

**CAMBRIDGESHIRE LOCAL ASSISTANCE SCHEME (CLAS) –
ALLOCATION OF FUNDING FROM CENTRAL GOVERNMENT 2015-16**

To: General Purposes Committee

Meeting Date: 19 May 2015

From: Adrian Loades,
Executive Director: Children, Families and Adults Services

Electoral division(s): All

Forward Plan ref: 2015/048 **Key decision:** Yes

Purpose: At its meeting on 26 March 2015, the Adults Committee agreed to seek agreement from the General Purposes Committee to increase the current allocation of £350K to a maximum of £513K for Cambridgeshire Local Assistance Scheme (CLAS). The Council received a late notification of additional funding of £513k as a part of the Government's February response to the consultation on the future of local assistance schemes.

The purpose of this report is to set out the reasons for this request and the likely impact of CLAS not receiving the full allocation of extra funding sought. It should be noted that the 'additional' £163k would be ring-fenced to fund the delivery of direct provision. In the event that this funding is not fully spent, it will be rolled over to 2016-17 and again made available to support direct provision.

Recommendation: The Committee is asked to increase the current allocation of £350K to a maximum of £513K for Cambridgeshire Local Assistance Scheme (CLAS), as set out in the Government's February announcement confirming the allocations to Local Authorities for local welfare and health and social care needs, noting that:

- (a) The current allocation of £350k is likely to be insufficient to meet the demand for direct provision despite the agreement to reduce the amount per successful application from £535 to £350;
- (b) The additional £163k would be ring-fenced to deliver direct provision. In the event that any part of this money is not required, it will be rolled over to 2016-17 and again made available to support direct provision; and

- (c) The £513k funding would be reoccurring but a decision about the future funding of CLAS would be reviewed in the light of some of the plans to make CLAS more self-sustaining during 2015-16.

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1.0 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 CLAS has been operating for two years and provides assistance for immediate crisis support and helping people settle back into the community following a crisis. The scheme is targeted at vulnerable groups and operates to a clear eligibility criteria. As a whole the scheme has been considered a success and is greatly valued by partner organisations across the county. A total of 1,306 successful applications were made to CLAS in 2014-15. **Appendix A** sets out a number of case studies that highlight the positive impact the scheme has had.
- 1.2 The scheme is administered, under contract, by Charis Grants who also have access to a range of suppliers for food, clothing, heating and white goods.
- 1.3 Applications to CLAS are made via 'authorised agents' who make applications on behalf of their clients. There are over 400 agents who represent a wide range of public and voluntary organisations covering housing, social care, health, police, probation, homeless charities etc.,
- 1.4 Applications can be made for awards of up to £350. Typically between 90 -110 applications for assistance are received each month. Most awards are processed within 24 hours. The value of awards has steadily reduced over the past two years in response to funding restrictions, from £1,000 to the current level of £350, which was introduced in April.

2. THE STRATEGY FOR 2015-16

- 2.1 Funding for local welfare provision until March April 2015 was guaranteed by the government as part of the agreement to devolve local welfare provision to local authorities from April 2013. Initially for 2015-16, the government gave no new money for CLAS but the county council agreed to fund CLAS from reserves to the value of £350k for 2015/16. This was a considerable reduction on the original budget of £1.2m per year which was available two years ago.
- 2.2 In response to this allocation of £350k, the Adults Committee asked officers in December 2014 to develop CLAS for 2015-16 on the basis of the reduced budget allocation and to find ways to make the scheme more sustainable as it was anticipated that funding would either cease or reduce further from 2016-17. The Adults Committee asked officers to explore two options in particular:
 - a. Immediate exit from the scheme (April 2015) and focusing any future support on maximising information and advice; and
 - b. Longer-term exit (April 2016) through the better integration of existing welfare support provision, including local charities and trusts and community support.

- 2.3 As a result of proposals put to the Adults Committee in March, the committee has requested that £100k should be invested into voluntary/community schemes with the intention of trying to create a higher level of integration and sustainability for crisis support across the county. Plans to invest this money are currently being developed and are likely to focus on the following areas:
- Using recycled white goods (which has the potential of achieving further savings for CLAS);
 - Increasing the level of crisis advice and support - particularly in the areas of financial, housing, benefit and employment advice;
 - Better integration with food banks; and
 - Locally sponsored voluntary/community initiatives.
- 2.4 Of the remaining £250k, it was agreed that this would be used to maintain direct provision but at a lower level. Specifically by:
- Reducing the total amount per application to £350;
 - Reducing administration costs further;
 - Reducing the specification of white goods;
 - Reducing the value of clothing vouchers from £100 per person to £50 per adult and £25 per child and baby; and
 - Deleting removal costs.
- 2.5 In allocating £250k for direct provision, the Adults Committee was concerned that this funding would not be sufficient to cover the whole of 2015/16. On the assumption that the fund continued to make around a 100 awards per month, even at the reduced level of awarding £350 per successful application, the fund would not suffice beyond six months.
- 2.6 In sum, the Adults Committee has sought to tailor the offer to the resources available and sought to try to maintain and develop a scheme that can, in part, meet the needs of those in crisis during 2015-16 and beyond. The strategy was recognised as having risks both in terms of the capacity of other organisations to address need in the eventual absence of CLAS and the potential impact on Council services such as social care if families are unable to meet their basic needs.

3. **IMPACT**

- 3.1 Understanding the full impact of reducing funding for crisis support is not straightforward. Multiple factors often 'trigger' people into needing crisis support and these needs can be met in a variety of ways and not just from CLAS. There is a concern that the full impact of people falling into crisis is not fully visible or understood. For example, people reporting to food banks, homeless shelters and private sector housing tenants. Feedback from partners organisations and case studies completed last year, suggests CLAS has had a positive and significant impact on people's lives when they qualify and are able to access support from CLAS. A full community impact assessment is attached as **Appendix B**.

- 3.2 In summary, there are three key potential impacts that continuing to reduce funding for local welfare support may have as follows:
- a. As CLAS is already targeted at some of the most vulnerable people in the community (many of whom are on low incomes or have no income at the point of crisis) the impact of reducing funding has the potential to be more marked.
 - b. The reduction in the total award amount will mean applicants will be receiving less. A family of one parent and two children looking to re-establish themselves into a new home typically request a cooker, fridge and washing machine. The cost of these will be over the £350 award limit so some items will be refused. It is not certain that alternative supplies of these white goods exist in terms of second-hand goods and recycled goods.
 - c. Until this point the scheme had the ability to 'flex' with demand by targeting resources at the most vulnerable. This went some way to mitigating against any loss of funding if the scheme came under pressure. The overall reduction in the budget means, for the first time, we have had to stop making certain types of award altogether, e.g. removal expenses, and have had to reduce the value of other awards e.g. clothing.

4. ALLOCATION OF FUNDING: INTERPRETATION AND RESPONSE

- 4.1 On 3 February 2015, the Government reversed its decision not to fund local welfare provision following a consultation exercise that was held late last year. The Consultation response stated

In response to representations during consultation, we have now decided to allocate an additional £74 million to upper tier authorities, to assist them in dealing with pressures on local welfare and health and social care.

HM Government February 2015L WLP in 2015-16 Consultation Summaries of Responses

- 4.2 The County Council's share of this money is £513k and is granted to the Council as additional money in the Revenue Support Grant. The statement that the funding was to meet pressures on "local welfare and health and social care" is in line with Government policy which has been that it was for local authorities to determine how they will meet needs following the transfer of local welfare provision in 2013. The Council, like most authorities chose to retain a specific local assistance scheme as this was seen as the least bureaucratic way forward and stopped families for example having to be assessed by social care services in order for their immediate needs to be met. The funding is not ring-fenced.
- 4.3 The timing of this decision was not helpful, as the County Council's budget making process was well advanced and final preparations

were being made to finalise the budget for Council's approval on 17 February 2015. Furthermore, the Adults Committee was not able to consider the implications of this announcement until its meeting in March 2015. Therefore the funding was placed in the Council's reserves for the purposes of the 2015/16 Business Plan.

- 4.4 The Adults Committee considered the future of CLAS and the funding announcement at its meeting of 26 March 2015. The following was agreed:
- a) To agree to the overall development of CLAS as follows:
 - 1. Maintaining a level of direct provision whilst continuing to find ways to reduce costs with an allocation of between £200K - £250K; and
 - 2. Investing a minimum of £100K in schemes that will build the capacity and infrastructure of communities and the voluntary sector to prevent people falling into crisis and will help crisis support to become more self-sustaining, integrated and resilient.
 - b) To agree the continuation of direct provision for crisis support and resettlement and to explore options for other local organisations to administer the scheme.
 - c) To agree that investment was made available to build greater sustainability into crisis support on the understanding that funding for local welfare provision is to remain uncertain for the foreseeable future;
 - d) To seek agreement from the General Purposes Committee to increase the allocation of £350K to a maximum of £513K (as set out in the recent Government announcement confirming the allocations to Local Authorities for local welfare assistance) with the additional £163K being used to support direct provision; and
 - e) To agree to the development of a full business case for the use of recycled white goods as part of the CLAS scheme.
- 4.5 Given that there was no explicit statement to say the funding was one-off (including in the Hansard record of the announcement), the Adults Committee view was that it should be treated as a recurring grant and plan accordingly. However, whilst the Adults Committee sees the money as recurring, it is understood that the financial landscape more generally may well alter during the current financial year due to the Comprehensive Spending Review, the likely changes to the scheme itself and the potential impact of current legislation, if enacted e.g. universal credit roll out in November/December. This may require a further discussion about how best to resource welfare provision across the county.
- 4.6 It should be noted that the Committee proposed that the additional funding of £163K should be used to fund direct provision. It proposed

that the funding should be ring-fenced for this purpose. In the event that the fund is not required, it would be rolled over to 2016-17 and again made available to support direct provision.

- 4.7 The full allocation of funding identified by the Government will be used to address directly both local welfare and health and social care needs as indicated by Government. For example, the fund will help alleviate pressures on Section 17 (Children's Act) monies; will be used by GPs and other health professionals; and will help keep people moving through parts of the system i.e. out of 'institutional' settings and back into the community.
- 4.8 The decision to request this money was a unanimous decision made by the Adults Committee.
- 4.9 The Adults Committee remains focused on finding other ways to fund and achieve efficiencies to build a more sustainable solution to crisis support across the county. These have included:
 - a. Trying to raise funding from partners and other donors – although opportunities have reduced since the additional funding was announced;
 - b. Exploring other ways to administer the scheme, possibly involving district colleagues and other organisations; and
 - c. As stated earlier, investing in ideas that will create either savings or achieving longer-term sustainability for crisis support.

5. ARGUMENTS FOR SEEKING THE FULL ALLOCATION OF MONEY

- 5.1 The Adults Committee was concerned that the Council avoids the timing of the funding announcement dictating how the funding should be applied and was keen that decision making about the use of the funding should be taken in the same way as all the other grants that are received by the County Council.
- 5.2 The Committee considered that it had been developing plans on the basis of the £350k one off funding requested through the Business Planning process. The request for £350k was in response to the very limited amount of funding available to the Council overall and the range of key competing priorities and pressures that the Committee had to address. Therefore, the £350k was not considered to be an amount that was sufficient to address the likely demand for CLAS and the consequences of its reduction. Instead, like many budgets it was a request that sought to balance service imperatives with the Council's funding position. The additional funding announcement for local welfare provision provided some scope for better balancing these pressures.
- 5.3 It should be noted that CLAS, through careful management and design, has been able to contribute to helping the Council achieve its wider savings targets. Some authorities have asked for welfare provision underspends to be rolled forward in anticipation of funding

being either reduced or withdrawn by Government. This has not been done locally and instead savings have been used to support the Council's overall financial position.

- 5.4 The Committee has been concerned that CLAS plays a role in preventing the escalation of need to statutory services. The funding provided has been deployed in accordance with a longer term aim of making CLAS more self-sustaining therefore seeks to support a range of providers and solutions for meeting crisis support.
- 5.5 The Committee was concerned that the funding announcement has in some instances impeded work with other organisations to develop arrangements for providing immediate crisis level support. Organisations have stated that they will be less inclined to provide funding if the Council is seen as not using the full amount of funding it has been given for local assistance purposes.

6.0 ALIGNMENT WITH CORPORATE PRIORITIES

6.1 Developing the local economy for the benefit of all

Securing and retaining employment can be greatly assisted by people being in settled accommodation and this is an area that CLAS has been able to contribute to with some success.

6.2 Helping people live healthy and independent lives

CLAS has an important contribution to make to helping people in moments of crisis either remain healthy and independent or regain their health and independence with the injection of short-term crisis support that CLAS can give. Of all the people who have been assisted so far a significant number have been able to return to more settled lives and, as a result, have regained their independence.

6.3 Supporting and protecting vulnerable people

CLAS is a scheme targeted at the most vulnerable and by definition those seeking assistance from the scheme have found themselves in in potentially harmful situations e.g. fleeing domestic violence; without shelter, food or heating.

7.0 SIGNIFICANT IMPLICATIONS

7.1 Resource Implications

The resource implications surrounding CLAS are as follows:

- To date £350k has been allocated to the CLAS scheme for 2015-16;
- At this stage £250k has been allocated to fund direct provision with the remaining £100k being used for investment into schemes to reduce costs and build greater sustainability and integration into

- crisis support work; and
- The allocation of funding for direct provision will be allocated on 'area formula' based on the number of benefit claimants in that area. This will ensure spend is targeted and driven by need.

In addition, the General Purpose Committee is being asked to allocate a further £163k in line with the full £513 allocation identified by Government in February 2015 for local welfare and health and social care needs.

Officers will continue to explore ways of reducing costs within the scheme overall, particularly with regard to the provision of white goods.

7.2 **Statutory, Risk and Legal Implications**

Statutory: The provision of a local welfare assistance scheme is not a statutory obligation so the council is under no legal duty to provide this service.

Risk: The risks associated with local welfare assistance are considered high from two perspectives:

- Reputational; and
- In not having a crisis assistance scheme, the question of whether vulnerable people are more at risk when they find themselves in a moment of crisis.

Reputational

Over the years certain organisations have come to rely on the social fund/CLAS as an invaluable source of help to assist people re-settling back into the community. There is a growing realisation that this assistance may not be available from April next year and the Council's reduction in spend is already having a negative impact in this area and is causing some organisations to raise concerns directly with members and senior officers.

Increased Risk to People in Crisis

It is hard to quantify whether those that have been supported by CLAS so far would have been more at risk if the scheme hadn't provided them with the assistance it did, in the way it did. Certainly, the scheme has been beneficial in helping many people recover from their crisis situations.

7.3 **Equality and Diversity Implications**

A community impact assessment (CIA) was produced when the scheme was designed and careful consideration was given to ensuring certain groups were not denied access to the scheme by the way the eligibility criteria was set out. The CIA was revisited in the light of the decision to control expenditure in September 2014. A

further update of the CIA has now been completed and is attached as **Appendix B**. CLAS provides important assistance for woman and disabled people (including mental health). If the scheme were not to continue these groups would be affected.

7.4 **Engagement and Consultation Implications**

In developing the original scheme there was both formal and informal engagement with key stakeholders groups and this has continued largely through the Financial Capability Forum. A task and finish group made up of key stakeholders (including city and district councils, two housing associations, CCG, DWP, CAB and Charis) has been actively involved in the development of CLAS and have provided invaluable insight and expertise into how CLAS might evolve. There remains a strong commitment amongst partners to ensure some of local welfare provision is secured for the longer term.

Four consultation events were held in November 2014 and March 2015, largely attended by authorised agents. A short informal consultation about the changes for 2015-16 took place between 11 and 23 March 2015.

7.5 **Localism and Local Member Involvement**

The development of future options for the scheme has the scope to involve local communities more e.g. the provision of food to food banks, charitable collections of clothes and furniture, and recycling of white goods. These will be considered alongside the options for the scheme moving forward.

7.6 **Public Health Implications**

As CLAS provides emergency food and heating it can have a direct impact on people's health. Sometimes these people already suffer and/or are recovering from a period of ill health.

Source Documents	Location
CLAS Eligibility Criteria	Room 224, Shire Hall, Cambridge http://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/info/20075/parenting_and_family_support/379/cambridgeshire_local_assistance_scheme_clas

**Examples of families helped in the first year of CLAS
(Cambridgeshire Local Assistance Scheme)**

These case studies were provided by front line professional workers acting as authorised agents for families who were helped by CLAS during 2013-14

1. Ms L (Cambridgeshire CC Adult Safeguarding Team - Cambridge)
LW is a young woman with mental health and substance misuse issues; she lost her tenancy in 2006 when her children were taken into care. Since that time she has not had her own accommodation – she has had brief stays in hostels which she has not been able to maintain as her behaviour was too chaotic. She was then ‘staying’ with vulnerable men in their tenancies – she was not engaged with any services, she was a street drinker who was constantly getting involved with the criminal justice system. She was offered her own tenancy in February, but obviously had nothing to go in it!! Emmaus, Cambridge Central Aid and The Besom Trust were all utilised and some furniture and other items were obtained.

“I (the authorised agent) applied to CLAS for a fridge freezer, cooker and washing machine – I was informed the same day that I was successful – the items were delivered and installed within two weeks.

My client is absolutely thrilled, her flat is lovely, we meet there and have tea. She is a lot calmer, and is now starting to engage with the support available to her – she says it is because she likes to be in her own home today – she feels safe there and has no need to go elsewhere.”
2. Mrs A (CHS - Cambridge)
Mrs AC was awarded clothing vouchers for her seven children and two single beds with bedding. She used the vouchers to get new clothing and shoes for school. Two boys were in very old beds both with a soiled mattress. She works part-time and tries really hard to support all children but has no spare funds for things like clothing etc. The children are used to wearing ‘hand me down’ clothes.
3. Miss H + children (Roddens Housing - Wisbech)
A high-risk domestic abuse victim received a fridge freezer, washing machine and cooker to replace items smashed by ex-partner. Receiving these items removed a huge weight off her mind and the offer of help through CLAS provided a way in to further assistance - Miss H was then given advice on benefits and signposted to other services (including police and other agencies).
4. Mrs M (CHS - Meldreth)
Mr C had to give up work and become Mrs MC’s full time carer due to the constant agonising pain that she is in. This caused a significant drop in income. They have four young boys and were awarded a fridge/freezer, clothing vouchers (£100) and a single bed and bedding. Their fridge/freezer was old and not working properly and as they have 4 young boys they try to fill the freezer and always have a full fridge. One of the sons had issues at night with bed wetting; his mattress was very soiled and there was a smell

upstairs. "He is so excited about his new bed that the bed wetting has decreased significantly." They were able to buy school clothes with the clothing vouchers; "the boys loved it because they no longer had 'grey' polo shirts".

5. Mrs A (CHS - Cambridge)

Mrs AD was awarded a cooker. She is terminally ill with lung cancer and only has months to live. Her old oven had to be lit by a match right at the back inside and was very dangerous. Her husband has severe mental health issues and she was worried about his safety once she has gone.

6. Ms A (Circle Housing Roddons – Fenland)

A young single mother who lived in a furnished studio flat with her small child. When she was offered a 2 bedroom flat by Circle Housing Roddons, she couldn't move in straight away as she had no cooker, fridge or furniture and no money to buy it all as she didn't expect it to happen so quickly. In social housing once an individual is offered a place, the viewing is arranged within a few days and often tenant has to sign tenancy agreement during the viewing. So, this young mother started her tenancy with arrears as her housing benefit was paid for the studio flat where she lived and not for the new place (as she didn't occupy it). The neighbourhood officer raised concern and we applied for the cooker and fridge for her. She got a Budgeting loan to pay for beds for herself and child. If there was no intervention from CLAS she wouldn't be able to move in for much longer which mean the arrears would mount up, and it would cost Roddons to chase her. Eventually Fenland District Council awarded DHP to cover the period the tenant didn't live in her new flat and they would have had to spend more if there was no CLAS intervention.

7. Mr F (Together for Families Employment Adviser, DWP Job Centre Plus, Wisbech)

The father is a lone parent, historically unemployed with some mental health issues. He has got custody of his sons when they were about 5, some 7 years ago and initially relied on second hand furniture to furnish the property they lived in. With general wear and tear the boys bunk beds were no longer fit for use so they slept on the sofa cushions on the floor while he slept on what remained of the frame. This arrangement did not have a derogatory effect on their lives, the boys attended school etc. with no issues. The issues built up when the washing machine broke down and he was unable to launder the clothing and they could not go to school, bear in mind they also had few clothes as finances were tight. A school family worker suggested he visit Bright House in Kings Lynn and purchase a machine and beds for the boys. The client broke down while in the Jobcentre and said he couldn't afford to do that. I had previously advised my colleagues of CLAS and was happy to take an application from him. We were able to get the boys beds and bedding, a working washing machine and even a cooker as the one he had only had one working ring on it and no working oven. While the family support team from the school were right to focus on the children, it was apparent to me that as we were able to offer immediate and responsive help to the family from CLAS and solve the problem within days, the action to involve Social Services could be stepped down as the boys could return to school. The JCP could then focus on helping the client look towards training and work as these pressing worries had been solved.

COMMUNITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT (MARCH 2015)

Directorate / Service Area	Officer undertaking the assessment
CFA, Adult Social Care	Name: Simon Willson
Service / Document / Function being assessed	Job Title: Head of PM&QA
Cambridgeshire Local Assistance Scheme (CLAS)	Contact details: simon.willson@cambridgeshire.gov.uk
Aims and Objectives of Service / Document / Function	
<p>The aim of CLAS is to provide one-off practical support or other forms of assistance for people in crisis and/or moving into, or remaining in, the community following a crisis. The scheme is aimed at supporting vulnerable individuals and families who are considered to be under exceptional pressure.</p>	
What is changing?	
<p>From 1st April 2013, under the Welfare Reform Act, Cambridgeshire County Council took over responsibility for some of the discretionary payments of the Dept. of Work & Pensions' (DWP) Social Fund. The Cambridgeshire Local Assistance Scheme (CLAS), therefore, broadly superceded the Social Fund Community Care Grants but does not seek to replicate that scheme.</p> <p>CLAS supports the County Council's overarching priority of "supporting and protecting vulnerable people." Specific outcomes are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helping to meet basic needs (food, shelter, warmth) of vulnerable individuals and families; • Meeting their needs in a timely fashion; • Improving their financial capability; and • Reducing their impact on statutory services or continued reliance upon statutory support <p>In broad terms, assistance will be given to people who meet <u>all</u> of the following four factors:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Live in Cambridgeshire 2. Get a means-tested benefit, or payment on account for one, or have evidence of very low income and capital 3. Meet vulnerability criteria 4. Have a need within the scope of the fund that cannot be met from other forms of support <p>Since April 2014 the level of funding for CLAS has been reducing which has necessitated lowering the amount of money available for each successful application. This started at £1,000 was reduced to £535 and the current proposal is to reduce this further to £350.</p> <p>No changes to the eligibility criteria are being made.</p> <p>Some award elements are being removed altogether: table and chairs, travel expenses and the value of clothing awards reduced by half.</p> <p>Authorised agents are being asked to provide clearer explanations as to what other assistance has been sought and the reason why this has not been successful.</p>	
Who is involved in this impact assessment?	
e.g. Council officers, partners, service users and community representatives.	

There has been a high level of engagement about the ongoing changes and developments to CLAS. In terms of developing the proposals for 2015-16 a Task and Finish Group was established that had representatives from DWP, Cab, city/district councils, CAB, children services, housing associations and other charities that provide crisis support. Discussions remain ongoing with these organisations and others, including the Trussell Trust and other local charities and voluntary groups.

Authorised agents attended two sessions in March and were invited to share their views on the proposed changes.

WHAT WILL THE IMPACT BE?

Tick to indicate if the impact on each of the following protected characteristics is positive, neutral or negative.

Impact	Positive	Neutral	Negative
Age	X		
Disability	X		X
Gender reassignment		X	
Marriage and civil partnership		X	
Pregnancy and maternity	X		
Race		X	

Impact	Positive	Neutral	Negative
Religion or belief		X	
Sex		X	
Sexual orientation		X	
The following additional characteristics can be significant in areas of Cambridgeshire.			
Rural isolation	X		X
Deprivation	X		X

For each of the above characteristics where there is a positive or negative impact please provide details, including evidence for this view. Describe the actions that will be taken to mitigate any negative impacts and how the actions are to be recorded and monitored.

Positive Impact

The CLAS scheme is designed to provide support to people in crisis situations as a result of losing their homes, income or other vital aspects of quality of life. Recipients include the homeless, those leaving institutions (prisons, hospitals etc.), victims of domestic abuse and people at risk of going into institutional care.

Economic

- CLAS will provide support to people at times of crisis and emergency, minimising harm to their long term economic exclusion. It will allow some people to remain in work or return to work more quickly.
- CLAS will prevent some people from taking out loans from sources such as Pay Day Loans or Loan Sharks
- Increasingly those seeking help from CLAS are also seeking wider financial advice which helps to ensure their longer term financial capability and build up their skills in money management. This in turn helps prevent them falling back into crisis.
- By helping people to become established in the community, CLAS will help retain money in the local economy.

Environment

- CLAS encourages applicants to use recycled goods rather than automatically encouraging the use of new goods (e.g. authorised agents are asked to refer to second-hand voluntary organisations for cookers, fridges etc.,

Social

- In general terms, CLAS looks at the "whole person" and will try to identify their specific needs, including those related to protected characteristics. In this sense it remains more responsive to individual need than the previous DWP scheme.
- One purpose of CLAS is to help people become established or remain established in the community. This particularly helps those with a physical or learning disability moving out of residential accommodation into own accommodation to support themselves more independently.

Negative Impact

Economic

- The purchasing of white goods is done largely through national retailers so does not benefit smaller business or charity or voluntary groups. Developments during 2015-16 will start to address this.
- Lack of funds through CLAS will put more pressure on local charities and voluntary groups – there is some evidence that they are currently unable to cope with the demand for second-hand goods, particularly white goods.

Environment

- The use of second hand goods might not be as environmentally friendly as new products in terms of energy consumption.

Social

- The further reduction in the budget for CLAS has resulted in removing some awards already e.g. removal costs and tables and chair and reducing others e.g. clothing. Other 'awards' have been restricted e.g. tumble dryers will now only be given to larger families and people with applicable medical needs.
- Under the DWP scheme the majority of users of crisis loans were young men (under 35) often living at home. The new scheme does not provide the same direct assistance to this group as it meets only high priority needs which are mainly at household level. This impact is mitigated to some extent by the availability of some other forms of help such as DWP Budgeting Loans.

Steps are being taken to mitigate the effect of this budget reduction by building up a "signposting" role whereby those for whom direct assistance cannot be given are directed to other sources of help (e.g. food and furniture banks and credit unions for short term loans). However, there is some evidence that services are already over stretched.

Neutral Impact

- The service will be open to all groups who might be experiencing a household emergency or a particular financial crisis, within the confines of the eligibility criteria.
- Fewer people will receive a direct response to need. However, the service will meet the highest priority needs, and will support self-help and responsibility across all groups, leading to better long term outcomes wherever possible.
- Equal and fair access to CLAS will be retained across the County. An appeals process is in place.
- Other than the issues specially mentioned, the impacts of the service will be neutral with regard to the various protected characteristics.

Issues or Opportunities that may need to be addressed

Issues

The reduction in the total award amount will mean applicants will be receiving less. A family of one parent and two children looking to re-establish themselves into a new home typically request a cooker, fridge and washing machine. The cost of these will be over the £350 award limit so some items will be 'refused'. It is not certain alternative supplies of these white good exist in terms of second-hand goods and recycled goods.

Until this point the scheme had the ability to 'flex' with demand by targeting resources at the most vulnerable. This went some way of mitigating against any loss of funding if the scheme came under pressure. The overall reduction in the budget means, for the first time, we have had to stop making certain types of award altogether e.g. removal expertise and reduce the value of others e.g. clothing.

Ongoing welfare reforms are likely to push more people into crisis as evince ion the ongoing demand for food.

Opportunities

A £100k has been made available to try and make crisis assistance more integrated and sustainable. Key initiatives are likely to centre on:

- Increasing the supply of recycled goods;
- Easier access to advice and support for individuals and professional; and
- Investing in local initiatives to prevent people falling into crisis in the first place.

Community Cohesion

If it is relevant to your area you should also consider the impact on community cohesion.

No anticipated impact but on the evidence of the past two years.