

**February 2013**

**Walsall Crisis Support Scheme – A review of the scheme:- April – December 2013/14**

**Ward(s)**                      All

**Portfolios:**    Cllr C Towe

**Executive Summary:**

To update scrutiny on the implementation of the Walsall Crisis Support Scheme.

As part of the Government's welfare reforms, Community Care Grants and Crisis Loans for general living expenses, previously administered by the DWP within the social fund, were abolished from April 2013 and replaced by a new local provision.

The new provision is now administered by local authorities in England and the devolved administrations in Scotland and Wales. Whilst the Government was not prescriptive with regard to the design of the new local provision; the intention of the funding transferred to local authorities is that it is to be used to provide the new local provision.

This report provides information:-

- on the implementation of the scheme to date
- what the demand has been like during the period April – December 2013
- what have we learnt
- the future

**Reason for scrutiny:**

Members requested an update of the operation of the scheme.

**Recommendations:**

**That:**

1. Consider the contents of this report.
2. Advise officers of further information requirements to enable a detailed review to be undertaken to provide options for service delivery from 2015.

## **Resource and legal considerations:**

Funding of £1,098,510 has been received to provide the service. The same sum will be available for 2014/15. Administration funding of £232,123 has been received for 2013/14 this will reduce to £212,766 for 2014/15. The government will undertake a review of the service provision in order to determine delivery beyond 2015.

The funding allocated remains un-ring fenced and can be used in a number of different ways to meet local need. This could include, for example, topping up local food banks, commissioning additional advocacy support or matching the funds with existing discretionary grants.

The settlement letter received in August 2012 (**appendix 1**) details the funding and flexibilities available to the authority in the delivery of a localised welfare support service.

A letter dated 27 January 2014 has been received, (**appendix 2**), informing authorities of the monitoring of spend that will be introduced during 2014/15

## **Funding for 2015 and beyond**

DCLG released the Authority's draft funding settlement for 2014/15 and provisional 2015/16 on 18 December 2013. Alongside the settlement further information was published on each authority's spending which includes £1.311m within the in 2014/15 spending powers detail in relation to Local Welfare Provision Grant but no allocation shown in 2015/16. Whilst further work will be required to understand the implications of this at present there is now no funding within the MTFP allocated for Crisis Support from 2015/16 onwards.

A press release from government received 24th December 2013 reads as follows:- "This Government is devolving more power and discretion to local councils, so they can best target those most in need. From 2015, the Local Welfare Provision Grant is being wrapped up in general central government grant to local authorities, as part of our broader commitment to reducing ring-fencing."

A further report identifying Crisis Support position and forward plan for 2015/16 will be circulated once details have been clarified.

Additional staffing resources were acquired to support the scheme with 5 additional assessment resources aligned to the benefits service. However, supporting residents in crisis and dealing with complex issues requires additional skills and capabilities to help residents at the first point of contact. Currently there are 8 assessment resources supporting the delivering this complex service. As part of the assessment of the future of the scheme from 2015/16 the potential impact on these staff will also need to be identified.

## **Citizen impact:**

The delivery of this service is critical to helping residents of the borough who find themselves in crisis.

**Environmental impact:**

None.

**Equality Implications:**

This service is available to all residents of the borough.

Appendix 1




Settlement Letter  
Walsall.doc

Appendix 2



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Programme funding f

**Contact Officer:**

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## Walsall Crisis Support Scheme

### 1. The operation of the scheme. – An update.

- Activity since April 2013 has seen the development of strong working relationships between members of the WCSS team and job centre staff, partners, charities and other council services. The job centre staff have visited the team to understand how the service supports residents in crisis.
- Changes have been made to how we help customers as we have found better ways of delivering the service e.g. food and utilities.
- Understanding and helping residents deal with their complex problems has enabled the development of a wide variety of help that has seen staff supporting customers in a variety of ways that has not made a demand on the traditional scheme spend. Helping residents in this way has enabled the team members to significantly improve the outlook for these residents in crisis and prevent a further higher cost demand on scarce council resources. e.g. homelessness.

### 2. The demand for the service.

#### DWP Scheme

The table below shows the numbers and cost of the applications for the elements of the scheme that were previously administered by the DWP.

2011/2012 (Full Year) DWP Data for Walsall <small>Awards &amp; applications rounded to nearest 10</small>	Crisis Loan Items	Crisis Loan Living Expenses	Community Care Grants	total
<b>Summary</b>				
<b>Applications received</b>	1,070	8,050	3,330	12,450
<b>Total expenditure</b>	£132,700	£328,500	£756,600	1,217,800
<b>Number of Awards</b>	530	5,960	1,480	7,970

#### WCSS during the period 01/04/2013 – 31/12/2013

The table below shows the number of applications made for help to the WCSS

Total applications received	Applications Approved	Applications Declined
7,038	4,240	2,798

## Scheme spend on awards by month April – December 2013

The total spend on awards by month is detailed below.

Month	Value
April	6,149
May	10,547
June	12,870
July	34,434
August	27,183
September	22,334
October	41,256
November	44,458
December	44,127
<b>Total</b>	<b>£243,359</b>

## Awards Approved

The type of support given to the awards approved.

Provision	Types of support provided
Deposits for rented tenancies	19
Furniture and carpets	454
Utilities	1124
Groceries	1980
Clothing/bedding	253
Travel	211
White goods	850
Other assistance	512

## Awards declined/ alternative support provided

Examples of the other help and support provided to residents in crisis are detailed below.

<b>Help given to customer by officer other than from the WCSS</b>
Help to apply for budgeting loan
Processed housing benefit claim and council tax reduction claim
Pulled on expert in debt management
Help to maximise other benefits
Call to DWP to sort their claim out
Help to apply for short term benefit advance
Helped to apply for assistance from the DWP hardship fund
Helped with housing issues – helped customer move.
Negotiated with 3 <sup>rd</sup> party on customers behalf
Helped customer get a job
Worked with children's services and section 17 funding
Pulled on charitable support
Educating customers – informing the customer of options/consequences --- e.g. money management.
Negotiation with landlords- rent in advance/deposits
Contacted bailiffs to waiver costs/fines
Contacted utilities – reset meter- waiver of arrears
Help from school with uniforms
Housing improvement – heating systems

### 3. Examples of residents helped.

Officers worked to help residents with the root cause of why they had turned to us for help. Resolving these deeper issues enables the resident to move out of crisis without necessarily using the Walsall Crisis Support Scheme funds.

The resident had water arrears for around £600 going back about a year. A WCS Officer contacted the water company and discussed arrangements for the customer to pay back by instalments and £450 of the debt written off. No cost to the fund

WCSS officer intervened and due to this it has changed the resident's ongoing life according to the probation service. WCS officer and an officer from housing services were asked to assist a probation customer. He had been under probation services for a long period of time and had gone through traumatic family problems. Housing services assisted in securing accommodation for him and WCS assisted in providing him with an electric cooker, a fridge and a bed. He was also provided with kitchen essentials so he could set up in his new home and feel like he had a purpose in life.

Shortly after supporting the resident the WCS officer received this email from probation services:-

*"I am writing to you to express my appreciation of what has done for my current Probation client. This has been in the role of assisting him in being able to sort out suitable accommodation which made a major contribution in terms of changing his life. We found staff to be professional, engaging with the client and going beyond the remit that one would normally expect from someone in a similar role. I am hoping because of the help, he has moved on in his life and will not come before the Criminal Justice System again. I have seen a notable change in him, since coming into contact with your team.*

*Staffordshire & West Midlands Probation Trust, Midland Road  
Complex, Walsall"*

Client presented being anxious and worn down - had been to the food bank with not a great amount of success as he didn't have a cooker at home so he couldn't cook some items.

The resident presented with Water Rate arrears and a couple of door lender loans which had resulted from buying flowers and other items for his mother's funeral.

#### **How the resident was helped.**

The WCS officer pulled on a debt management advice agency to help. This support enabled affordable repayments on the loans to be agreed. The resident wished to avoid insolvency. An application was made to a Charitable Trust and this was accepted and the arrears will be cleared after 26 weeks

Different charities provided the following: - £400 for carpets, TV being purchased enabling the return of a costly hire purchase rental, cleared phone bill.

Food bank vouchers. The customer is now a volunteer for an advice agency

Resident was claiming Employment Support Allowance (ESA) which was terminated in November 2012 due to failing his medical assessment. He was told that because he could sit and stand, he was capable of doing some sort of work.

He contacted us in January 2013 as he was not receiving any income and was struggling with feeding himself. A WCS officer started to work with him and made contact with ESA to query the decision and what he should do next. He was helped with food throughout this period. SSAFA were also helping to support him.

A new claim was submitted for ESA and a request was put in for backdating to November 2012, but he had to attend another medical appointment. He did this, but again was turned down for ESA.

With the WCS officers' assistance, he appealed against the decision and was supported when the case was taken to the tribunal. His GP was asked to provide documentary evidence of all his health issues to support his application. Reconsideration was agreed and he received backdated ESA payment of over £700 back to November 2012.

Officers visited resident living in owner occupied accommodation but in squalid and chaotic conditions. He had sold the house to a developer after his father had died but was having difficulties realising the capital to help him move and start a new chapter in his life. Officers worked with Solicitors, estate agent, CAB, housing association and probation officer. The only support that he received from the fund was food. All the other support came from officers supporting Mr C to work through the complex nature of his issues.

6 August 2012

Dear Chief Executive

**Abolition of the discretionary Social Fund and transfer of funding for a new provision**

I am writing in respect of earlier correspondence on the provisions in the Welfare Reform Act that abolish the current Community Care Grant and Crisis Loan schemes. As you know these schemes will be abolished in April 2013 and in order to avoid a gap in support for vulnerable people new arrangements will need to be in place from April 2013.

I know from discussions your officials have had with my Department that your planning for a new provision is well under way. This letter is to inform you of the indicative amount of programme funding you will receive for your new provision and the amount of set up and administration funding to enable you to do that. Programme funding is indicative because the final figure will be based on discretionary Social Fund spend in your area for the 2012 – 2013 year.

The programme funding has been calculated by looking at the legitimate demand, for those aspects of the discretionary Social Fund being abolished, for your area. We then applied that as a percentage of the Department's allocated £178.2 million to arrive at your figure. For administration funding we are transferring the amount the Department for Work and Pensions spends on administering them. This works out at approximately twenty per cent of the transferred programme spend. For start up funding, we listened to what authorities have told us. The amount to be transferred therefore allows a degree of flexibility according to your intentions, and is in line with expectations that the programme funding will be, in most cases, aligned with existing provisions.

Community Care Grants were awarded for a range of expenses, including household equipment, and were intended to support vulnerable people to return to or remain in the community or to ease exceptional pressure on families. They were also intended to assist with certain travel expenses. Crisis Loans were made to meet immediate short-term needs in an emergency or as a consequence of a disaster when a person had insufficient resources to prevent a serious risk to the health and safety of themselves or their family.

Although you are not expected to replicate the previous Community Care Grant and Crisis Loan schemes, I attach for information a brief reminder of their purposes at Annex A.



RESTRICTED


As you are aware, the Government has decided that it would not be appropriate to place a new duty on local authorities/devolved administrations in respect of the new provision you are planning. You need to be able to flex the provision in a way that is suitable and appropriate to meet the needs of your local communities.

However, whilst we do not want or expect you to replicate the current scheme in either whole or part, it is incumbent upon me to say that it is the intention of the Government that the funding is to be used to provide the new provision. Whilst the Government recognises the difficulties relating to the boundary between providing financial support and social services, we expect the funding to be concentrated on those facing greatest difficulty in managing their income, and to enable a more flexible response to unavoidable need, perhaps through a mix of cash or goods and aligning with the wider range of local support local authorities/devolved administrations already offer. In short, the funding is to allow you to give flexible help to those in genuine need.

I would add that spending decisions are, and will continue to be, a matter for local authorities and the Government does not intend to start placing restrictions on any future decisions they may make on funding.

Funding transfer details.

<b>Walsall</b>	
<b>Local Authority:</b>	Walsall
<b>2012/13</b>	
Set-up funding	£10,985
<b>2013/14</b>	
Programme funding	£1,098,510
Administrative funding	£232,123
<b>2014/15</b>	
Programme funding	£1,098,510
Administrative funding	£212,766



**STEVE WEBB MP**  
**MINISTER OF STATE FOR PENSIONS**

## RESTRICTED

### **Annex A - Former Purpose of Community Care Grants and Crisis Loans**

**Community Care Grants** were primarily intended to help vulnerable people live as independent a life as possible in the community. They were awarded to households receiving means-tested benefits such as Jobseekers Allowance. The prime objectives were to:

- help people to establish themselves in the community following a stay in institutional or residential care;
- help people remain in the community rather than enter institutional or residential care;
- help with the care of a prisoner or young offender on release on temporary licence;
- ease exceptional pressures on families e.g. the breakdown of a relationship (especially if involving domestic violence) or onset of a disability, or a calamity such as fire or flooding;
- help people setting up home as a part of a resettlement programme following e.g. time in a homeless hostel or temporary accommodation; or
- assist with certain travelling expenses e.g. for funerals of a family member or hospital visiting.

**Crisis Loans** were intended for applicants who are unable to meet their immediate short term needs in an emergency or as a consequence of a disaster. They were awarded for immediate living expenses in order to avoid serious damage or risk to the health or safety of the applicant or a member of the family.



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27 January 2014

Dear Chief Executive,

**PROGRAMME FUNDING FOR NEW LOCAL WELFARE PROVISION  
2014-15**

I am now in a position to provide details of the programme funding for local welfare provision for 2014-15.

As you know, this will be the last year of separate funding from the Department for Work and Pensions. In line with our localism agenda, the Government will continue to provide support to local authorities through general funds as part of the Government's commitment to reducing ring-fencing and ending top-down Whitehall control.

In June 2012, I provided an indicative figure for provision in 2014-15. I am pleased to confirm the actual allocation will follow the indicative figure. Please see the table attached.

The resources for 2014-15 will be paid in quarterly instalments, starting at the beginning of April. Once the year starts, we will monitor the emerging picture of the support provided by local authorities. We will ask before the start of April what each local authority's forecast is and follow up those that don't reply or forecast low spend; and as we have done since April last year, officials will visit local authorities throughout the year asking for

evidence of what support they are providing to meet local welfare needs. Whilst we do not intend to withhold money, if evidence comes to light that the money is not being spent we will have to revisit that decision during the course of the year.



**STEVE WEBB MP**  
**MINISTER OF STATE FOR WORK AND PENSIONS**

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**Programme (AME), Administration (DEL) and Set-up funding allocation by country and local authority**

**Table 1 - Total funding allocated to England**

<b>2014/15</b>	
Programme funding	£144,198,240
Administrative funding	£27,929,203

**Table 2 - Total funding allocated to Scotland**

<b>2014/15</b>	
Programme funding	£23,795,238
Administrative funding	£4,608,808

**Table 3 - Total funding allocated to Wales**

<b>2014/15</b>	
Programme funding	£10,206,521
Administrative funding	£1,976,862

**Table 4 – English Local Authority allocations**

	<b>2014/15</b>	<b>2014/15</b>
<b>Local Authority</b>	<b>Programme Funding (AME)</b>	<b>Administration Funding (DEL)</b>
Barking and Dagenham	£ 766,521	£ 148,465
Barnet	£ 799,385	£ 154,830
Barnsley	£ 834,330	£ 161,598
Bath and North East Somerset	£ 249,260	£ 48,278
Bedford	£ 399,829	£ 77,441
Bexley	£ 500,127	£ 96,868

Birmingham	£ 6,170,642	£ 1,195,168
Blackburn with Darwen	£ 645,138	£ 124,954
Blackpool	£ 941,805	£ 182,415
Bolton	£ 1,017,045	£ 196,987
Bournemouth	£ 495,855	£ 96,040
Bracknell Forest	£ 174,271	£ 33,754
Bradford	£ 1,956,944	£ 379,033
Brent	£ 855,509	£ 165,700
Brighton and Hove	£ 629,487	£ 121,923
Bristol, City of	£ 1,564,735	£ 303,068
Bromley	£ 819,535	£ 158,732
Buckinghamshire	£ 479,510	£ 92,874
Bury	£ 570,871	£ 110,570
Calderdale	£ 550,199	£ 106,566
Cambridgeshire	£ 860,674	£ 166,701
Camden	£ 856,465	£ 165,885
Central Bedfordshire	£ 355,903	£ 68,934
Cheshire East	£ 612,032	£ 118,542
Cheshire West and Chester	£ 755,020	£ 146,237
City of London	£ 20,994	£ 4,066
Cornwall	£ 985,074	£ 190,795
County Durham	£ 1,592,057	£ 308,359
Coventry	£ 1,195,974	£ 231,644
Croydon	£ 1,151,867	£ 223,101
Cumbria	£ 1,148,229	£ 222,396
Darlington	£ 407,270	£ 78,883
Derby	£ 986,595	£ 191,090
Derbyshire	£ 1,531,041	£ 296,541
Devon	£ 1,127,174	£ 218,318
Doncaster	£ 914,324	£ 177,092
Dorset	£ 499,426	£ 96,732
Dudley	£ 693,159	£ 134,255
Ealing	£ 867,493	£ 168,021
East Riding of Yorkshire	£ 557,071	£ 107,897
East Sussex	£ 992,468	£ 192,227

Enfield	£ 910,673	£ 176,385
Essex	£ 2,461,324	£ 476,724
Gateshead	£ 839,042	£ 162,511
Gloucestershire	£ 925,583	£ 179,273
Greenwich	£ 1,094,072	£ 211,907
Hackney	£ 1,407,258	£ 272,566
Halton	£ 649,558	£ 125,810
Hammersmith and Fulham	£ 588,581	£ 114,000
Hampshire	£ 1,317,829	£ 255,245
Haringey	£ 1,118,562	£ 216,650
Harrow	£ 404,977	£ 78,438
Hartlepool	£ 532,270	£ 103,093
Havering	£ 604,178	£ 117,021
Herefordshire, County of	£ 306,277	£ 59,322
Hertfordshire	£ 1,765,277	£ 341,910
Hillingdon	£ 709,230	£ 137,368
Hounslow	£ 599,028	£ 116,023
Isle of Wight	£ 344,271	£ 66,680
Isles of Scilly	£ -	£ -
Islington	£ 1,209,612	£ 234,285
Kensington and Chelsea	£ 417,003	£ 80,768
Kent	£ 2,863,798	£ 554,678
Kingston upon Hull, City of	£ 1,481,500	£ 286,946
Kingston upon Thames	£ 244,788	£ 47,412
Kirklees	£ 1,119,027	£ 216,740
Knowsley	£ 1,043,213	£ 202,056
Lambeth	£ 1,588,613	£ 307,692
Lancashire	£ 2,936,800	£ 568,818
Leeds	£ 2,886,082	£ 558,994
Leicester	£ 1,606,825	£ 311,220
Leicestershire	£ 886,854	£ 171,771
Lewisham	£ 1,530,915	£ 296,517
Lincolnshire	£ 1,487,187	£ 288,047
Liverpool	£ 3,533,945	£ 684,476
Luton	£ 510,573	£ 98,891

Manchester	£ 2,721,885	£ 527,191
Medway	£ 663,252	£ 128,463
Merton	£ 366,911	£ 71,066
Middlesbrough	£ 954,042	£ 184,785
Milton Keynes	£ 747,067	£ 144,697
Newcastle upon Tyne	£ 1,262,979	£ 244,622
Newham	£ 1,060,966	£ 205,494
Norfolk	£ 1,905,516	£ 369,072
North East Lincolnshire	£ 696,579	£ 134,918
North Lincolnshire	£ 452,585	£ 87,659
North Somerset	£ 419,518	£ 81,255
North Tyneside	£ 716,790	£ 138,832
North Yorkshire	£ 793,346	£ 153,660
Northamptonshire	£ 1,678,473	£ 325,097
Northumberland	£ 869,822	£ 168,473
Nottingham	£ 1,826,780	£ 353,822
Nottinghamshire	£ 1,784,916	£ 345,713
Oldham	£ 856,548	£ 165,901
Oxfordshire	£ 779,213	£ 150,923
Peterborough	£ 663,666	£ 128,543
Plymouth	£ 878,428	£ 170,139
Poole	£ 208,198	£ 40,325
Portsmouth	£ 599,514	£ 116,118
Reading	£ 375,353	£ 72,701
Redbridge	£ 533,221	£ 103,278
Redcar and Cleveland	£ 631,301	£ 122,274
Richmond upon Thames	£ 330,846	£ 64,080
Rochdale	£ 806,140	£ 156,138
Rotherham	£ 773,427	£ 149,802
Rutland	£ 23,116	£ 4,477
Salford	£ 1,185,232	£ 229,563
Sandwell	£ 1,334,354	£ 258,446
Sefton	£ 955,455	£ 185,058
Sheffield	£ 2,071,098	£ 401,143
Shropshire	£ 467,992	£ 90,644
Slough	£ 272,000	£ 52,683



Solihull	£ 467,148	£ 90,480
Somerset	£ 912,181	£ 176,677
South Gloucestershire	£ 344,050	£ 66,638
South Tyneside	£ 532,660	£ 103,169
Southampton	£ 540,104	£ 104,611
Southend-on-Sea	£ 504,548	£ 97,724
Southwark	£ 1,362,932	£ 263,981
St. Helens	£ 632,563	£ 122,519
Staffordshire	£ 1,475,587	£ 285,801
Stockport	£ 741,973	£ 143,710
Stockton-on-Tees	£ 743,244	£ 143,956
Stoke-on-Trent	£ 1,066,323	£ 206,532
Suffolk	£ 1,463,161	£ 283,394
Sunderland	£ 1,202,316	£ 232,872
Surrey	£ 959,156	£ 185,775
Sutton	£ 422,179	£ 81,770
Swindon	£ 436,520	£ 84,548
Tameside	£ 900,528	£ 174,420
Telford and Wrekin	£ 486,724	£ 94,272
Thurrock	£ 368,757	£ 71,423
Torbay	£ 552,980	£ 107,105
Tower Hamlets	£ 1,444,675	£ 279,814
Trafford	£ 464,142	£ 89,898
Wakefield	£ 943,043	£ 182,654
Walsall	£ 1,098,510	£ 212,766
Waltham Forest	£ 774,070	£ 149,927
Wandsworth	£ 930,923	£ 180,307
Warrington	£ 552,524	£ 107,016
Warwickshire	£ 943,130	£ 182,671
West Berkshire	£ 166,222	£ 32,195
West Sussex	£ 1,030,763	£ 199,645
Westminster	£ 885,291	£171,469
Wigan	£ 991,278	£191,997
Wiltshire	£ 619,057	£119,903
Windsor and Maidenhead	£ 101,121	£19,586
Wirral	£ 1,345,925	£ 260,687
Wokingham	£ 77,213	£ 14,995

Wolverhampton	£ 1,329,642	£ 257,533
Worcestershire	£ 947, 372	£ 183,493
York	£ 315,141	£ 61,039