

Summary Fair Treatment Assessment (FTA)

Area for Assessment:		
Name of service or function etc	Local Discretionary Grants Scheme: Local support to replace Community Care Grants & Crisis Loans	
Which Service does this affect?	Resources	
Is this a new, existing or revised function?	New	If a Saving please give amount(£) N/A
Summary of findings:		
Main conclusions on the likely impact of the function on different equality groups (protected characteristics):		
<p>As part of the Government's Welfare Reforms, Community Care Grants and Crisis Loans will be abolished and transferred from the Department for Work & Pensions (DWP) to local authorities, which in turn, will be given the flexibility to operate schemes that match local needs. As of the 1 April 2013, local authorities will be required to operate local schemes that replace Community Care Grants and Crisis Loans.</p> <p>While the total amount of Government funding for the programme falls short of what was expected, it does, provide Solihull Council with discretion as to how the fund can be used provided that the spirit of Community Care Grants and Crisis Loans is retained. Of course, local authorities will have responsibility to: 'ensure that decisions are fair and impartial and to decide on appropriate arrangements for reconsideration or review' [DWP: Government Response to the Call for Evidence, June 2011]</p> <p>Implementing a Local Discretionary Grants Scheme presents an opportunity to complement current support interventions that target the most vulnerable people, such as troubled families ('Families First'), early help strategy and homelessness strategy. To ensure the scheme connects with programmes that seek to close the gap of inequality, its delivery will be monitored by the Action Against Poverty Champions Group who have a particular role in monitoring the partnership responses to Welfare Reform. The whole basis of the Scheme is multi-agency working with statutory agencies, advocacy services and voluntary groups.</p> <p>The key findings and impacts identified in this assessment are:</p> <p>Age - Data from the DWP show there is a low take up of the fund by people aged over 65, with the highest tendency to claim being within the age range of 25 to 49 years. A more equal distribution can be achieved by working with partners that support clients of different ages.</p> <p>Carers - Under the existing arrangement, care receivers and care givers are one of the main beneficiaries of Community Care Grants. Owing to the fact we will retain the fundamental principles of Community Care Grants, we expect no adverse changes.</p> <p>Disability - Existing criteria to support people requiring significant and substantial amounts of care or supervision will be retained within Solihull's Scheme. As indicated by DWP research (2004) over a third of applications for Community Care Grants are from people with physical and mental health disabilities. In view of this, we will work with statutory authorities and advocacy services to support disabled people to</p>		

make and manage applications.

Looked After Children - The DWP holds no localised data in respect of claims by looked after children. However, we will work with the Children and Young People 16+ Plus Team to target care leavers at risk of crisis or in need of community care, using awards to complement their transition from local authority care to independent living.

Marriage/Civil Partnership - The main beneficiaries of the current arrangement are single males and females. These household types are deemed to have the least amount of resources /instrumental support available to cope with an urgent crisis or care need. However, we will review the risks that affect the health and safety of partners or immediate family members, using the existing DWP definition of a family that goes beyond the conventional 'nuclear' family.

Pregnancy/Maternity - Sure Start Maternity Grants will be retained by the DWP and applicants seeking help with the costs of a new born or adopted baby will be referred into this scheme. As currently, lone parents with young children will be a priority group under Solihull's Scheme, because maternity stress together with the pressures of managing on a low income can give rise to urgent crisis or care needs.

Race/Ethnicity - Overall success rates under the current arrangements are slightly higher for white customers than for other groups, with the DWP unsure why there are different success rates for customers from different ethnic groups. A locally delivered Scheme would be able to address this issue – by working with a diverse range of partners.

Socio- Economic Disadvantage - Intrinsicly the Scheme is designed to provide a final safety net for people who have insufficient resources to meet an urgent crisis or care need. The criteria set out in this Scheme have been informed by the 'Action Against Poverty Needs Assessment', and support for applicants will fall under the framework of the Action Against Poverty Strategy to address the long term risks of persistent poverty.

Other Categories - No evidence is available for: Religion or Belief, Gender Reassignment or Sexual Orientation. These characteristics will not form the basis for an award. A complaints, review and appeals policy will monitor whether an award has been biased by discrimination or prejudice.

Actions:

Actions to be taken to mitigate or reduce any negative impact:

Action	Outcome	Timescale
Incorporate relevant equality monitoring categories within the application, assessment, award and appeals process	Monitoring of equality impacts for different components and stages of the fund	April 2013
Equality monitoring incorporated into the case management system	As above	April 2013 – March 2015
Operate partner feedback/monitoring sessions	Monitor partner/customer experiences of applying and using local discretionary grants	Periodically, on a quarterly basis: Sept 2012 – March 2015
Periodic feedback from the Action Against Poverty Champions Group on how the scheme is tackling socio-economic disadvantage	As above	Periodic review – at the Champions Group meetings, Sept 2013
Monitor referral relationships with partners involved in operating this Scheme	Improved referral systems for different vulnerable groups	April 2013 – (Qtr 1 Sept 2012)

Monitor the effects of limiting the applicant to no more than two awards within a 12 month rolling period.	Assessment of risk to the applicant's ongoing health and safety – consequences of being refused.	April 2013 – Quarterly (Qtr 1 Sept 2012)
Monitor staff safeguarding processes/training	Safeguarding processes are followed to prevent risk of abuse, violence or harm	April 2013 – Quarterly (Qtr 1 Sept 2012)
Monitor award reviews and appeals (include consequences of being refused)	Improve decision making – better understanding of complex cases. Avoid rigid interpretation of the policy.	April 2013 – Quarterly (Qtr 1 Sept 2012)
Monitor any difficulties applicants have in making/managing the application process	Remove barriers to the application process and eliminate unnecessary processes.	April 2013 – Quarterly (Qtr 1 Sept 2012)
Date Assessment Signed Off	8 November 2012	