

## Durham County Council Equality Impact Assessment

**NB:** The Public Sector Equality Duty (Equality Act 2010) requires Durham County Council to have 'due regard' to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between people from different groups. Assessing impact on equality and recording this is one of the key ways in which we can show due regard.

### Section One: Description and Screening

<b>Service/Team or Section</b>	Resources- Financial Services
<b>Lead Officer</b>	Paul Darby
<b>Title</b>	Proposal for Changes to the Welfare Assistance Policy
<b>MTFP Reference (if relevant)</b>	N/A
<b>Cabinet Date (if relevant)</b>	14 <sup>th</sup> March 2018
<b>Start Date</b>	February 2018
<b>Review Date</b>	October 2018

### Subject of the Impact Assessment

Please give a brief description of the policy, proposal or practice as appropriate (a copy of the subject can be attached or insert a web-link):

#### **Welfare Assistance Scheme**

The Welfare Reform Act 2012 abolished the discretionary elements of the DWP Social Fund and transferred responsibility to upper tier and unitary authorities. Funding was provided by Central Government to allow local authorities to develop and deliver their own scheme.

The welfare assistance scheme helps people with a nil or low income to get short term support, or help to live on their own. There are two types of help:

- Daily living expenses are paid if circumstances change unexpectedly. An application for help can be made for daily living expenses (for up to seven days). This includes food, baby milk and nappies, heating, and travel.
- Settlement grant is paid to help applicants stay in their home, or move back into housing, after living in supported or unsettled accommodation. For

example if leaving care or been made homeless. This includes help towards beds and / or bedding, furniture, white goods (for example, cooker, fridge, washing machine), kitchen equipment, floor coverings, curtains, storage and / or removal costs.

Durham County Council's scheme was approved in March 2013, with the administration of the policy initially outsourced to Civica and Five Lamps to deliver the Welfare Assistance Scheme under an umbrella partnership called Help and Advice Network Durham (HAND) for the period 2013/15.

In 2013/14 & 2014/15 the budget was equal to the specific grant funding provided by the DWP of £1,592,057 for both years plus admin grant of £336,414 in 2013/14 and £308,359 in 2014/15. The administration grant funding was passported to Civica and Five Lamps as part of the initial contract.

Since 2015/16, when the Government removed the specific grant funding, the Council has funded its scheme within its core budget, with an annual budget of £1,000,000 per year, including administration costs of £140,000 per annum.

To coincide with the change in funding arrangements in April 2015 it was decided to bring the service 'in house' to be administered by the Resources service on behalf of the County Council. The work of the Welfare Assistance scheme is overseen by the Poverty Action Steering Group (PASG).

A review of the Welfare Assistance policy was carried out in 2017 with a view to implementation in April 2018. The need for a review of the policy was emphasised by the roll out of Universal Credit Full Service to all 10 Job Centre plus offices in County Durham which will be completed by June 2018.

The roll out of Universal Credit Full Service started in October 2017 and following the September Poverty Action Steering Group (PASG) meeting a delegated decision was taken to amend the Welfare Assistance Policy to support Universal Credit (UC) claimants through the initial five weeks wait for payment.

This was intended to alleviate the financial pressures for those customers who will face moving from Housing Benefit (HB) to UC. The qualifying criteria for customers moving on to UC, has been changed from one award within twelve months to one in six months. In addition, a second week award of a food basket can now be claimed within one month (from one week) of the award date.

It is recommended that the Welfare Assistance Scheme continue to be operated in-house, with the policy amended to include the improvements that have been identified in feedback from stakeholders and customers.

It is proposed to review the policy and improve services in relation to:

**Nappies and baby milk**

Following discussions with stakeholders including colleagues in Health, in future the Welfare Assistance Scheme will incorporate a Paypoint cash out voucher option to customers in order to fulfil this requirement. This would allow them to

purchase the appropriate milk and nappies to their children's needs, therefore minimising the risk of allergies for the child and giving the customer the freedom to purchase goods potentially on offer and take advantage of sale offers. The proposed amount is £20.00 per award and when incorporated into the Policy would be monitored for take-up and actual spend.

### **Hygiene packs**

The current Welfare Assistance Scheme policy does not allow for hygiene packs such as toiletries and sanitary products. Customers have nevertheless requested these and asked for toilet rolls and toiletries to be included as part of their food basket, which are currently excluded items. This is an issue that has been raised by Members and recently gained a high profile in the national media as the issue of period poverty has been highlighted as an issue for women on low income. Due to VAT implications with the Family Fund they are unable to provide this as part of the Asda basket.

From 2018/19 the Welfare Assistance Scheme will incorporate a hygiene pack, with a proposed amount of £10.00 per award. This would be fulfilled in the same method proposed for satisfying the requirement for nappies and milk, giving customers the freedom to purchase goods on offer, making the award cost effective and potentially last longer. It is not possible to accurately estimate the costs of this policy change at this stage.

### **Utility Costs (gas and electric)**

The current Welfare Assistance Scheme policy allows for an award of £28.30 for 7 days regardless of household composition and time of the year. Benchmarking with other local authorities in the region has shown a variety of payment amounts and provision from no help with utility / fuel costs to offering a standard amount from £10.00 to £30.00 per seven days.

It is proposed from April 2018 to follow the principles used for food baskets, and the value of utility costs is awarded according to household composition. The Welfare Assistance Scheme will be amended from £28.30 per household to £30.00 for a single person, £35.00 for a couple and an extra £5.00 per child.

Analysis shows for the period of April to November 2017 the total utility costs awarded was £15,156. Using the new proposed figures the projected spend would have been £19,610. Spend in this area is however expected to increase once full roll out of Universal Credit is live within the whole of County Durham.

### **Travel**

The provision of travel is currently in the Welfare Assistance policy but is not utilised to any great extent and can be difficult to award. Whilst benchmarking with other Local authorities in the region has shown that not all schemes offer help with travelling it is proposed to keep the provision of travel within our scheme. From April the Welfare Assistance Scheme will include a Paypoint cash out voucher for a maximum amount of £50.00. This will enable emergency help with petrol and taxis, bus and train travel.

### **Low cost loans for replacement goods**

It is proposed to agree to develop the proposal around settlement grants from NE First Credit Union for replacement goods which are not catered for under the current scheme. Customers would take out a low cost loan from NE First Credit Union which, if successfully repaid, would enhance the credit score of the customer. It is suggested that £10,000 is ring fenced and piloted to support this initiative. Further reports will be taken to the Poverty Action Steering Group to agree the elements of and delivery of the loans.

### **Section 17 Payments in CYPS**

As part of the review, discussions with colleagues in Children and Young People Service (CYPS) revealed that payments being made by CYPS and charged to the CYPS cash limit budget through Section 17 of the Children's Act 1989 included payments which may have been eligible for support through the Welfare Assistance Scheme. The financial assistance given in terms of goods or services, including food and utility costs, or in exceptional circumstances cash, are approved by the relevant Social Care Team and can be provided to a child, parent or carer under Section 17(6) to address identified needs to safeguard and promote a child's welfare where there is no other legitimate source of financial assistance.

Arrangements have been put in place to ensure that the CYPS and their service users fully utilise the Welfare Assistance scheme including awareness raising among CYPS staff, regular liaison meetings between staff and the setting up of referral protocols made through the Advice in Co Durham partnership.

It has been recommended that funding awards via the Welfare Assistance Scheme is pre-committed in 2018/19 and granted to:

- a. Area Action partnerships – to mainstream the annual allocations
- b. The Durham Foodbank – to fund part of their infrastructure and help maintain / augment provision going forward, on the basis that this complemented / augmented the Welfare Assistance Scheme
- c. FEED Project (East Durham Trust) – to increase capacity / ability to support residents in East Durham
- d. NE First Credit Union for the supply of replacement goods.

Who are the main stakeholders? (e.g. general public, staff, members, specific clients/service users):

- General public
- Frontline staff including Social workers, Housing Officers and finance staff
- Relevant charities and Community / voluntary groups

## Screening

Is there any actual or potential negative or positive impact on the following protected characteristics?		
Protected Characteristic	Negative Impact Indicate: Y = Yes, N = No, ? = unsure	Positive Impact Indicate: Y = Yes, N = No, ? = unsure
Age	N	Y
Disability	N	Y
Marriage and civil partnership (workplace only)	N	N
Pregnancy and maternity	N	Y
Race (ethnicity)	N	N
Religion or Belief	N	N
Sex (gender)	N	Y
Sexual orientation	N	N
Transgender	N	N

Please provide **brief** details of any potential to cause adverse impact. Record full details and analysis in the following section of this assessment.

N/A

How will this policy/proposal/practice promote our commitment to our legal responsibilities under the public sector equality duty to:

- eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation,
- advance equality of opportunity, and
- foster good relations between people from different groups?

The proposed improvements to the Welfare Assistance Scheme aims to positively promote our commitment to the public sector equality duty. There are particular positive impacts in relation to working age, disability, pregnancy and maternity and gender. Furthermore, it is anticipated that implementation of this policy from April 2018 will ensure consistency and fairness in decision making.

## Evidence

What evidence do you have to support your findings?

Please **outline** your data sets and/or proposed evidence sources, highlight any gaps and say whether or not you propose to carry out consultation. Record greater detail and analysis in the following section of this assessment.

Analysis of caseload data from 2017/18 shows that over a 10 month period 1137 awards were made. The following table demonstrates the percentage breakdown of applicants by equality characteristic and this has been used as a proxy for future caseload in terms of this Equality Impact Assessment:

<b>Characteristic</b>	<b>Successful Applicants (%)</b>	<b>Unsuccessful Applicants (%)</b>
<b>Age Range</b>		
Aged 16-24	23	27
Aged 25-34	33	37
Aged 35-59	41	33
Aged 60+	3	3
<b>Household</b>		
Single (no children)	60.1	47
Single (with children)	26.1	34
Couple (with children)	8.3	8
Couple (no children)	5.5	11
<b>Sex</b>		
Female	55	60
Male	45	40
<b>Disability</b>		
Considered disabled	53	53
Not disabled	47	47

At this stage it is clear that the vast majority of existing claimants are from working age and single households with 34% of claimants having children.

Unsuccessful application (where we have collected data) display similar characteristics to those that were successful in their applications:  
60% of unsuccessful applications were made by females and 40% by males.  
53% of unsuccessful applications were made by people with a disability.

For those single household that made applications the characteristics on gender shows 41% of successful applications were from males with no children. This group represented 35% of all unsuccessful applications.

Characteristic	Successful Applicants (%)	Unsuccessful Applicants (%)
<b>Single Households</b>		
Male (no children)	41	35
Female(no children)	26	23
Male(with children)	4	7
Female (with children)	29	35

### **Support for Service Users**

Advice and support is always given to help service users to maximise their income and benefit entitlement where ever possible during the assessment of an application to the Welfare Assistance scheme.

### **Consultation**

The scope of the review and consultation has been wide ranging, involving benchmarking the arrangements in Durham against other authorities and discussions with a wide range of delivery partners and key stakeholders, including:

- A staff survey among DCC staff;
- Adult Health Services Management and Social Work teams, including the Sensory Support team;
- Advice in Co Durham Partnership;
- Children Services Think Family and Social Work teams;
- Citizens Advice
- Customers who had received an award;
- County Durham Housing Group;
- Durham Christian Partnership;
- East Durham Trust;
- Housing Solutions
- MacMillan Joining the Dots project, supporting people affected by cancer;
- Family Fund;
- NE Credit Union;
- Public Health;
- Social Care Direct;
- Welfare Assistance Scheme team;
- Welfare Rights Officers

### **Further Evidence**

- Views expressed via the consultation process
- As more users of services are women, then the potential is for women to be more affected by any changes than men. (Source: WAS data).

- A majority of service users have some form of physical disability, mental infirmity, or sensory impairment.

### Screening Summary

On the basis of this screening is there:	Confirm which refers (Y/N)
Evidence of actual or potential impact on some/all of the protected characteristics which will proceed to full assessment?	Yes
No evidence of actual or potential impact on some/all of the protected characteristics?	

### Sign Off

Lead officer sign off: Paul Darby, Head Of Finance & Transactional Services	Date: 1.2.18
Service equality representative sign off: M Gallagher, Equality and Diversity Officer	Date: 1.2.18

If carrying out a full assessment please proceed to section two.

If not proceeding to full assessment please return completed screenings to your service equality representative and forward a copy to [equalities@durham.gov.uk](mailto:equalities@durham.gov.uk)

If you are unsure of potential impact please contact the corporate research and equalities team for further advice at [equalities@durham.gov.uk](mailto:equalities@durham.gov.uk)

## Section Two: Data analysis and assessment of impact

Please provide details on impacts for people with different protected characteristics relevant to your screening findings. You need to decide if there is or likely to be a differential impact for some. Highlight the positives e.g. benefits for certain groups, advancing equality, as well as the negatives e.g. barriers for and/or exclusion of particular groups. Record the evidence you have used to support or explain your conclusions. Devise and record mitigating actions where necessary.

Protected Characteristic: <b>Age</b>										
What is the actual or potential impact on stakeholders?	Record of evidence to support or explain your conclusions on impact.	What further action or mitigation is required?								
<p>Existing applicants are more likely to be younger and female. It can be anticipated that future applicants will form a similar age and gender profile. Overall working age groups are more likely to be positively impacted by the all aspects of the revised policy.</p> <p>Take up amongst people aged over 60 years is low (3%) and this will be addressed through a comprehensive marketing and communications plan aimed at community groups including the 'Advice in County Durham' partnership.</p>	<p>Age range of existing successful claimants:</p> <table border="0"> <tr> <td>23%</td> <td>Aged 16-24</td> </tr> <tr> <td>33%</td> <td>25-34</td> </tr> <tr> <td>41%</td> <td>35-59</td> </tr> <tr> <td>3%</td> <td>60+</td> </tr> </table> <p>97% of successful claims are by people aged 16-59.</p>	23%	Aged 16-24	33%	25-34	41%	35-59	3%	60+	<p>These impacts will be further enhanced through the support to service users plus a marketing and communications plan to raise awareness of the scheme. In particular working with the Advice in County Durham partnership to increase claims among older people.</p> <p>Continued advice and support will help to maximise income and benefit entitlement where ever possible during the financial assessment.</p>
23%	Aged 16-24									
33%	25-34									
41%	35-59									
3%	60+									

Protected Characteristic: <b>Disability</b>		
What is the actual or potential impact on stakeholders?	Explain your conclusion considering relevant evidence and consultation	What further action or mitigation is required?
Existing applicants are more likely to have a disability compared to the overall	Of existing successful applicants 53% have a disability. There is no	These impacts will be further enhanced through

population profile for County Durham therefore this policy is a positive source of support for those with a disability.	<p>difference in the proportion of disabled applicants submitting an unsuccessful application.</p> <p>17.8% of working age County Durham residents have a disability (Census 2011)</p>	<p>the support to service users plus a marketing and communication plan.</p> <p>Reasonable adjustments will be made where required.</p>
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Protected Characteristic: <b>Marriage and civil partnership (workplace only)</b>		
What is the actual or potential impact on stakeholders?	Explain your conclusion considering relevant evidence and consultation	What further action or mitigation is required?
N/A		

Protected Characteristic: <b>Pregnancy and maternity</b>		
What is the actual or potential impact on stakeholders?	Explain your conclusion considering relevant evidence and consultation	What further action or mitigation is required?
<p>The policy has a positive impact for pregnant women and new mothers via the provision of baby milk/nappy packs and hygiene packs, support with utility costs and enhanced working with children services.</p> <p>Policy improvements include incorporation of a Paypoint cash out voucher option to allow purchases appropriate to need and providing an opportunity to purchase goods on offer, making an award cost effective and potentially lasting longer.</p>	<p>Discussions and consultation with Children Services, members feedback from service users have identified a need for these services.</p> <p>Applicant data specific to pregnancy and maternity is not available.</p>	<p>Marketing and communications plan. Joint work with children services.</p>

Protected Characteristic: <b>Race (ethnicity)</b>
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What is the actual or potential impact on stakeholders?	Explain your conclusion considering relevant evidence and consultation	What further action or mitigation is required?
There is no evidence available to indicate impact.		

Protected Characteristic: <b>Religion or belief</b>		
What is the actual or potential impact on stakeholders?	Explain your conclusion considering relevant evidence and consultation	What further action or mitigation is required?
There is no evidence available to indicate impact.		

Protected Characteristic: <b>Sex (gender)</b>		
What is the actual or potential impact on stakeholders?	Explain your conclusion considering relevant evidence and consultation	What further action or mitigation is required?
<p>The policy is positive for both men and women but will benefit women more as the larger proportion of applicants and those more likely to have greater childcare responsibilities.</p> <p>Positive impact includes increased work with Children Services and the provision of nappies and baby milk, hygiene packs which may beneficially impact women more than men.</p> <p>Policy improvements include incorporation of a Paypoint cash out voucher option to allow purchases appropriate to need and providing an opportunity to purchase goods on offer, making an award cost effective and potentially lasting longer.</p>	<p>Of all successful claims 55% were female and 45% male.</p> <p>60% of all unsuccessful claims were made by females and 40% by males.</p> <p>60.1% of applicants are single with no children and 26.1% are single with children.</p> <p>34.4 % of claimants overall have children.29% of all single claimants are females with children.</p> <p>Women are more likely to undertake the bulk of care responsibilities and be the main carer in a single parent household.</p>	<p>These impacts will be further enhanced through the support to service users plus a marketing and communication plan.</p>

Protected Characteristic: <b>Sexual orientation</b>		
What is the actual or potential impact on stakeholders?	Explain your conclusion considering relevant evidence and consultation	What further action or mitigation is required?
There is no evidence available to show whether or not impact is likely.		

Protected Characteristic: <b>Transgender</b>		
What is the actual or potential impact on stakeholders?	Explain your conclusion considering relevant evidence and consultation	What further action or mitigation is required?
There is no evidence available to show whether or not impact is likely.		

## Section Three: Conclusion and Review

### Summary

Please provide a brief summary of your findings stating the main impacts, both positive and negative, across the protected characteristics.
<p>The EIA states that there are impacts of the change overall, (positively affected people are more likely to be younger, female and have a disability) and that future service users are likely to be of a similar profile. Policy improvements such as incorporation of a Paypoint cash out voucher option and increased utility cost support is beneficial to all.</p> <p>There are unlikely to be any disproportionate negative effects with respect to the protected characteristics by making these changes to the Welfare Assistance policy.</p> <p>Further action has been put in place by way of a comprehensive marketing and communications plan to promote the Welfare Assistance Scheme. Joint working with CYPS will ensure that this service fully utilises the scheme. Working with the Advice in County Durham partnership aims to increase claims among older people.</p>

Will this promote positive relationships between different communities? If so how?
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As more working age people access the Welfare Assistance fund it means that they are less likely to be reliant on older relatives.

### Action Plan

Action	Responsibility	Timescales for implementation	In which plan will the action appear?
Advice and support is always given to help service users to maximise their income and benefit entitlement where ever possible during the financial assessment.	Welfare Assistance Team-Chris Graham	January 2018+	Assessment and Awards Team Plan
Comprehensive marketing and communications plan to promote the Welfare Assistance Scheme.	Welfare Assistance Team-Chris Graham	January 2018+	Assessment and Awards Team Plan
Governance of the Welfare Assistance Scheme is provided by the Poverty Action Steering Group.(PASG)	PASG	January 2018+	PASG Action Plan
Work with the Advice in County Durham partnership to increase claims among older people.	Welfare Assistance Team-Chris Graham	January 2018+	Assessment and Awards Team Plan
Reasonable adjustments will be made for disabled people where required.	Welfare Assistance Team-Chris Graham	January 2018+	Assessment and Awards Team Plan

### Review

Are there any additional assessments that need to be undertaken? (Y/N)	N
When will this assessment be reviewed? Please also insert this date at the front of the template	October 2018

### Sign Off

Lead officer sign off: Paul Darby, Head Of Finance & Transactional Services	Date: 9.2.18
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Service equality representative sign off: M Gallagher, Equality and Diversity Officer	Date: 9.2.18
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Please return the completed form to your service equality representative and forward a copy to [equalities@durham.gov.uk](mailto:equalities@durham.gov.uk)