

LOCAL SUPPORT AND PREVENTION FUND POLICY

Responsible Officer

Email: nigel.bishop@shropshire.gov.uk

Tel: 01743 258677

Fax:

1. Summary

- 1.1 This paper presents the draft policy for the administration of The Local Support and Prevention Fund within Shropshire Council.
- 1.2 The Local Support and Prevention Fund policy provides details on the framework the council uses when considering awards for people in crisis or who need support to remain in the community. This is known nationally as Local Welfare Provision.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Cabinet is requested to agree that the draft policy is published for consultation before being brought back to Cabinet for approval after any amendments have been made as a result of the consultation.

REPORT

3. Risk Assessment and Opportunities Appraisal

- 3.1 We have identified that customers with disabilities may feel adversely impacted due to the inclusion of their disability income in our income and expenditure check when considering awards. This has been mitigated by the fact that we offset any adult care costs they have resulting from their disability. Our consultation process may help to confirm or otherwise assess the impact however we expect that there will be an overall positive impact across the nine protected characteristics groups and on social inclusion. Please refer to the attached ESIIA at Appendix B. This will be updated after the consultation exercise.

4. Financial Implications

- 4.1 The Government has provided councils with funding to administer the Local Support and Prevention Fund since April 2013. It is likely that further funding will not be provided from April 2015 onwards. The council has ring-fenced unspent money from 2013/14. Although the LSPF is not an official ring-fenced grant, Shropshire Council consider the funding to be ring-fenced for the purpose of funding the LSPF plan, it has also been indicated that the funding could potentially be clawed back if not used for the purposes it was awarded for. An application to place the balance of the unspent funding into a reserve will be made at year end, and the money will be held to fund the LSPF for the future to allow support to continue for the next 4 to 5 years.

5. Background

- 5.1 The Social Fund was introduced over two decades ago as part of the Fowler reforms of the Social Security system. The fund incorporated both statutory (Maternity and Funeral payments) and discretionary payments (Crisis Loans to avoid risk to health and safety, Budgeting Loans to spread the cost of paying for essential items that were difficult to budget for, and Community Care Grants to help establish the most vulnerable back into society or to prevent them from entering institutional care). These payments were administered using a broad framework of directions from the Secretary of State which gave basic rules after which, deciding officers could use their discretion according to the facts of the application.

Administration of the social security system has changed significantly since the introduction with the increasingly remote administration making it more and more difficult to apply consistent discretion to customer applications.

The need for Local Authorities to take on local welfare support arose as a result of the government's decision to replace the old Social Fund system with a more locality based approach better able to focus on need in the local area and building on the programmes and services that were already in place so allowing the development of more efficient and joined up delivery models. Financial savings were envisaged via a more holistic approach that incorporated providers such as local furniture schemes and food banks as well as looking to advisory services and support structures as additions to, or alternatives to, cash help.

This transfer to Local Authority administration happened in April 2013, when Shropshire Council started administering The Local Support and Prevention Fund.

No statutory duty has been placed on Local Authorities for the delivery of local welfare provision.

6. Draft Policy

- 6.1 This policy shows how the council administers The Local Support and Prevention Fund using the Local Welfare Provision funding that it has received from the Government.
- 6.2 The council has two key aims:
- To provide quick and effective support to people who require help to meet an immediate short term need
 - To assist people to establish themselves or maintain their independence in the community.
- 6.3 The policy demonstrates the basic eligibility criteria, what awards can be given for, what they cannot be given for, the application process, the treatment of income and expenditure, the things we take into consideration when making our decisions, how the awards are made and it explains how people can ask us to look at our decision again if they disagree with it. It also shows how we will signpost people to work opportunities where possible.
- 6.4 We are asking for permission to consult on this policy so that partners and individuals can:
- comment on the fairness of the policy
 - make observations on whether income from Disability Living Allowance, Personal Independence Payments and Attendance Allowance should be taken into account when considering these award requests.

List of Background Papers (This MUST be completed for all reports, but does not include items containing exempt or confidential information)

Cabinet Member (Portfolio Holder)

Portfolio Holder for Resources, Finance and Support

Councillor M Owen

Local Member

All

Appendices

Appendix A – The Local Support and Prevention Fund (LSPF) Draft Policy

Appendix B – The ESIIA for the LSPF policy