

Supporting Independence Scheme

Newcastle's replacement scheme for
Community Care Grants

25th February 2013

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1. Introduction

As part of the wider welfare reforms, the Government will be abolishing the discretionary Social Fund from April 2013 and asking local authorities to set up replacement schemes for Crisis Loans and Community Care Grants.

The Government's contention in localising support for Crisis Loans and Community Care Grants is that local authorities are better placed to provide assistance in these circumstances, as many of the reasons for making an application will be linked to wider services that the council already provides and/or commissions, such as support for young people moving on from care or following a stay in homeless accommodation. It is also hoped that local control will ensure that best use is made of the limited funding.

There is no requirement for local authorities to set up the replacement scheme(s) in a particular way, and local authorities are encouraged to:

- work in partnership with the local Third Sector to develop schemes
- explore a range of in-kind support, and to link to advice, information and advocacy
- explore a full range of models for delivery

Newcastle intends to replace the DWP's schemes to respond to crisis and to provide support to resettle and sustain people in the community. This document sets out the draft principles for the delivery of a pilot for the replacement Community Care Grants.

There is a parallel document that describes the replacement pilot scheme for the DWP's Crisis loans. The two schemes have been developed in tandem and are complementary. However, as with the DWP's schemes the delivery mechanisms are sufficiently different for there to be two reports describing the responses needed to meet the needs of people facing a poverty related crisis and those needing white goods and furniture to resettle or sustain them in the community.

The localising of the schemes provides Newcastle with opportunities to build on our closer contact with people who face crises to help them prevent repeat episodes and to maximise the value of the funds. To this end, there will be a single approach to prevention that will align the use of these funds to existing care and support provision.

In addition to the DWP scheme we are building in a preventative element to the replacement service that will target support to people facing repeat crisis and provide training and information on financial inclusion to the agencies providing support and care to people in crisis.

2. Current arrangements

At the moment, the Government administers the Community Care Grant scheme as a discretionary element of the Social Fund through the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP).

The DWP currently administers Community Care Grants (along with Crisis Loans) through a centralised processing office and national phone line. The DWP then makes a direct payment into a successful applicant's bank account for the amount of assistance awarded. Alternatively, a giro is posted to the applicant's address, or collected from their local Jobcentre Plus office.

Community Care Grants are non-repayable grants which are intended to support vulnerable people to remain in, or return to, the community, or to ease exceptional pressure upon families.

Eligibility is dependent upon receipt, or imminent receipt of, an income-related benefit.

They are commonly awarded for a range of expenses including household equipment such as white goods and furniture. Their aim is 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 disaster, such as fire or flooding
- help people setting up home as a part of a resettlement programme, e.g. following 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 (in Newcastle this will be incorporated into the Crisis Loan replacement)

3. Budget

In August 2012, DWP provided notification of the indicative amount that will be available for the new provision as well as the amount of set up and administrative funding - this amount is for the replacement of both elements of the Social Fund (both Community Care Grants and Crisis Loans).

2012/13

Set up funding	£12,630
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2013/14

Programme funding	£1,262,979
Administrative funding	£266,877

2014/15

Programme funding	£1,262,979
Administrative funding	£244,622

It is anticipated that £1.04m of the programme funding above will be available for the replacement Community Care Grants scheme. This is based on the DCLG restricting the award for Crisis Loans to the 2005/06 level of £222, 900. £100,000 of the Community Care Grants replacement will be retained as a contingency to be used by either the eg to meet unexpected needs from both Community Care Grants and Crisis Loan replacement such as connection charges, this will be reviewed monthly. With initially £900,000 being transferred to YHN for the delivery of the Community Care Grants,

Of the administration grant £95,000 will be required for the Crisis Loan replacement scheme, and the remaining £149,622 will be available to administer the replacement Community Care Grant scheme and for the provision of preventative support. £9,000 of the set up funding will be used for the Crisis Loan replacement and £3,630 for the Community Care Grants.

4. Principles for a Community Care Grant replacement scheme

Due to the reduced amount of money available for the replacement scheme, the Council will be unable to replicate the provision currently in place by the DWP. In addition, the Council does not have the facility to increase this cash limited budget in response to changes in demand. As such, the following principles are being recommended in order to ensure that the most is made of this funding by verifying and targeting resources, whilst aligning with the Council's existing services and programmes which seek to sustain people in the community and tackle inequalities. It is important to be clear from the outset that there is insufficient funding to offset the worse affects of poverty and that the Council is being required to meet increasing demands with reduced funding (£220,000 less than DWP spent in 2011/2). This is a cash limited budget that cannot be overspent without meaning cuts to other services therefore it will need to be targeted and effectively used. Our approach has been to try and reduce the high level of transaction costs that were experienced by the DWP particularly in the 50%+ refusal rate. We aim for the replacement scheme to become a tool for support and care services to sustain vulnerable people's independence. Therefore this will be a partnership approach primarily between the Support People services and Children's and Adult's social care. All partners will seek to make the best use of limited funds to meet the needs of those with no alternatives. This will require on-going alignment with other discretionary funds eg Children's Services Section 17 and for support workers to continue to maximise resources by applying to charitable funds to enhance the value of sustainment packages.

Principles:

A replacement Community Care Grant scheme – to be known as the Supporting Independence Scheme (SIS) – will be available to:

- **help people on low incomes to resettle and sustain independence in the community where they have no alternative access to items required to maintain independence**

This includes help for people to:

- resettle in the community following a stay in an institution
- remain in the community rather than enter an institution
- set up home in the community, as part of a planned resettlement programme, following an unsettled way of life

The overarching outcomes of the scheme are:

- To allow people to return to or remain in the community without the need for more costly or intensive care and support services
- To make best use of all the Council's resources which aim to resettle and maintain people in the community. This includes providing resources for support workers to facilitate maintained independence for their clients

- To support the most vulnerable by aligning provision and access to items to appropriate commissioned support services and advice
- To integrate provision and access to items into the Active Inclusion Newcastle Unit which aims to provide a system wide approach to people's basic needs for a home
- To facilitate access to decent housing; the SIS will not be used to pay for repairs to inadequate accommodation, or to provide items which should be supplied by landlords. Goods provided by the SIS will be of good quality and expected to last for a substantial period
- To minimise waiting times and refused applications by supporting SIS referral agencies to verify that applications are appropriate and complete

The proposal is for a pilot scheme which will inform the development of a sustainable scheme based on the analysis of actual use and need.

5. What the scheme will provide

5.1 What the SIS covers?

The SIS will cover the provision of one or more of the following in accordance with need:

- Beds
- Bedding
- Chairs/sofas
- Tables
- Wardrobes/chest of drawers
- Pans, utensils, crockery and cutlery
- Floor coverings for bedrooms and living areas
- Curtains
- Cookers/Microwaves
- Kettles/toasters
- Vacuum, iron, ironing board
- Fridges
- Washing machines
- Storage or removal costs

5.2 Amount of award

The value of the SIS will be discretionary, in relation to the needs being presented and the financial situation of applicants. Applications of more than £950 may require additional supporting evidence of need, the exact nature of which will

depend on the goods requested. The SIS is a cash limited discretionary fund and therefore access cannot be perceived to be a right.

The SIS will only include the provision of the services and items required. Due to the limited amount of money available for the scheme and to ensure that full use is made of the funding, where possible the scheme will provide applicants with the items that they have requested directly and will provide quality second hand items where available.

The scheme is discretionary and only applicants whose circumstances meet the criteria outlined in section 6 will be considered for an award. The **Active Inclusion Newcastle Unit** will however support SIS referral agencies to identify alternative sources of financial assistance for their clients.

6. Who the scheme is for

Newcastle's approach to the replacement scheme aims to be more effective than the DWP's application form based process by utilising the closer knowledge of statutory agencies as well as our commissioned face to face designated support services

Referrals to the SIS will be from designated SIS referral agencies, who will include support providers who are funded to resettle and sustain people in independence, as well as designated statutory agencies.

We are moving from the DWP's prescriptive approach to eligibility, to one based on making the best use of limited resources to meet prioritised local needs. This approach will facilitate more effective spending based on a better understanding of need and the resources required to sustain independence. This will require a culture change amongst designated support providers and statutory agencies; from maximising the income they are able to secure from DWP for their clients, to being more accountable for the effective use of the local SIS available budget to sustain or resettle their clients. Support providers will be required to integrate the SIS into their support planning procedures and we will monitor the effectiveness of SIS referral agencies' submissions to the scheme.

This means that people will not be able to apply directly but will need to apply through a support agency. This is because at present that majority of successful applications are supported and our consultation has shown that independence is more likely to be sustained if vulnerable people are supported.

6.1 Eligibility criteria

The designated support providers and statutory agencies will be guided by the following eligibility criteria when applying for assistance from the SIS for their clients:

- be moving from an 'institution' **as part of** a planned programme of resettlement support

Some examples of institutions include hostels and short term supported accommodation, hospitals, chronic care facilities, refuges, prisons or approved premises, care leavers or offenders on release on temporary license

Or

- require help to remain in the community and avoid moving into an institution **and** be in receipt of a planned programme of sustainment support

Or

- require help to set up home in the community following an unsettled way of life **and** are being resettled as part of a planned programme of resettlement support

Or

- families who requires help to maintain their independence **and** are in receipt of designated support as part of a planned programme

In addition to the criteria above, SIS referral agencies must agree to provide data on clients' circumstances at regular intervals (3,6 and 12 months after receiving award) after receipt of support as a condition of clients being granted awards from the SIS.

6.2 Financial eligibility

The scheme is intended for those on low incomes. This includes people who are in receipt of one of more of the following qualifying benefits:

- Income Support
- Income related Employment and Support Allowance
- Income based Jobseekers Allowance
- Pension Credit
- Child Tax Credit at a rate higher than the family element

and

- Do not have savings or investments of more than £500 if aged under 60, and £1,000 if aged over 60.

6.3 Exclusions to the scheme

- People involved in a trade dispute
- People subject to immigration control
- People who require an item not covered in section 5.1
- People who require an item less than the value of £50 (our intention is to minimise transaction costs through the provision of repeated small awards)
- People who do not meet the criteria set out in 6.1 and 6.2
- People who do not have a settled home or imminent move on arrangements to settled accommodation
- People who have made an application to the Resettlement and Sustainment Scheme within the last 12 months and whose circumstances have not significantly changed since their previous application

7. How the scheme will be provided

7.1 Application and assessment process

- 7.1.1 Referrals will be accepted from designated SIS referral agencies, which will include resettlement and sustainment support providers and/or statutory agencies that are registered with the Newcastle Gateway.
- 7.1.2 Applications will be made through the Newcastle Gateway portal.
- 7.1.3 Confirmation will be required from the SIS referral agency that the applicant meets the qualifying conditions set out in section 6.
- 7.1.4 A decision will be made by the Active Inclusion Newcastle Unit as to whether the qualifying conditions set out in section 6 have been met, based on the information supplied by the SIS referral agency.
- 7.1.5 The application will be processed and the SIS referral agency informed of the outcome of the application.
- 7.1.6 The application will be processed as follows:
- a) If the application is fully complete, the SIS referral agency will be contacted within 5-10 working days with a decision
 - b) If the application is incomplete, the SIS referral agency will be contacted to request the relevant information be added. Once all relevant information and evidence has been submitted, the SIS referral agency will be contacted within 5-10 working days with a decision

- c) If successful, awards will be provided in line with the applicants' needs provided there are sufficient funds available

7.1.7 The Newcastle Gateway will be updated with the award decision

7.1.8 Applications can be made via the Newcastle Gateway portal at any time for clients with a qualifying need. The AIN Unit will be available to deal with applications Monday - Friday (with the exception of bank and public holidays).

7.2 Roles and responsibilities

7.2.1 The Council

The SIS will be administered by the Active Inclusion Newcastle (AIN) Unit within the Housing and Welfare Services section of Adult and Culture Services.

The AIN Unit will be responsible for:

- Monitoring and evaluating the delivery of the pilots
- Resource allocation and budget monitoring

The AIN Unit will be responsible for the allocation and monitoring of SIS resources within the finite amount of resource available.

Consideration will be given to the amount of resource available in the SIS budget and the priority of each case will be compared to other applications. There is a duty not to overspend the annual budget and consideration will be given to each application on its individual merits. Due to the reduced funding available for the SIS, referral agencies and the AIN Unit will need to ensure that alternative options have been explored before awarding assistance from the SIS (e.g. access to YHN's furniture packages).

The AIN Unit will build upon its existing Gateway and Move On Panel arrangements to ensure that the SIS is directly related and targeted to individuals supported through commissioned resettlement and sustainment support programmes.

- **Monitoring:**

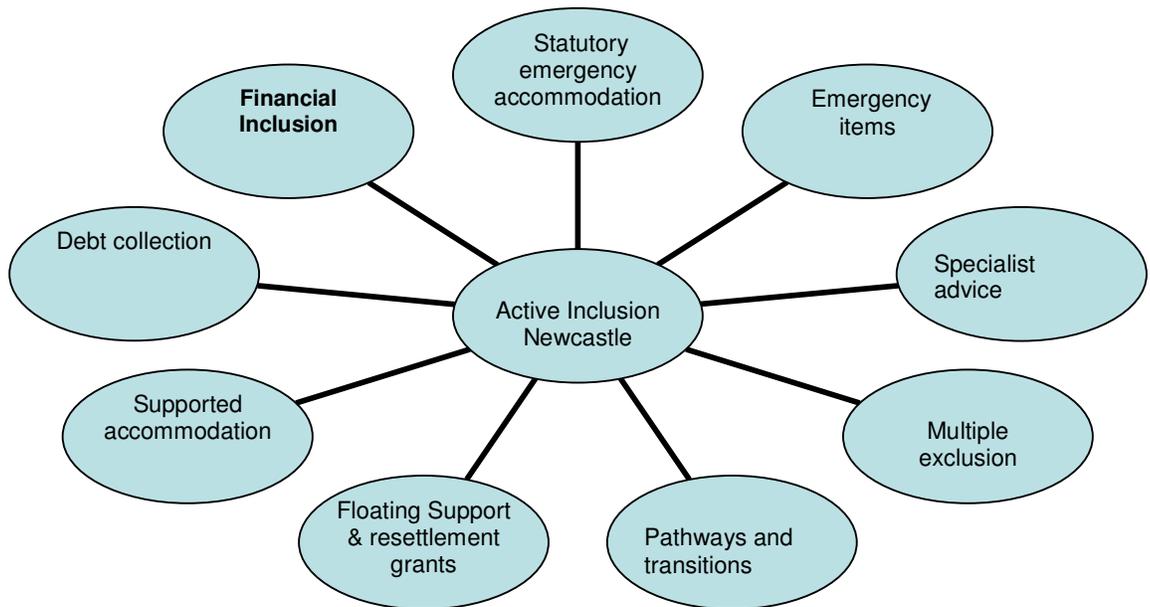
The AIN unit will be responsible for monitoring the utilisation of the scheme (e.g. number and nature of applications and awards), at both an individual client level as well as a support provider level. The AIN Unit will develop a system wide approach to monitoring the outcomes achieved across the range of investment targeted at resettling and sustaining independence. This will ensure that the SIS is an integrated part of support planning and not a stand alone process.

The AIN Unit will also be responsible for monitoring the Service Level Agreement with Your Homes Newcastle described below.

▪ **Preventative support:**

The AIN Unit will align SIS monitoring data to the provision of care and support. Where the client has an existing care or support programme, the AIN Unit will monitor the effectiveness of the increased investment and ensure that support plans are adjusted accordingly to reflect the change in circumstances. Where the person does not have support but faces a crisis the AIN Unit will match the client to an appropriate support service.

In the course of consulting on the development of the replacement scheme it was established that care and support providers did not want a stand alone preventative service for the replacement schemes. What was identified was the need for secondary advice for care and support providers to keep up to date with the benefit changes and access to financial inclusion services. This fits with “hub” concept central to the development of AIN that involves coordinating a range of services that identify and support people to respond to and prevent repeat crisis (see below).



7.2.2 Your Homes Newcastle (YHN)

Your Homes Newcastle will be responsible for obtaining and delivering the specified goods and items under a Service Level Agreement with the Council. This will be done under their existing Furniture Framework Contract, and the Council will be invoiced on a monthly basis.

This will maximise the benefits to the Council from the existing arrangements it has with YHN for the delivery of care and support and their furniture provision. This will help to ensure that the SIS cash limited fund assists the maximum number of vulnerable people to sustain independence.

Goods supplied by YHN as part of the SIS will carry a 12-month guarantee to be retained by the recipient. Goods will be of sufficient quality that they can reasonably be expected to last a period of 5 years and incur lower than average running costs.

7.2.3 Designated support providers and statutory agencies

Designated resettlement and sustainment support providers and/or statutory agencies that are registered with the Newcastle Gateway will be able to make referrals to the scheme through the Newcastle Gateway portal. In this document we have referred to these partners as SIS referral agencies.

Adult and Culture currently commissions resettlement and sustainment support programmes through its Supporting People services. Other statutory agencies (for example Children's Services or Adult social care) also provide or commission services that aim to resettle and sustain vulnerable families and adults in the community.

These services are either delivered directly or are delivered by YHN or voluntary and community sector providers. The main aim of these services is to support people to sustain themselves in independence.

Presently these agencies advocate on behalf of their clients to access Community Care Grants to help them to resettle or sustain independence. Under the replacement scheme, agencies will assess their clients' resettlement and sustainment needs as part of their wider support planning responsibilities and will refer clients for assistance from the SIS accordingly.

We expect the designated agencies and provider to work with the Council to maximise the value of the fund by minimising transaction costs (for example through only making appropriate referrals), exploring alternative options to goods and items, and taking collective responsibility for securing optimum value from the cash limited budget.

SIS referral agencies will include:

- Gateway accommodation and floating support services
- Statutory agencies (Probation, Adults and Children's Social Services and Mental Health Services)
- Housing Advice Centre
- Women's Refuges
- Any other providers of resettlement and sustainment support as identified by statutory services within Newcastle

8. Disputes

The SIS is a discretionary fund and therefore awards will not be treated as a right. However, the Council wants to ensure fairness and transparency and will set up a mechanism to deal with disputes.

Disputes about the SIS will be dealt with as follows:

- Disputes should be made within one calendar month of the notification of the decision being made
- The dispute can be made in writing or by e-mail, to the Active Inclusion Newcastle Unit and should refer to the reason for refusal and specify the reason why the SIS referral agency believes this decision should be reviewed
- Where a dispute is made, a Senior Officer will conduct a review of the decision in liaison with the designated referring agency within 10 working days of the appeal being received

9. Monitoring

The Active Inclusion Newcastle Unit will administer and monitor the SIS.

Newcastle Gateway will be used to administer and monitor the number of applications and awards and will ensure the validity of applications. This includes monitoring the type of referrals, which organisations are making referrals and the type of awards.

In addition, monitoring will be undertaken to assess the effectiveness of the integrated approach to the SIS and support planning.

The AIN Unit will also assist SIS referral agencies to address repeat crises and complex cases via a preventative support programme aimed at developing a consistent response to financial crisis across the sector.

The sum paid each month from the annual SIS budget will be a set amount. The purpose is to ensure that there are sufficient funds to meet current and future demands on the SIS budget throughout the financial year and to ensure that the Council's aims and objectives are being met.

We will establish a set of performance measures as part of the Service Level Agreement with YHN to ensure the value of the fund is maximised.

10. Risks

An Impact Assessment will be completed to assess the equality and wider impacts which may arise from the proposal.

11. Consultation and Communication

It is recommended that consultation takes place via the Council's Let's Talk Newcastle website. In addition to those households who approach the Council for support who are vulnerable or homeless, stakeholders who provide advice and support to vulnerable or homeless households will be consulted.

The Council will ensure that designated support providers, designated statutory agencies, local registered housing associations and voluntary sector organisations are made aware of the SIS and the qualifying conditions which need to be met to receive support and how applications can be made.

In addition, as part of its enabling role the Council will ensure that:

- Referrals to the SIS are consistent and appropriate
- Training is provided for front-line staff to ensure their knowledge of the scheme is both relevant and up to date
- The SIS is integrated within the wider Financial Inclusion programme and that this is communicated with all relevant partners
- A list of SIS referral agencies is available and maintained

12. Review

The scheme will be reviewed after 6 months and 12 months with the aim of establishing a sustainable scheme. This is necessary due to the limited information available on the current scheme from the DWP.

13. Timetable for implementation

Task	Status	Target Completion Date
Create Policy for consultation	Draft complete 27 November 2012	30 November 2012
Carry out impact assessment	In progress	5 December 2012
Cabinet members to consider proposals for the scheme	Completed	10 December 2012
Create Project Plan	In progress	24 December 2012
Create detailed processes for administration and operation of the scheme, including IT requirements	In progress	7 th January 2013
Develop communications plan	In progress	7 th January 2013

Task	Status	Target Completion Date
Develop training plan	In progress	7 th January 2013
Consultation - to include public as well as support, advocacy and statutory agencies – via Lets Talk Newcastle (comprising website and direct consultation)		31 January 2013
Cabinet to approve final scheme (Business Cabinet)		31 January 2013
IT systems in place		1 March 2013
Complete training on new protocols and system for local scheme delivery.		22 March 2013
SLA with YHN established under which they will obtain and deliver the goods and items		31 March 2013
Scheme goes live		1 April 2013

Appendix 1: Utilisation of Community Care Grants

Table 1: Expenditure on Community Care Grants in 2010/11 for Newcastle

Direction 4 Condition Satisfied	Paid nationally £m	% of Total Amount	Paid in Newcastle £
Direction 4(a)(i) People moving out of institutional or residential care	10.0	7.2	62,000
Direction 4(a)(ii) Helping people stay in the community	39.6	28.5	245,520
Direction 4(a)(iii) Families under exceptional pressure	78.8	56.7	488,560
Direction 4(a)(iv) Prisoner or young offender on release on temporary licence	0.3	0.2	1,860
Direction 4(a)(v) People setting up home as a planned programme of resettlement	8.7	6.2	53,940
Direction 4(b) Travelling expenses	1.6	1.1	9,920
Total	139		861,800

Table 2: Comparison of 2005/6 and 2009/10 claim data for Newcastle

	Claims	Awards	Total spend	Av. award
2005/06	5,400	2,890	£968,400	£336
2009/10	5,160	2,640	£824,700	£313

Table 3: Demographic data

Applicant group	CCG		
	Amount £m Nationally	% of total amount	Amount £ Newcastle
Pensioners	11.7	8.4	72,332
unemployed	24.1	17.4	149,831
Disabled	42.8	30.8	265,219
Lone Parents	42.2	30.4	261,774
others	18.1	13.0	111,943
Total	138.9	100	861,099

Table 4: 2010/2011 Awards & applications rounded to nearest 10	CCG
Applications received	4,860
Total expenditure	£861,100
Number of Awards	2,520
Lone Parent Status	
Lone Parent	26%
Not a Lone Parent	32%
Unknown	43%
Age of youngest child	
0-5	20%
6-8	2%
9-12	3%
13-16	3%
No children 16 or under	72%
Age of recipient	
Under 18	1%
18 to 24	15%
25 to 34	25%
35 to 44	21%
45 to 54	16%
55 to 64	12%
65 to 69	4%
70 to 79	5%
80 to 89	1%
90 and over	0%
Unknown	0%
Household type	
Couple	19%
Single female	51%
Single male	30%

Table 5: 2011/12 applications and awards by month			
	Applications	Awards	Expenditure
Apr-11	380	210	£71,700
May-11	340	150	£49,400
Jun-11	420	220	£81,300
Jul-11	440	200	£96,700
Aug-11	380	180	£78,000
Sep-11	460	200	£87,700
Oct-11	360	170	£74,200
Nov-11	460	220	£84,000
Dec-11	330	140	£45,300
Jan-12	280	130	£51,300
Feb-12	370	180	£89,000
Mar-12	450	220	£99,700

SIS process map - next page

