this and have given customers the option to let us know, upon application, that they are already in receipt of DHP or CTH. There is no proposal to only allow applications to LAS when applying for DHP or CTH. Applications for LAS can be submitted at any time.
A lot of Derby residents who need to access these services might be confused by combining payments. This is compounded by it being a digital claim. Vulnerable residents in crisis or needing extra support are often digitally excluded.	Payments and awards for each discretionary financial element will be paid in the same way as they are now. DHP, where possible will be paid directly to the Landlord, CTH to the Council Tax account and LAS directly to the customer by way of goods. The digital nature of the application proposed does not differ from the current application process for each of these services.
providing the assessment is thorough and easy for vulnerable groups to give the relevant information with prompts if necessary	Nothing to add

It will not work to have one combined payment for three separate payments that have quite different criteria.	The questions being asked across all three applications were very similar. Any questions that were not the same have been reviewed by the individual teams and removed where no longer relevant.
I am not sure about this. Merging the DHP and Council Tax hardship schemes is almost certainly better, reducing the need for multiple claims and/or having to decide which to apply for or whether to apply for both. However, adding in the local assistance scheme risks confusing both applicants and staff administering the scheme. I think that very careful thought needs to go into this as it could have the unintended consequence of actually complicating the system rather than simplifying it.	<p>The forms across DHP, CTH and LAS all currently have very similar questions. The proposed combined application will remove the duplication across the three applications and enable processing to take place in the same way. The back office processing of the applications will still be carried out by the same teams and they will still have access to the same information as they do currently.</p> <p>Part of the application process also allows the customer to give us an indication of which financial award they are applying for.</p>
not everyone can apply online - a paper application should be allowed	The current DHP, CTH and LAS applications are only available online. The new SDAS service will function in the same way.
Do you agree or disagree with the proposal to provide additional support packages to meet the needs of individuals who apply through the Single Discretionary Award application?	
Comments on providing additional support packages	Mitigation
Again I would like to know in what form this support will be provided.	The customer's needs will be assessed by the Welfare Reform team, who will then refer the customer to the most appropriate partner, based on their need. Any referrals made by the Welfare Reform team will be case managed with progress being reported back via the case management system.
Neither of these so-called support packages and their intentions ever work or help and are an absolute waste of time and further funding. How about train more young people or provide paid work experience and potential full-time employment to (new) parents or people who need support wishing to go back to work instead	<p>Learning from other projects and trials has been assessed when designing this service. The learning and engagement from the Universal Support Delivered Locally trial, funded by the Department for Work and Pensions has shown us that a more coordinated approach to support service delivery improves engagement.</p> <p>Part of the Welfare Strategy for Derby supports partnership working and exploring new models for delivery via external funding opportunities. We are developing partnerships to support with work experience placements and we are also seeking external funding to potentially create paid opportunities by re-running our Derby's Working programme.</p>

Would like to know what type of support this would be. To just signpost to self help is often not sufficient as not everybody has access to a computer or is computer literate.	The customer's needs will be assessed by the Welfare Reform team, who will then refer the customer to the most appropriate partner, based on their need. Any referrals made by the Welfare Reform team will be properly case managed with progress being reported back via the case management system.
As long as the support is tailored to my needs particularly if I need face to face advice if I am vulnerable or not "on line" savvy.	One of the support offers will relate to digital skills and improving digital ability.
Agree in theory but wonder whether there would be the capacity of advice services to provide the support and also am concerned that people who are struggling to pay their rent or council tax would be encouraged into job clubs etc where not appropriate.	The support delivery will not be online. It will be delivered over the phone or face to face.
Extra support is great but who is going to provide it. I understand that the council has had to make difficult decisions about funding services but there is little advice and support left in Derby and further cuts planned for next year . Eg Derby advice	We will be working closely with our partners to monitor capacity and referrals.
so long as it is clearly explained fully understood and agreed by client	Being in rent arrears or Council Tax arrears would not impact someone's ability to engage with a job club or work. Where someone is suffering financial hardship, taking steps to move closer to work has the potential to significantly improve their financial position.
There definitely needs to be referrals to support and advice services for benefits and money advice.	We will be working with a very specific group within this customer group, predominantly Job Seekers. Where engagement with support is not appropriate according to the policy, we will not be asking people to engage.
	Despite difficult decisions regarding funding, the Council and other local organisations and agencies have been working hard to continue to work in partnership to support the residents of Derby.
	Nothing to add
	Nothing to add
Do you agree or disagree with the proposal to share information with other partners so they can offer applicants additional services?	
Comments on sharing information with partners	Mitigation
There is a danger of misuse of data protection like people being profiled for statistical purposes. It should only be for the best interest of the claimant.	There will be a formal, robust data sharing agreement in place across the partnership to ensure the correct use of data both in line with the Data Protection Act 1998 and in line with the informed consent provided by the customer.

if you are sharing data there needs to be a SLA and signed agreement to ensure that the agencies you share with are fully trained and be data complaint - also needs to be a declaration of interest process so that applicants are not dealt with by people they know etc. the applicant needs to be aware of this as do the agencies with whom info is shared. some information would be confidential and should not be shared For example you may get a victim of DV whose details cannot be shared with anyone for safety reasons - there needs to be provision for this - per gaps only dealing with named members of staff or coordinated internally to maintain confidentiality	There will be a formal, robust data sharing agreement in place across the partnership to ensure the correct use of data both in line with the Data Protection Act 1998 and in line with the informed consent provided by the customer. There will be processes put in to place for customers who need alternative options due to domestic violence.
Only if I am made aware of who those partners will be and that it is appropriate to my needs.	The customer will be giving informed consent to sharing information and will be fully informed on which partners will receive their details.
These are not always recurring awards so not necessary, to share information.	Information will only be shared where the customer's needs are assessed and they require a referral to a partner agency regarding a specific support needs.
There should not be conditionally attached. for example residents making a claim who is assessed as needing budgeting advice or career advice should not have to do this in order to get a payment. Conditionality does not work. Support and nudging does. Sharing customer details should only be with the explicit consent of the customer	This answer does not relate to sharing data - please refer to the question relating to engagement.
so long as it is for the benefit of the client fully understood and agreed	Nothing to add
not everyone understands what other organisations do	The customer will be fully informed on who they are being referred to and for what purpose.
Do you agree or disagree with the proposal to apply a requirement to engage with additional services in order to qualify for further awards?	
Comments on proposal to engage with additional services	Mitigation
To a claimant this could feel like blackmail and they would then feel under duress to work with the agency who they are referred to.	The customer's needs will be discussed in detail prior to any referrals. The issues being referred for are also things that are likely to be causing the customer significant worry. For example, possession proceedings or multiple debts.
will there be a right of appeal and review on this ? there should be and applicants should be able to have someone represent them	Any decision not to make an award can be reviewed/appealed in the same way as currently available.
I don't agree as they may be many of reasons a person may not engage for example someone who suffers from Anxiety or Agoraphobia, someone who struggles with confidence, someone who finds it hard to be mobile, someone on ESA OR DLA etc or someone who's not been able to engage through no fault of their own or if these restrictions create a barrier for people or if the council representatives fail to help or deliver.	As per the proposed policy, no one in receipt of Employment and Support Allowance will be expected to engage with support services. Anyone with a disability or DLA is able to access services if they wish but it is not a requirement of the award.

<p>If it is used as a form of blackmail it is not fair as everybody is different. Some people may struggle to engage due to mental illness and this would make them less likely to ask for help. I would worry this group of people would become more marginalised.</p>	<p>Most people with mental health issues will be in receipt of Employment and Support Allowance and therefore not required to engage.</p> <p>All engagement criteria will be tailored for each individual based on their need and capabilities.</p>
<p>I think engagement generally should largely be voluntary and any-one in need should be helped regardless.</p>	<p>Whilst engagement is expected where someone is in receipt of Jobseekers Allowance, it does not preclude other groups from asking for and engaging with support services voluntarily.</p>
<p>Strongly disagree with making these additional demands on claimants. Help and advice should be offered on a purely voluntary basis and payments should not be conditional on this.</p>	<p>The customer's needs will be discussed in detail prior to any referrals. The issues being referred for are also things that are likely to be causing the customer significant worry. For example, possession proceedings or multiple debts.</p>
<p>Conditionality does not work. it excludes chaotic and vulnerable residents of Derby. We should support and encourage in a way that treats the individual with respect and dignity.</p>	<p>Each customer will have a personalised package of support that supports them in the way that they require and not in a standard way</p>
<p>each case should be looked at and reassessed again due to possible changes in circs or information not given in original application there should be no penalty</p>	<p>Where a person is engaged with this service their needs will be re-assessed regularly to reflect their progress.</p>
<p>Many of the vulnerable groups identified will struggle with an online applciation and find it hard to engage with services and should not be penalised for this.</p>	<p>The self service offer allows people to apply for these discretionary payments currently and will continue to do so under the SDAS.</p> <p>The most vulnerable customers will be working with the Welfare Reform Officer who will support them to engage with services.</p>

<p>The increased emphasis on compulsion is extremely worrying. This has always been a problem when it related to budgeting advice, etc., but the inclusion of work-related activity would be disastrous. There is growing evidence that this kind of compulsion actually pushes some people further away from work. Claimants are suffering from a system where the actual emphasis is more on taking benefits away than it is helping them find and retain work. The target group for this scheme should be the people who are most suffering from this. Many have health (often mental health) problems; some have learning difficulties; others just have limited skills and difficulty finding work. Most have become alienated from the system precisely because of their negative experiences of this sort of compulsion. If people are offered a service that seems genuinely set up to help them, they will engage with it. If they see a service that is set up as a barrier to them claiming benefits, they will understandably be afraid of it. Please do not make this mistake.</p>	<p>Conditionality set by Jobcentre Plus is entirely different to the requirement we are proposing to engage with support.</p> <p>As per the proposed policy, no one in receipt of Employment and Support Allowance will be expected to engage with support services. Anyone with a disability or DLA is able to access services if they wish but it is not a requirement of the award.</p> <p>This is a person centred service that will not arbitrarily stop discretionary payments where engagement has been unsuccessful. It is meant to encourage conversations with the customer to really detect the root cause of the problem. The support services available will not be offered as a blanket support offer, they will only be offered where a needs assessment has identified a genuine barrier. The Welfare Reform Officers will support the most vulnerable people to engage in the service that is most appropriate for them.</p> <p>The service will encourage personalised solutions together with open and honest communication between staff and customers.</p>
<p>This does not promote choice and control</p>	<p>This is a person centred service that is designed to encourage conversations with the customer to detect the root cause of the problem. The support services available will not be offered as a blanket support offer, they will only be offered where a needs assessment has identified a genuine barrier. The Welfare Reform Officers will then support the most vulnerable people to engage in the service that is most appropriate for them. Where we have a number of support offers relating to one particular need the customer will have the choice and control to decide upon which service they would like to be referred to.</p>
<p>Do you agree or disagree with removing people who are affected by more than one welfare reform from the priority group category so that we can offer them additional support?</p>	
<p>comments on removing people who are affected by more than one welfare reform</p>	<p>Mitigation</p>
<p>No I sing agree instead change the "priority " groups to include those on a very low income, those with a parent with illness, young people, single or couples with or without a family who have moved out from parents and are renting a property on low incomes etc.</p>	<p>We currently prioritise those who are most vulnerable, a full list is available in the policy but this does include carers.</p>

What type of support would this be. You would need to have robust structure in place and unsure how this is affordable given current climate.	Access to money advice, debt advice, digital skills support, banking and lending products, housing advice, welfare rights support, employment support and education and skills support.
Every case should be judged individually after a full income and expenditure review and expert advice given regarding welfare benefits and money advice.	Nothing to add – this is included in the current plans
Do not understand what this proposal means. Not clearly worded.	Nothing to add
Adult dependants, who are recognised as adults, but vulnerable, remain within the family home, but the lead householder, no longer receives housing benefit for them or council tax reduction, this is not resolvable as they are classed as an adult, they cannot claim housing or council tax relief in their own right as they are too vulnerable to live independently. No amount of support services will change the outcome, therefore they continue to be a priority.	Non dependents are not treated as a priority group under the current policies and no changes are proposed.
each case needs to be individually assessed	Nothing to add – this is included in the current plans
Those affected by more than one welfare reform are very vulnerable and should be treated as a priority.	This group will be treated as a priority for support services to enable them to move closer to and in to work to improve their circumstances.
This is nonsense! You don't need to remove people from the priority group to give them other help. Please separate the help you are offering people financially from the other help you are offering them. This way you will get the much needed financial/material support to those in most need of it and you will also be able to provide support to those in the best position to benefit from it.	All customers will have access to this support however the requirement to engage will only be applicable to the group set out in the policy.
Do you agree or disagree with the proposed reduction to the length of any second award for those who no longer fall in to the priority group category from 6 months to 3 months?	
Comments on the proposal to reduce the length of any second award for those who no longer fall in to the priority category from 6 months to 3 months	Mitigation
Have you thought of tapering the award over the period of 6 months to allow claimants a chance to budget better and spread it out rather than put it off and then have to find the full shortfall. Finding a smaller amount to pay is a lot more achievable and sustainable to most people who are struggling financially.	Tapering awards was considered as an option however DHP payments are usually made in one payment as opposed to monthly/weekly payments. Tapering would involve more frequent payments and more officer time which is not an option we want to pursue given financial pressures.
These reforms basically mean cuts to those most vulnerable, while the council wastes money on, for example, unnecessary, polluting and wasteful 'infrastructure' eg Derbyshire incineration plant tinyurl.com/qg6bpfn	

this should only be used as a guideline only - there needs to be cases where there is an exception	Decisions will be made on a case by case basis and fully take in to consideration the person's circumstances.
No I don't agree, because it effectively will not help in the long term.	Offering the additional support programme will work to remove individual barriers and help people improve their individual circumstances
would it not be better to taper the award over a longer period to get people used to paying something and budgeting better. It is also less severe than going from full help to nothing. It is surely better to re-educate.	Tapering awards was considered as an option however DHP payments are usually made in one payment as opposed to monthly/weekly payments. Tapering would involve more frequent payments and more officer time which is not an option we want to pursue given financial pressures.
It should not be restricted and if the budget and need is there it should continue.	The DHP budget will be put under considerable pressure by the introduction of further welfare reforms across 2016/17. The proposed policy will allow for the protection of those who are most vulnerable
My issue with this is that DHPs are helping people sustain tenancies. the council cannot really cope with more residents needing to be re housed	With the introduction of the support programme, we don't anticipate that the proposals will have any impact on tenancy sustainment.
vulnerable clients will struggle to make new applications every 3 months - 6 months is a much better time period for allowing people to prepare for budgeting and meeting costs without support	The proposal isn't to reduce the length of award to 3 months across the board. The first award will remain at six months with the second being for three months. The customer would not receive any further award in that financial year so would not have to re-apply again for 6 months from the date of the second award.
There are lots of very vulnerable (and poor) people not in the priority category. This appears to be an attempt to distinguish between the 'deserving' and 'undeserving' poor.	We are prioritising the most vulnerable. We fully accept that there are people suffering financial hardship who will be in the group that we want to work with and their personalised support programme will reflect that.

Single Discretionary Award Policy V1.0



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Introduction

Derby City Council has historically provided support to those residents most in need through three separate discretionary payment schemes; Local Assistance (LAS), Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) and Council Tax Hardship (CTH). These three schemes have been partially funded by the Department of Work and Pensions through ring-fenced and non ring-fenced funding.

Derby City Council has full discretion to determine locally how best to support the needs of residents and to establish the criteria for the provision of this discretionary assistance to residents.

Over the past five years we have witnessed a change to the local and national government funding landscape. As part of the austerity measures, Derby City Council has witnessed a 40% reduction in its total funding from Government.

In the Government's Emergency Budget July 2015 changes to thresholds for the Benefit Cap and reductions in welfare expenditure were announced in tandem with a faster rollout for the new Universal Credit system and a commitment to helping citizens back into work.

This Policy must be read in line with the Single Discretionary Award Policy Guidance which can be found on our website www.derby.gov.uk

Purpose and aim

- To prescribe Derby City Council's arrangements for a single Welfare Discretionary Policy covering the Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP), Local Assistance Scheme (LAS) and the Council Tax Hardship scheme (CTH) with a single needs assessment
- To support the aims and objectives of the city's Welfare strategy and the Derby City Plan
- To ensure that this single Welfare discretionary fund is targeted for those vulnerable Derby residents who demonstrate a need for support.
- To manage the awards of support within the cash limited provision.
- To control duplicate payments from a range of funding streams for which the Council and other key partners have delegated responsibility to administer – as detailed in Appendix 1.

- Develop a programme of financial, digital, and generalist advice and access to education, training and employment support to help prepare residents for Universal Credit and the associated Welfare Reforms

Scope

Derby's single Discretionary Welfare scheme is targeted to support vulnerable people, resident in Derby, who present a need that cannot be met from another source because of the recent Welfare Reform changes and, where appropriate, to prepare them for Universal Credit. Support may be provided if the resident's application indicates that:

- Their situation presents a risk to the health and safety or wellbeing of the applicant, or a risk of homelessness to the applicant or an immediate family member/dependent within the household.
- The situation prevents an intended return to, or the continuation of, independent living in the community.

The scope of this policy covers the following key areas:

1. What the Council may award the resident from the Single Discretionary Award Scheme

One, all or a combination of the following:

- white goods, electrical goods, general furniture and goods for the home
- vouchers for the supply of dried and tinned goods.
- payments for utilities will be made by topping up payment cards/keys – these must belong to the tenancy holder.
- payment by direct credit to the relevant Council Tax account.
- a DHP may be awarded to support a move to cheaper alternative accommodation where the applicant is unable to access this support from other Council or partner organisations' home-move support schemes. This type of award will be limited to either a rent deposit or rent in advance in lieu of an on-going DHP award, or to cover reasonable removal costs. A DHP may be awarded for a rent deposit or rent in advance for a property that the claimant is yet to move into only if they are entitled Housing Benefit or the Housing Costs element

of Universal Credit at their present home, at the point at which the award is made.

- A DHP payment may include either direct payment to the claimant or landlord, or in the case of Derby Homes' tenants and specific Registered Social Landlords (RSLs), will be credited direct to their rent account. No awards are made in cash. The method of payment and payee will depend on the claimant's circumstances.

2. Eligibility criteria

For the general eligibility criteria of all awards included in the single Discretionary Welfare payment a combination of the following conditions, depending on the type of award, must be satisfied.

Applicants must:

- Be aged 16 or over
- Be in receipt of one of the following qualifying benefits*:
 - Income Support
 - Job Seekers Allowance
 - Pension Credit
 - Employment Support Allowance
 - Disability Living Allowance (DLA) (middle to high rate care and/or high rate mobility)
 - Universal Credit (to be eligible for a DHP, the claimant must be receiving the Housing Costs element of UC, for rental liability)
 - An advance payment of Universal Credit
 - Incapacity benefit (for those applicants who have not had this replaced by ESA)
 - Working Tax Credits
 - Housing Benefit
 - Council Tax Support
 - Attendance allowance
 - Bereavement allowance
 - Carer's allowance
 - Constant attendance allowance
 - Disability living allowance (middle to high rate mobility, or middle to high rate care)
 - Contributory employment and support allowance
 - Contribution-based jobseeker's allowance
 - Maternity allowance

- Personal Independence Payment (Both Daily Living Components and/or the Enhanced Rate Mobility Component)
 - Statutory Sick Pay
 - War disablement pension
 - War widow's and widower's pension
 - Widowed parent's allowance
- Have more Council Tax to pay as a result of a reduced Council Tax discount or exemption arising from the Council Tax technical reforms and who can demonstrate financial hardship or exceptional personal circumstances.
- Be without sufficient resources to meet short-term needs or priority debts of themselves or members of their household.
- Be fleeing domestic violence or hate crime, leaving long term hospital care or prison or re-settling after a period of homelessness.
- Make an application via the approved e-form and complete an online income and expenditure form
- Agree to take up and remain engaged with the programme of support offered at time of award
- Be the liable person on the relevant Council Tax bill where a Council Tax Hardship award is being requested.

* Not all benefit types and criteria will qualify the applicant for all award types. A combination of eligibility criteria is applicable to each award under this scheme

Applicants who are aged 16 or 17 and who are not entitled to a Leaving Care Grant and can demonstrate a need for support may apply for assistance from the Single Discretionary Award scheme.

Assessments on need will be based on individual circumstances which can include (but not exclusive to) consideration of the following factors:

- At risk of or affected by domestic abuse or hate crime
- A mental health problem for which treatment or support is being received
- A risk to the health and safety or wellbeing of the applicant
- At risk of homelessness
- A short fall in Housing Benefit
- A short fall in the Universal Credit Housing Costs element for rental liability

- Having more Council Tax pay as a result of a reduced discount or exemption
- Being unable to meet your immediate needs e.g. not being able to afford food/utility top ups

The Council will set the value and period of the award that will be paid and where appropriate, successful applicants to the scheme will be offered support with the move to Universal Credit, getting them closer to work, in addition to offering referrals money advice; budgeting support; access to banking products; access to digital skills support; better off calculations; access to job clubs and training and housing advice.

Applicants must be willing to take up and remain with the most appropriate support recommended by the Council, which may include money advice; budgeting support; access to banking products; access to digital skills support; better off calculations; access to job clubs and training and housing advice. Certain groups (including pensioners) will be excluded from any closer to work requirements.

We may not ask you to engage with 'towards work' activity where you:

- are in receipt of Employment and Support Allowance and are in the Support Group
- are in receipt of Disability Living Allowance at either the higher rate of Care or the higher rate of the Mobility Component but do not fall in to a protected group above
- are in receipt of Personal Independence Payment at the enhanced rate of either the Daily Living component or the mobility component and do not fall in to a protected group above.
- are a carer, in receipt of Carers Allowance

In addition to these general eligibility criteria the applicant may be asked to:

- Be living at the address you are claiming for
- Have a local connection; living in Derby for three of the last 12 months OR for at least three of the last five years, except in cases where applicants are fleeing violence or hate crime. The local connection criteria will not be applied to awards for Discretionary Housing payments.

Any on-going payment of DHP or CTH granted under this policy will be for a period of up to six months, apart from the priority groups set out in section 3 below. All other non-priority claimants, if successful, will be entitled to receive a six month award in the first instance and should they make a second claim they may be entitled to a further three month award.

In the case of Discretionary Housing Payments and Council Tax Hardship payments, awards may be adjusted during the award period if the claimant has a change in

circumstances which affects their entitlement to Housing Benefit, the Housing Costs element of Universal Credit or Council Tax Support.

Where the DHP is being awarded to meet an on-going shortfall:

- (a) For Housing Benefit claimants the DHP award cannot exceed the claimant's eligible rent amount.
- (b) For Universal Credit claimants the level of DHP award cannot exceed the claimant's Housing Element amount.

Assistance awards meeting the criteria will be supported provided the scheme has sufficient funds and is meeting its legal duties.

Where the Council has recommended a package of support during the first six month award and the claimant has not engaged, a second award may not be made.

3. Priority Groups

The following claimants will be treated as being priority groups for the purposes of DHP awards:

- foster carers
- carers
- households where substantial disabled adaptations have been undertaken to meet the disability needs of a household member
- households with a child who is unable to share a bedroom due to disability and where any of the following applies:
 - a. there is a claim for child DLA care component at the middle or highest rate in payment
 - b. There is no entitlement to DLA care component at the middle or highest rate but the child has a disability that may be particularly disruptive.

For claimants in priority groups, DHP awards can be allowed for up to 12 months

4. When the Council may not make an award via the single Welfare Discretionary policy

Applications for assistance may be declined if one or more of the following apply:

- a. Support is available through other statutory or discretionary provision
- b. Other support has been granted for this need or situation.
- c. Eligibility criteria not met.

- d. For Housing Benefit Claimants the shortfall in HB is because of:
deductions made from HB to recover a prior HB overpayment; service charges that are ineligible for HB; increases in rent due to outstanding rent arrears or certain sanctions.
- e. For UC claimants, the shortfall in UC is because of deductions made from UC to recover a prior HB overpayment or service charges that are ineligible for UC
- f. The applicant is not the main tenancy holder
- g. The applicant is not the liable person named on the Council Tax bill
- h. A need for support is not evidenced.
- i. Exceptional financial circumstances not evidenced.
- j. Applicant/circumstances/items are excluded.
- k. The Applicant has access to capital or savings
- l. Council unable to support the application within allocated funds.
- m. Applicant is a “person from abroad” who does not have entitlement to public funds.
- n. Applicant refuses to engage with the support that may be offered as part of this scheme or complete the recommended measures/advice

5. Internal Administration

All services engaged with vulnerable applicants have a responsibility to ensure the principles of this Policy are fully supported; that demands on the fund are genuine.

Where the Council holds a duty to fulfil the support needs under its range of statutory functions the applicant is required to explore these support services at the earliest opportunity.

All departments work collaboratively to ensure that the scheme is run in the most economical and effective manner for applicants and wider Derby residents.

All awards will be subject to review to ensure that the scheme is run in the most economical and effective manner for the residents of Derby. This will enable Derby City Council to guarantee a scheme beyond 2016.

6. Legislation, guidance and standards

There is no statutory obligation to run a single Discretionary Welfare scheme but in order to provide the best value to the residents of Derby and to provide a resilient support structure for our most vulnerable residents Derby City Council is committed to:

- Work in partnership with the local Third Sector to develop schemes.
- Explore a range of in-kind support, and to link to advice, information and advocacy.
- Explore a full range of models for delivery.

7. Disputed decisions

Each of the award types within the single Discretionary Welfare policy are subject to different rules for reviewing disputed and appealed decisions.

Local Assistance Awards

This award is not subject to a formal appeals process by virtue that any decision to make a payment is of a discretionary nature.

Where an application is declined and a decision is disputed for a reason other than one relating to exclusions from the Scheme, an officer independent of the original decision maker will review the decision. Matters relating to exclusions are not open to review.

The reviewing officer's decision is final and binding.

CTH Awards

The applicant, or their representative, must submit an e-form request for the decision to be reviewed. They must set out the reasons why they believe the decision should be reviewed. All requests, with supporting information, must be made within 21 days of the decision being notified.

A claimant may appeal under Section 16 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 against the Council's decision regarding their eligibility for Council Tax Hardship, in the first instance by writing to the Council – within one month of the date of decision - to request that it be reconsidered. The Council will then reconsider its decision and notify the claimant of its considerations and reasons for its decision.

The claimant then has a further two months to request a subsequent and independent review of their appeal by the Valuation Tribunal for England following the above process.

DHP Awards

DHPs are not subject to a formal appeals process as all payments made by the Council are of a discretionary nature.

Where an application is declined and a decision is disputed for a reason other than one relating to exclusions from the Scheme, an applicant or their representative may request a review.

All requests for reviews must:

- Be made by the applicant or their representative
- Be submitted as a written e-request
- Set out the reasons why they believe the decision should be reviewed
- Be made within 21 calendar days of the original decision being notified.

The request will be reviewed by another officer who has delegated authority to make the decision. This reviewing officer's decision is final and binding and completes the internal review process.

8. Data Access and Sharing

Derby City Council will treat all information provided in confidence and in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998. It will be used for the purpose of referring you to the most appropriate partner under the single discretionary award policy and assessment. The needs assessment will also be shared with the Derby City Council Derby Direct Team to assess what additional support you may require and for monitoring and reporting purposes.

Information includes your name, address, contact telephone number, email address and answers to the questions relating to your needs as set out in the application form for discretionary support. Partners will share the details of your engagement with services and the outcome of your support with the Council. This is for monitoring and evaluation purposes and may also inform any future awards.

We will use this information for decision making, reporting and analysis purposes. We may contact you, to get general feedback. We will not share your information with any organisation other than the partners listed below and it will not be used for any other purpose.

When making an application, you will be informed of exactly which partners we may share your information with and for what purpose within the Data Protection Statement.

9. Evaluation and review

The Council will review the scheme arrangements and amend as necessary based on emerging needs and demands.

We are committed to reviewing this scheme every calendar year to ensure that it:

1. Offers best value for money for the local taxpayer
2. Is meeting the needs of our most vulnerable residents
3. Reflects any new statutory requirements upon the Council
4. Is helping to prepare our residents for the impact of national welfare reform and Universal Credit transition over the coming years

Alternative Options

The Council has a wide range of statutory duties to address exceptional vulnerable needs and to support independent living. In addition Government Departments and the Third Sector provide support for vulnerable citizens. The Council's single Welfare Scheme will compliment these duties and will avoid duplication or replication of existing support.

The following lists alternate support for guidance purposes. It is not intended to be exhaustive.

DWP

The DWP retains responsibility for administration of a series of one off grants and loans to assist people on benefits who are experiencing short-term financial pressures or difficulties. These include:

- a. Maternity Expenses
- b. Funeral Expenses
- c. Daily Living Expenses
- d. Cold weather payments
- e. Winter Fuel Payments
- f. Budgeting or alignment loans to bridge short-term financial pressures.

Budgeting Advances for residents on Universal Credit will provide valuable access to an interest-free advance for one-off items, for claimants that have been continuously receiving an income related benefit for a period of 6 months and have no, or very low, income. A Budgeting Advance might be required to:

- a. buy furniture or household equipment
- b. buy clothing and footwear
- c. pay rent in advance, in order to secure a new tenancy or removal expenses
- d. pay for essential home improvements
- e. help with travel to work costs
- f. help with maternity and funeral expenses
- g. help cover the cost of obtaining work or remaining in work (in particular, upfront child care costs)

Prison Service

People leaving prison are provided with a discharge grant of £50.

Midland Community Finance

People at threat of eviction/mortgage arrears can claim an interest free loan repayable over 2 years

Charitable Funds

What is a charitable fund?

Charitable funds give grants to a range of people who have a financial need and meet the criteria of the fund. The fund is an amount of money that has been set aside by the grant giving charity for a particular purpose. They are run by charities that often have grant giving as part of their aims and objectives.

Some charities run only one fund however others will have several for different purposes. You will often find that the fund or funds will reflect the work that the charity does and will often have a particular focus, for example:

- Particular disabilities or illnesses
- Jobs or industries that the person applying has either worked in previously or works in currently
- Faiths
- Nationalities
- Living in particular areas of the UK
- Trying to manage on a low income
- A specific age group (older people, children and young people etc)
- Partners/children of people applying to the fund

Using resources to find charitable grants for the people that you work with can be done via Turn2us.

Turn2us is a free service that helps people in financial need to access welfare benefits, charitable grants and other financial help. Support can be accessed online, by telephone and face to face through partner organisations. The Turn2us website has a quick and easy grant searching tool that uses criteria to establish what grants might be available to the person you are working with:

<http://www.turn2us.org.uk/default.aspx>

See also:

<http://www.glasspool.org.uk/home/homepage> for other grants

