

Stockport Local Assistance Scheme - Business Case

Portfolio:	Adult Social Care
Outcome:	People are able to make informed choices and look after themselves People who need support get it
Project SRO:	Andrew Webb
Project Lead:	Vince Fraga

1. Executive Summary

This business case proposes changes to the Stockport Local Assistance Scheme to develop a unified approach to how the Council assesses, administers and makes discretionary payments to those who require financial support and assistance.

2. Case for Change

The Stockport Local Assistance Scheme was created in 2013 to manage the devolved responsibilities of the DWP to provide social care grants and emergency loans to individuals and families in financial crisis. This service has provided services that seek more preventative approaches than purely financial payments. This service also signposts individuals to develop more resilient and sustainable ways to avoid crisis and achieve greater independence.

This service provides a key mechanism for prevention and support for a wide range of individuals and families it is not a statutory function and is not the core business of Adult Social Care. The savings required for ASC is significant and cannot be achieved without service reconfiguration and alignment to other areas of provision. At the same time the success of managing and reducing this budget through efficiencies and maximisation of other areas of provision e.g. the Credit Union etc, needs to continue and reasonable targets made to achieve savings. However, there is a need to align the work of this service into a single structure and approach that provides a unified process for the discretionary payments the Council provides to individuals.

The core element of this business case will be to re-design the SLAS team to undertake wider functions that will support preventative approaches and consolidate in one place a range of discretionary payments the Council provides to individuals.

3. Project / Programme Proposal

3.1 Project / Programme Vision

It is envisaged that Adult Social Care will reduce its financial commitment to the SLAS service and do this through closer integration of other funding streams available through the council. The Council will seek to achieve efficiencies through the development of a single access point for management of its discretionary payments such as Section 17 for children and young people, discretionary housing payments, school uniform provision and other SLAS related payments e.g. fuel, food and white goods. A review of discretionary payments, support, and affordable credit, across partners will be undertaken to reduce duplication, for example Food Banks offering Fuel bank, Stockport Credit Union affordable credit, and initiatives available through housing providers such Stockport Homes "The Pantry" community shop, and furniture re-use scheme.

3.2 Scope

3.2.1 Approach

Together with colleagues in Corporate and Support Services and Children's Services a redesign project will be undertaken to determine the key elements of discretionary payments that can be integrated into a single structure within the council. This will need to consider the current levels of staffing, budgets available and volumes of demand.

There is also the opportunity to align this service more closely into the MAASH and further develop the Council's approach to access into services. This will be aimed at reducing demand and avoiding individuals being brought into formal services too early and create more effective and proportionate signposting to more appropriate services and support in the community.

As part of a task group colleagues within the council and external partners will review all current arrangements for financial assistance, support and affordable credit. The aim of this will be to reduce duplication of financial assistance and ensure a co-ordinated streamlined approach and response with easier access for applicants.

3.2.2 Services and Budget

Service Budget	2017/18
	Current Budget (before reductions) £m
Salaries (including on costs)	£0.185
Non Pay	£0.013
Programme budget	£0.395
Total	£0.593

3.3 Delivery Model Options and Preferred Model

As previously stated there is a view that a unified approach to discretionary payments will be more efficient and realise cost savings through alignment of budgets, staff and processes. As parts of this process of redesign an options appraisal will be undertaken and include an option to maintain the current arrangements along with an understanding of the impact this would have on savings requirements.

4. Objectives and Benefits

An integrated and fully aligned service for the assessment, administration and provision of discretionary payments to those requiring financial assistance.

To reduce the financial commitment Adult Social Care has made to this provision since 2013 and seek alternative sources of funding/income to manage and minimise the impact.

5. Initial Investment Return/Income Generation Analysis

	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
New Service Costs	£0.593	£0.489	£0.489	£0.489
Cost of Change				
Financial Savings	£0.000	£0.104	£0.104	£0.104
Transitional Funding				
In Year Position				
Cumulative Net Position				

6. Key Timescales

Milestone Description	Date Expected	Output at Milestone
Review of all discretionary payments.	Jan 2018	Full overview of all payments the Council provides.
Engagement with relevant colleagues in CYP, Revs & Benefits.	Feb 2018	Full sign up with colleagues to developing a new model of delivery.
Review of credit union	Feb 2018	Review that highlights the opportunities of the credit union in supporting financial inclusion and minimising the reliance on payments to individuals.
Develop option appraisals	March 2018	Full complement of options developed and appraised.
Full design of preferred model of delivery.	May 2018	Model developed with specification and key deliverables.
Consultation with staff	July 2018	Staff views and input sought for preferred delivery model.
Implementation of new service	September 2018	Full roll out of new service.

The above timescales have been reviewed to reflect the work required to move to a more aligned service. A budget saving of £50k can be achieved in the first half of 18/19 from the existing SLAS scheme. This will leave £54k remaining savings to be achieved from the aligned services in the second half of the financial year.

7. Consultation and Engagement

Consultation on the Stockport Local Assistance Scheme began on 20th November 2017 and ended on 22nd December 2017. The questionnaire had been placed on the Councils "Have Your Say Webpage" with supporting information explaining the proposals. In addition to this the questionnaire was available on electronic touchscreen kiosks placed in Libraries where there were also paper copies.

A direct email was sent containing a link to the consultation for Stakeholders. Over 50 Stakeholders were invited to complete the questionnaire including Internal Council colleagues and departments, external partner agencies, and various third sector organisations.

A number of communications supported this consultation including posters placed in public buildings, news releases, and messages broadcast via Facebook and Twitter.

At the close of the consultation it received 145 responses. 104 of these were online respondents, 31 stakeholders and 10 from Kiosks in libraries.

The consultation report can be viewed here:



Proposed Adults and
Heath Scrutiny Report

8. Interdependencies, Constraints and Risk

Risk Description	Risk Owner	Broad Risk Response	H/M/L
Buy in from colleagues in relevant services not achieved	Corporate Director for Peoples Services with relevant Heads of Service	Early engagement and negotiation	M
Demand outstripping capacity for payments and support.		Continued screening and monitoring of applications against re-profiled budgets.	M
Pressures on external services in the voluntary and community sector could limit the ability to signpost people to preventative services.		Assessment of impact any external pressures are having on the community and voluntary sector and oversight on emerging models of asset based approaches to prevention.	H
Proposed alignment does not realise the targeted level of savings		Options appraisal development to take account of risk factors and identify mitigating actions to manage the impact.	H

Equality Impact Assessment

Title: Stockport Local Assistance Scheme Consultation.

Date: 03 January 2018

Stage: Consultation

Lead Officer: James Rowlands

Stage 1: Do you need to complete an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)?

About Equality Impact Assessments

Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 requires the Council to have due regard to certain things every time it makes a decision. Due regard means having information about the equality impacts of a proposed course of action when a decision is made. Where negative impacts (or likely impacts) have been identified, the Council is required to consider alternative or additional courses of action that mitigate the harmful impacts.

No – At the consultation stage the following discretionary payments are being consulted on:

- Stockport Local Assistance Scheme
- Discretionary Housing Payments
- Secondary School Uniform Scheme
- Free School Meals
- Section 17 payments.

With the exception of section 17 payments all of these schemes are currently applied for using online forms. (Section 17 is applied for internally by Stockport Family Social Workers) The consultation has asked the public and stakeholders for their views on:

“How we currently assess, administer, and allocate payments through the different schemes mentioned above. We would like to make things easier for people who apply by having one application form and one front door to access these payments. To do this we are looking at how we can bring these services together. This consultation is an opportunity to give your views on the current arrangements and to give us feedback on what would improve things for people applying for financial assistance from the Council”

As the proposal is to have one online application form and one front door members of the public should see no negative change in the way in which they currently apply for these services, it will still be an online form.

The proposed online form will be an intelligent form which dependant on what the person is applying for will ask only relevant questions to their application and should therefore be simpler and much more efficient than the current system of individual online applications for each scheme. This mitigates the comments in the consultation about using one online form resulting in a very long and complex application. As is the case now if a person is unable to use an online form then

alternatives will be offered on an individual basis. Some examples being telephone or face to face appointments.

The savings the Council needs to make will be achieved by aligning where possible the administrative functions of the various discretionary schemes within the back of house functions, removing duplication of work and improving the aligned assessment process to achieve more informed and consistent decisions.

When a full business case with proposals is completed a full EIA will accompany this.