

Appendix 4 - Consultation Report

Consultation report: Local Discretionary Social Fund October 2012

Contact

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CONTENTS

1. Executive Summary	3
2. Introduction.....	3
3. Methodology	4
4. Response and respondent profile	8
4.1 Response rate	8
4.2 Respondent Profile	8
5. Results and findings.....	10
5.1 Service delivery	10
5.2 Provision of in-kind and direct support rather than money.....	11
5.3 Grants and loans.....	14
5.4 Further support	17
5.5 Provision of a separate fund	17
5.6 Foundations of the service	18
5.7 Eligibility criteria	19
5.8 Support in moving to work.....	21
5.9 Review of applications	22
5.10 Limits to applications	23
5.11 Limits to awards.....	25
5.12 Name of scheme	27

1. Executive Summary

- In terms of service delivery, telephone and online were the preferred channels, although a fifth felt it was important to have a face to face option, particularly for those who may not have online or telephone access
- The majority (64 per cent) agreed with the direct provision of food to applicants instead of money for food, although vouchers for food were favoured as a middle way
- A larger majority (79 per cent) were in favour of the direct provision of furniture and white goods
- Still more (85 per cent) were in favour of the proposal to source reliable second hand goods
- Seven in ten thought that larger amounts of money should be repayable
- The overwhelming majority (94 per cent) felt that applicants should be directed to further support to tackle underlying issues
- A third felt that a separate fund should be retained
- The proposed foundations were widely supported (82 per cent agreed)
- Views were divided as to whether the fund should be limited to people on income-based benefits – 40 per cent felt the restriction should be applied and 49 per cent felt it shouldn't
- A large majority (84 per cent) felt the fund should be protected for residents of Brighton and Hove
- There were mixed views about whether there should be a limit to applications to the fund per individual per year and/or a limits to the amount of successful applications per individual per/year
- Likewise, respondents did not agree about whether there should be a financial limit on awards per individual per year or per award, or what level the limits should be
- The favoured name for the fund was "Brighton & Hove Community Support Scheme"

2. Introduction

What's happening

As part of the wider welfare reforms, the government will be abolishing Crisis Loans and Community Care Grants in April 2013. At the moment, the government administers these schemes as discretionary elements of the Social Fund through the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP).

The government's intention in localising the 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, such as moving on from care. It is also hoped that longer term support will be easier to access through local authorities.

Finally, local control of a budget will ensure that best use is made of the limited funding.

There is not a requirement from the government for local authorities to deliver a service with the budget provided. However, if councils do seek to introduce a replacement scheme, they will be doing so with less funding than has previously been available.

The government have announced a provisional budget for Brighton & Hove of £630,000. In 2010/11, more than a million pounds was spent on Community Care Grants and Crisis Loans in this city. This means we are dealing with a budget that is approximately 40% less than it was two years ago.

Why we consulted on a scheme for Brighton & Hove

We consulted on how we can best design a local service for Brighton & Hove that will meet similar needs to those currently provided. Namely this will be: to meet short term needs in the event of a crisis or emergency to support vulnerable people to remain in, or return to, the community, and to ease exceptional pressure upon families.

The budget is much reduced and fixed, which means there will be no additional funding available if we were to run out. So, the service we provide must make the money available to help as many people as widely as we can, throughout the year.

We needed to explore a range of ideas to help us make sure we make the best use of the limited funding available. The timescales are also extremely tight to set up a new service in the city. As such, it is possible that we will not be able to deliver all the options agreed in the first year. However, the scheme will be reviewed throughout the first year to ensure we are using local information from applications to refine the scheme as we go.

3. Methodology

This was both an on line and paper consultation. A direct line phone number was provided to those requesting a paper copy of the questionnaire or for those who had any queries about the changes. Paper versions of the questionnaire were also provided through support and advice agencies in the city, who were encouraged to ask people who were being supported through applications to the current schemes to respond to the consultation. The Citywide focus group for Welfare Reform made a suggestion that the consultation may be deemed to lengthy by some vulnerable groups and that this may impact upon the overall number of responses received. As such, with consultation from the Advice Services Network and Brighton Housing Trust, a shortened version of the questionnaire was produced and distributed.

The Consultation was widely communicated both publicly and through the community and voluntary sector to our advice services in the city. The CVSF distributed information to their membership relating to information gathering around current use of the funds. The CVSF and the Advice Services Network also promoted the public consultation through email broadcasts.

Brighton & Hove City Council issued a press release on 26th September and the consultation was advertised on the Brighton & Hove City Council website and through

Social Media. An internal email bulletin was sent to all staff in Adult Social Care, Children’s Services, Housing Commissioning and Housing and Social Inclusion. The email encouraged staff to alert their customers to the changes and the consultation.

Housing and Social Inclusion sent an email alert to 3,000 council tenants to advise them that the consultation was underway.

Multiple meetings were set up between the Social Fund Project Team and various advice services, external providers, stakeholders and partners, charities and Council services. The purpose of these meetings was to communicate the upcoming changes, the public consultation and to gather vital local information on the way in which the funds are currently applied for and awarded in the city. More detail on these engagements are detailed below.

The CVSF equalities network was asked to feed into the Equalities Impact Assessment of the replacement scheme and to provide equalities data on current use of the funds.

We recognised that it would be very difficult to engage users of the Social Fund in the public Consultation. As this is currently a discretionary and generally an emergency need fund, a person may have applied once in the past and would not *intend* to have to make an application again in the future. Similarly a person would not necessarily identify themselves as a user of the funds, but may well be put into a situation where assistance is unexpectedly required in the future. Additionally, users of the fund tend to be among the most vulnerable groups in our community who are ordinarily a difficult demographic to encourage consultation responses from. As such, continued and close engagement was maintained with the following organisations, in particular, throughout the consultation period in order to offer any assistance necessary to encourage responses from all representative groups in the city, where possible.

- Mind in Brighton & Hove
- The Fed
- Rise
- MACS
- Terence Higgins Trust
- Sussex YMCA, YAC services
- BHT
- CAB

The advice services were asked to focus their support on those who might require assistance in order to respond to a consultation questionnaire. For example, those facing barriers such as literacy problems, language difficulties or disabilities.

Other organisations also promoted the public consultation via their own social media and email distribution lists. The charity, Amaze, alerted its readers to the consultation via their Compass E-Bulletin, whilst the Whitehawk Inn Adult Learning Centre promoted the consultation via their own facebook and twitter accounts.

The following organisations and services were engaged with regards to Localisation of the Social Fund

Name of Service	Detail
Adult Social Care Services	Attendance at Social Fund scoping meetings

Age UK	Response made to feed into EIA
Amaze	Engagement around consultation. Response made to feed into EIA. Notification of social fund consultation included in e-bulletin, sent to subscribers.
ASC – financial assessment team	Attendance at Social Fund scoping meetings
Advice Services Network (ASN)	Attending their meetings
Advice Services Partnership	Attending their meetings
Black and Minority Ethnic Community Partnership (BMECP)	Response requested to feed into EIA
Brighton Housing Trust – Private Rented Sector Team	Meet with Liz Duff, further engagement through wider group meetings. Invited to offer voucher incentives to any of their clients who wished to respond but needed assistance to do so.
Brighton Unemployed Centre Families Project	Various engagement, including external focus meetings. Invited to offer voucher incentives to any of their clients who wished to respond but needed assistance to do so.
Brighton Voices in Exile	Fed into joint consultation feedback from Community and Safety Partnership
CAB - Brighton & Hove Citizens Advice Bureau	Various engagement. Invited to offer voucher incentives to any of their clients who wished to respond but needed assistance to do so.
Carers' Centre	Engagement around consultation and EIA
Children's Services (B&HCC)	Attendance at Social Fund scoping meetings
City Mission (Basics Food Bank)	Meeting and shadowing
City Wide Focus Group on Social Fund	Invitees included: Southdown Housing, The Fed, JobCentrePlus, CAB, Brighton Unemployed Centre Families Project, CVSF, Money Advice Community Support (MACS)
City Wide Overview Group for Welfare Reform	Invitees include: Sussex Central YMCA, Rise, CVSF, JobCentrePlus, Brighton Housing Trust, ASN, B&H Economic Partnership, B&H Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB)
Community Safety Partnership	Ongoing engagement with various specialist teams
Community and Voluntary Sector Forum (CVSF)	CVSF have been assisting with the distribution of information relating to pre-consultation and the formal consultation process out to their members. CVSF email contact list encompasses over 500 individuals from member organisations.
Crime Reduction Initiative	Meeting to discuss impacts of the changes and use of the current system by ex-offenders returning to the community
East Sussex County Council	Attended a meeting and ongoing communication
Emmaus	Attended meeting
FareShare	Attended meeting and shadowing
The Fed	Assistance with user engagement around the

	consultation. Invited to offer voucher incentives to any of their clients who wished to respond but needed assistance to do so.
The Food Partnership	Attended meeting
Freegle (exchange of second hand goods on the internet)	Attended meeting
Integrated Support Pathway	Attended meeting with Stuart Kitchenside (Sanctuary Housing) from The Foyer.
JobCentrePlus	Have met regularly with Graham Widdowson from JobCentrePlus Brighton and subsequent involvement with the JC+ through the citywide group. Also met with JobCentrePlus Hove
Housing Options	Attendance at Social Fund scoping meetings
Housing And Social Inclusion	Attendance at Social Fund scoping meetings
Mind	Alerted to the Social Fund Consultation and invited to offer voucher incentives to any of their clients who wished to respond but needed assistance to do so.
Money Advice Community Support (MACS)	Attended meeting and shadowing. Invited to offer voucher incentives to any of their clients who wished to respond but needed assistance to do so.
Offender engagement work	Engagement through meetings with POAL project officer and JC+ offender specialist working in Lewes and Ford Prisons.
Probation Service	Attended meeting
Public Health	Attended meeting
Resident groups	Housing and Social Inclusion have sent an email notification to 3,000 B&H council tenants in regards to the Social Fund consultation. This mailing list includes representatives from the various resident groups within the city.
Revenues and Benefits (B&HCC)	Attendance at Social Fund scoping meetings
Rise	Various engagement. Invited to offer voucher incentives to any of their clients who wished to respond but needed assistance to do so.
Speak Out, Brighton & Hove	Response made to feed into EIA
Sussex Partnership (mental Health Services)	Attended meeting
Supporting People	Attended meeting
Sussex YMCA	Various engagement. Invited to offer voucher incentives to any of their clients who wished to respond but needed assistance to do so.
Terrence Higgins Trust	Assistance with user engagement around the consultation - Invited to offer voucher incentives to any of their clients who wished to respond but needed assistance to do so. Ongoing engagement in regards to their advice service provision.
West Sussex County Council	Ongoing communication

Welfare Rights Team (B&HCC)	Involvement in all WR project boards and various meetings
Whitehawk Inn	Twitter and Facebook alert to followers in regards to Social Fund consultation

The consultation was open for five weeks between 26 September and 24 October 2012. The consultation paper is appended to this report.

4. Response and respondent profile

4.1 Response rate

In total 122 responses were received.

4.2 Respondent Profile

At the end of the consultation questions people were asked whether they were completing the survey on behalf of an organisation that supports people to make applications to Crisis Loans and Community Care Grants. Thirty-three respondents said that they were, so 89 completed the survey as individuals.

People were also asked, if they felt comfortable, to say if they had previously applied for a Community Care Grant or Crisis Loan, and to say whether or not their application was successful. Forty five people said that they had applied before but not all went on to say whether the application was successful or unsuccessful.

As part of the questionnaire respondents were asked to complete the council's standard equalities monitoring questions.

The results below do not include the responses of those people who answered on behalf of an organisation, so the maximum number of responses is 89.

In summary:

- A wide range of ages are represented in the respondent profile
- More females than males completed the survey
- A quarter of respondents identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender
- Almost half said they had no religion; the largest religion represented was Christian (28 per cent)
- Almost a third said that their day-to-day activities were limited because of a health problem or disability which has lasted, or is expected to last, at least 12 months

- Ninety-two per cent identified their ethnicity as White, White Irish or White other
- Twelve per cent said they were carers

Age band	Number of people	Per cent
20 to 34	15	19
35 to 44	22	28
45 to 54	15	19
55 to 64	21	27
65 to 74	6	8
Total	79	100
Not known	10	

Gender	Number of people	Per cent
Male	32	39
Female	50	61
Total	82	100
Not known	7	

LGBT	Number of people	Per cent
Heterosexual	56	74
LGBT	20	26
Total	76	100
Not known	13	

Religion or belief	Number of people	Per cent
No religion	38	49
Buddhist	3	4
Christian	22	28
Jewish	2	3
Pagan	1	1
Agnostic	4	5
Atheist	5	6
Other	1	1
Other Philosophical belief	2	3
Total	78	100
Not known	11	

Health problem?	Number of people	Per cent
Yes	25	32
No	54	68
Total	79	100
Not known	10	

Ethnicity	Number of people	Per cent
White - British	57	70
White - Irish	1	1
White - 'other'	1	1
White - no further info	16	20
Other ethnicity	6	7
Total	81	100
Not known	8	

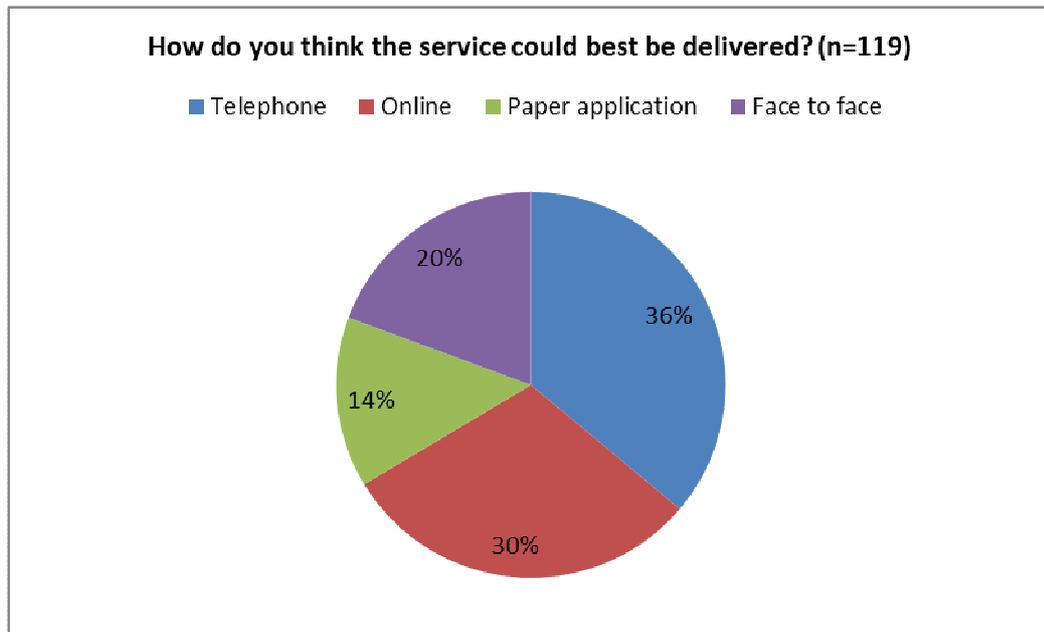
Carer?	Number of people	Per cent
Yes	11	12
No	70	79
Total	81	91
Not known	8	

5. Results and findings

Please note that there is no way of accurately gauging whether respondents are representative of residents in the city therefore care should be taken when interpreting these results.

5.1 Service delivery

After a short introduction respondents were asked to select how they thought the service could best be delivered from a list of four options. Respondents were asked to select only one answer.



Just over a third thought that telephone would be the best way to deliver the service, with only slightly fewer thinking an online service would be best. Paper application was the least favoured option, with only 14 per cent thinking this would be the best way to deliver the service.

A fifth thought that face to face would be best. These respondents were asked to give ideas about how the service might be run face to face and where the funding could be found to run the service on this basis.

Reasons people gave for their preference for a face to face service centred on the immediacy of applicants' needs and their vulnerability; they may not be able to afford phone calls, have access to the internet or have the literacy skills to complete a paper application. Language barriers and issues associated with comprehension were felt to be less of a problem in a face to face setting. A few referred to the opportunity that a face to face service offered in terms of referring people to other forms of support that might be needed, perhaps to address an underlying issue and a couple also noted that it was easier to judge the authenticity of the applicant in a face to face setting.

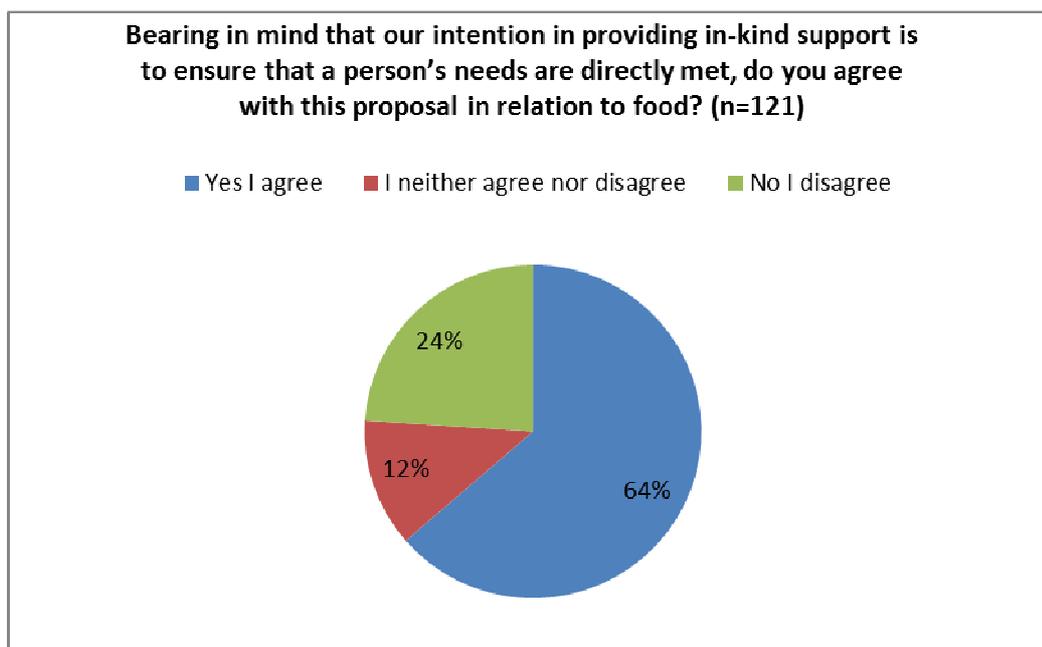
"Face to face is always best as the potential recipients are often not of fixed abode, sometimes illiterate and may have no access to a phone or internet linked computer."

The most common view from these respondents was that the service could be run face to face as part of an existing service; housing and council tax benefit services were mentioned as possible services it could be run through as were Jobcentre Plus and the Citizen's Advice Bureau.

"From local offices, staff could run it alongside their usual jobs."

5.2 Provision of in-kind and direct support rather than money

The idea of providing in-kind support to those people most in need was then explained before people were asked whether they agreed with the provision of in-kind support for food.



The majority of respondents agreed with the direct provision of food to applicants rather than money for food. However, almost a quarter disagreed.

Those who neither agreed nor disagreed tended to think supermarket vouchers were a better option, as long as they couldn't be used to buy tobacco, alcohol or lottery tickets or they felt that food banks should be used instead.

“Rather than directly purchasing the food of her choice, why not supermarket vouchers for the supermarket of her choice? And maybe you could make sure they're vouchers specifically for food so they can't be spent on other things the supermarket provides.”

Those who disagreed did so for a variety of reasons. Some felt that it would be too resource intensive for the council to provide food directly. Others felt it was demeaning to people, and it was disempowering as it removed their ability to choose. A couple felt that food should not be part of the offer as people should be able to rely on existing networks for support in this regard, and a few mentioned food banks as an alternative. Supermarket vouchers were also mentioned as being preferable to in-kind provision.

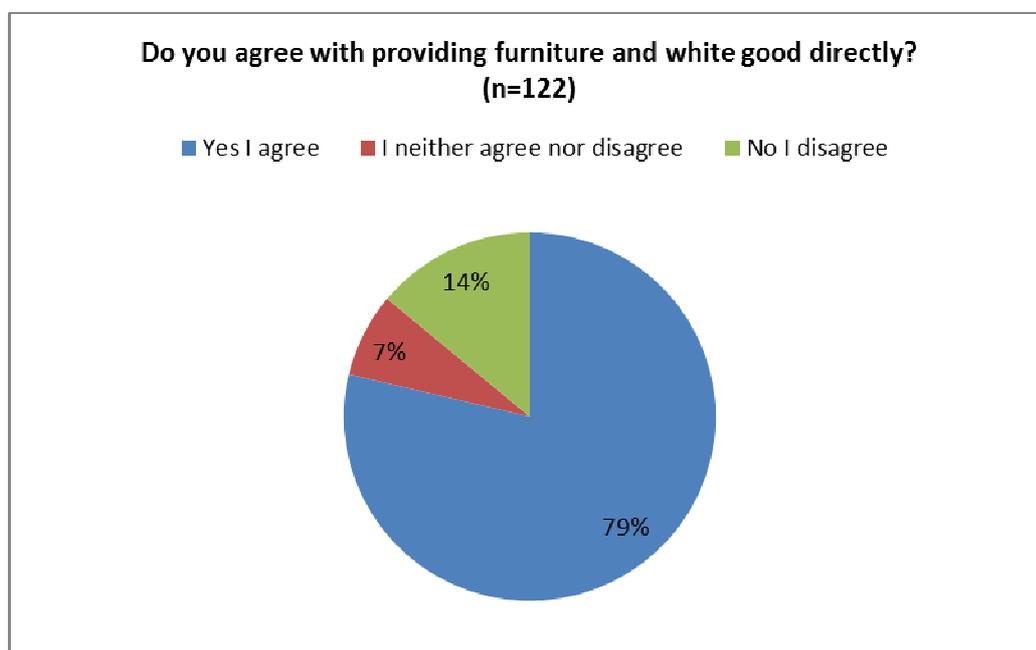
“There is no chance that the council would be able to cope with supplying food that's suitable. It is also demeaning to ask people to list what they need... Make a reasonable payment and butt out.”

People were asked for any ideas about how best to provide food as an in-kind service.

Again many referred to setting up a food voucher scheme as being preferable to the direct provision of food. Ideas included having a central store, possibly run by a charity, which stocked basic food stuffs that people could exchange vouchers for, or setting up arrangements with local food shops.

Reservations centred on the cost of administering such a service.

Respondents were then asked if they agreed with the provision of furniture and white goods directly to applicants.



A larger majority agreed with the proposal to provide furniture and white goods directly than agreed with the in-kind provision of food. Only 14 per cent disagreed with this proposal.

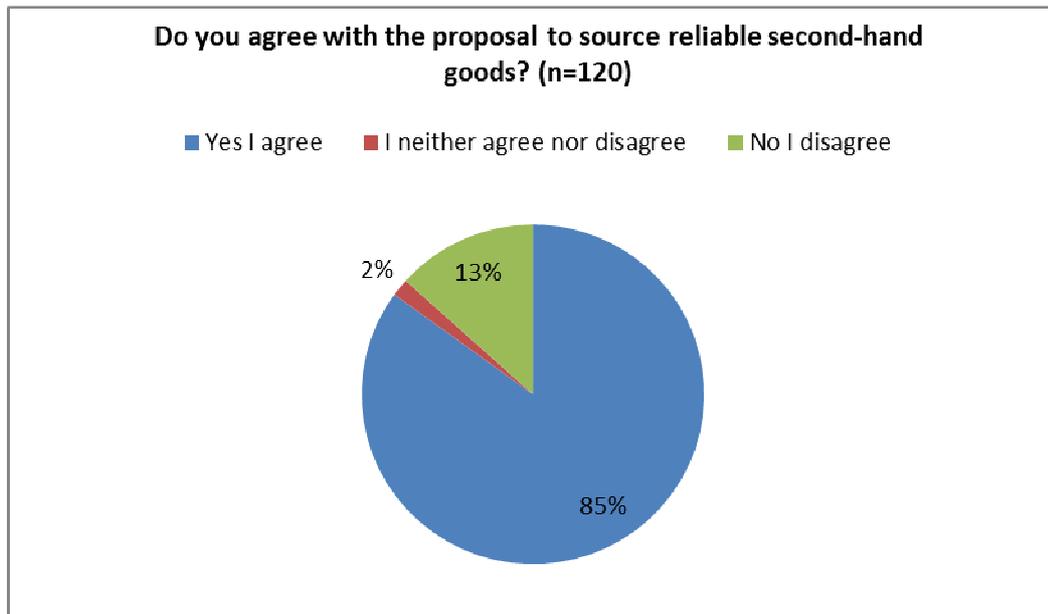
When asked to elaborate on their views reservations centred on concerns about the Council's ability to broker the best deals and on the right of the applicant to choose goods that best suit their needs.

"I have doubts that any supplier to B&H will deliver this stuff cheaper than people can source it for themselves."

People who agreed with the proposal felt that it would be efficient as it would cost less, people would not have to spend money on fares to go looking for items and it would ensure people's genuine needs were met quickly, as well as minimising the scope for fraud. Many suggested using second hand stores such as YMCA, Magpie and Shabitat.

"If white goods and other furniture could be delivered in a more timely fashion than the currently incredibly long wait for a cash payment then this would be a positive step."

People were then asked if they agreed with the provision of quality, second hand goods, to help maximise the reach of the budget.



An even larger majority, 85 per cent, agreed with the proposal to source reliable second-hand goods. Thirteen per cent disagreed and only a very small proportion, two per cent, neither agreed nor disagreed.

Reflecting the level of agreement with this proposal most felt it was a really good idea as people would get what they needed, local charities could benefit if they helped by providing the goods, it would be environmentally friendly and it would leave more money in the fund to help more people.

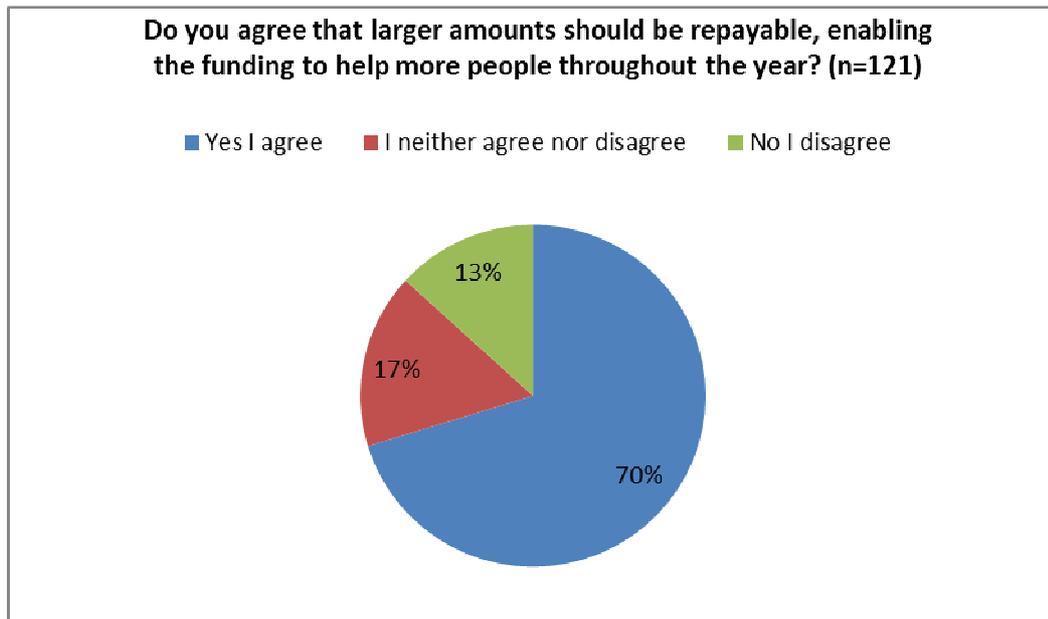
“Great, great, great idea. Why buy a few new gifts for a few when you can buy used for many. its also environmentally friendly, and, I assume it will keep money in the local area rather than giving it to a white goods company! Really good idea!!!!”

Concerns centred on the safety of such items and the need for guarantees, and a couple mentioned that some new goods were so cheap nowadays that there wouldn’t be any saving in buying second hand.

5.3 Grants and loans

One way to make the limited budget go further would be to make interest-free loans for larger applications for assistance. Smaller amounts could still be given as grants, with no repayments necessary, whilst larger awards would need to be repaid.

Respondents were asked “Do you agree that larger amounts should be repayable, enabling the funding to help more people throughout the year?”



The majority, 70 per cent, agreed that larger amounts should be repayable, with only 13 per cent disagreeing. A fairly large proportion, 17 per cent, neither agreed nor disagreed.

Concerns about this proposal centred on the fact that it wouldn't always be appropriate to ask all people to make repayments on larger amounts.

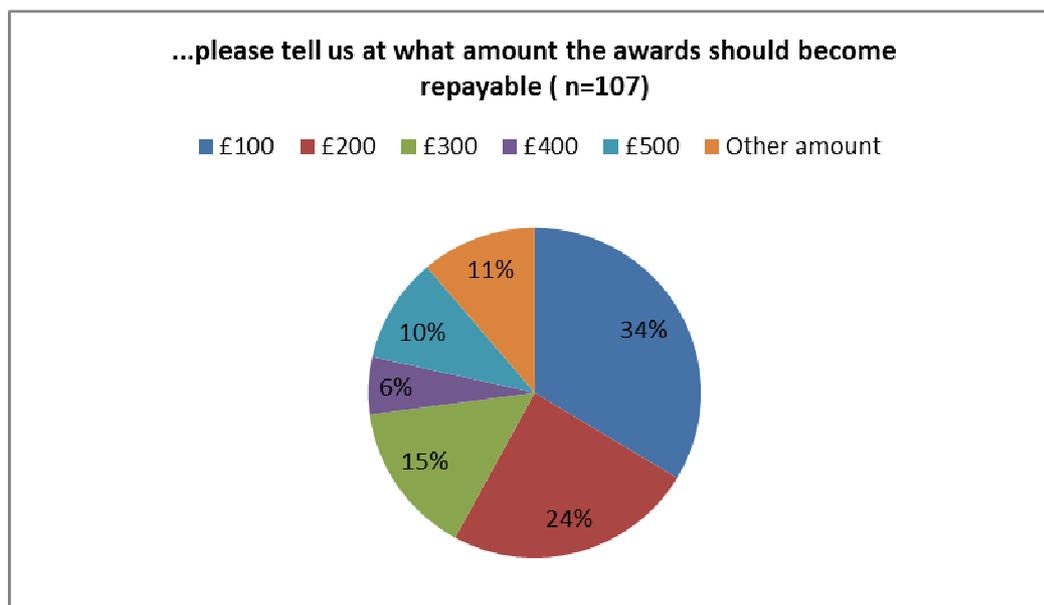
"I do agree that some people would be in a position to pay back a larger loan, but some might not and it would be an extra burden. For instance a disabled person, or a parent of a disabled child might not have capacity to get work or otherwise increase their income to pay back a loan."

Those in favour of larger amounts being repayable felt it would be good to give people the responsibility and it might help with financial literacy, if support were administered to help people make repayments.

"This should be linked into receiving budgeting support and advice to help the applicant manage their money better."

They felt some people would be in a position to repay the amounts and therefore should do so to ensure the fund is kept at a level where it can help the most vulnerable.

Respondents were then asked to select at what level they felt an award should become repayable.



Most felt that the threshold for making awards repayable was relatively low, with 58 per cent thinking it should be £200 or less. However ten per cent felt that awards should not be repayable up to £500.

Those who specified another amount tended to think it should vary depending on the means and income of the individual, and did not actually specify a different amount.

Respondents who felt that awards should be repayable at lower levels tended to think that people should take responsibility for managing their finances, although most also felt that repayment schedules would need to be tailored to be affordable.

“I think even small amounts should be repaid even if a small amount at a time or over a long period to ensure people have a sense of ownership/responsibility for their finances.”

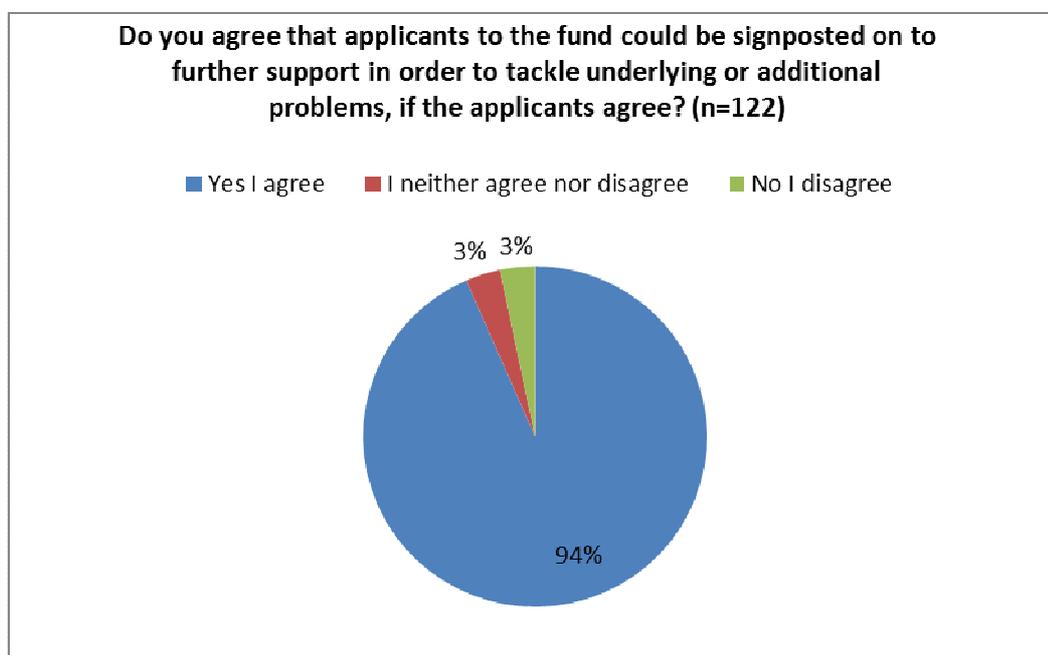
Those who were in favour of a higher amount being the threshold for repayment commented on the need to look at individual circumstances, and a couple said that people could end up making lots of applications for smaller loans, under the threshold, to avoid having to pay them back, making more administrative work and not necessarily meeting their needs.

“Putting a limit on the award, may mean that people will apply for lesser amounts more often to stop the penalty of paying back.”

Asked if they had any concerns about the provision of loans, comments centred on the council’s ability to recover them and its lack of experience as a loan provider.

5.4 Further support

After a case study of circumstances in which an applicant to the fund might also benefit from additional support, people were asked to say whether they agreed that applicants should be signposted to further support with the applicant's agreement.



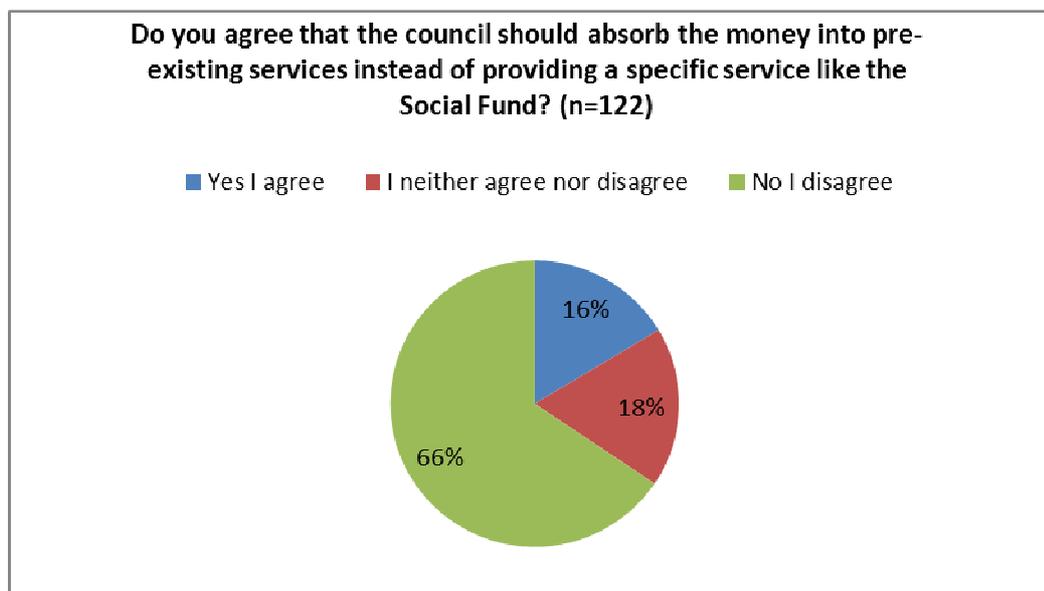
A huge majority, 94 per cent, agreed that applicants should be signposted to further support with the applicant's consent.

Although most felt it was a good idea in theory there were concerns about whether the council would be able to resource this adequately as the quote below demonstrates.

"Addressing the root cause rather than providing a short term fix will always be preferable but I can't see how the council would have the resources for effective care and support."

5.5 Provision of a separate fund

As the government has given local authorities the freedom to choose what they will do with the social fund budget there is an option that the fund money is used to top up other existing funds in Brighton and Hove that already help people on low incomes. Respondents were asked whether they agreed that this should happen, instead of retaining a separate social fund.



Two thirds, 66 per cent, are in favour of the Social Fund being retained as a separate service. Just 16 per cent felt that the money should be distributed across other existing funds designed to help those on low incomes.

Comments related to the transparency of keeping a separate fund, both for applicants but also when balancing the books internally. There was widespread sentiment that this “last resort” fund should be retained and be open to anyone, as the comment below shows.

“The social fund is designed that anybody can apply if they need it for emergencies/budgeting, alot of the other services are only for people on benefits so if it was absorbed by other funds would exclude people.”

Those who were undecided tended not to know enough about the other funds to be able to judge whether the fund should be retained as a separate one.

Those who were in favour of spreading the fund through pre-existing services tended not to make comments to explain their answers.

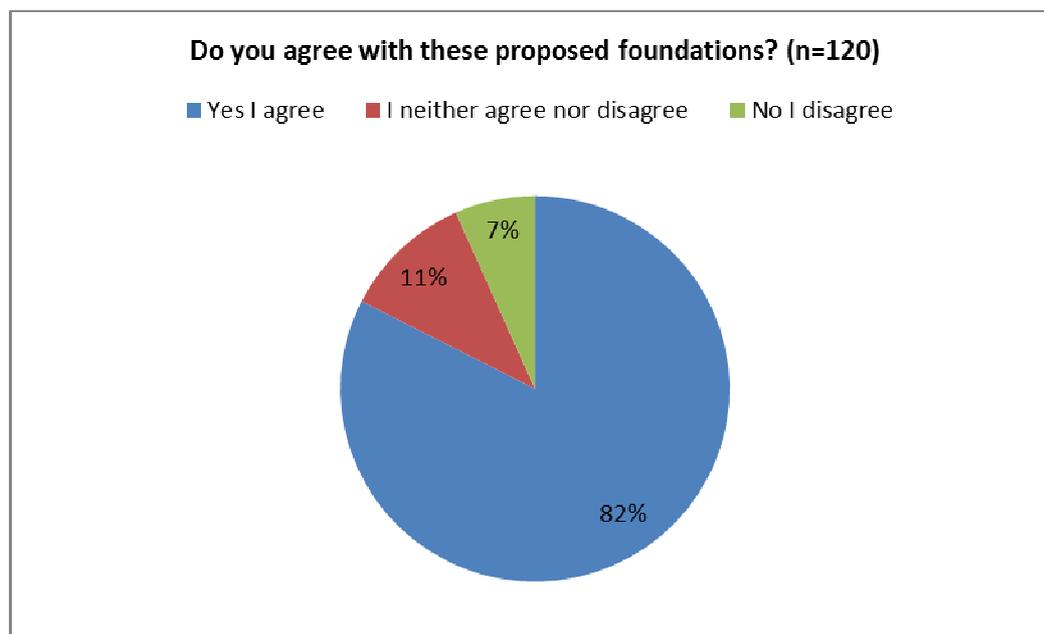
5.6 Foundations of the service

Respondents were then presented with some foundations upon which the service could be based, as follows:

- a. To allow people to return to or remain in the community without the need for extra care
- b. To support the most vulnerable in urgent situations through signposting to appropriate support services, advice, or through provision and access to goods
- c. To use the funds in the short term in order to prevent further and higher impacts on other service budgets in the city
- d. To engage individuals with appropriate support services, where needed, to help identify underlying causes for needing assistance

e. To meet standing statutory duties under Homeless, Equalities, Human Rights Act and Child Protection legislation

They were asked to say whether they agreed with these foundations.

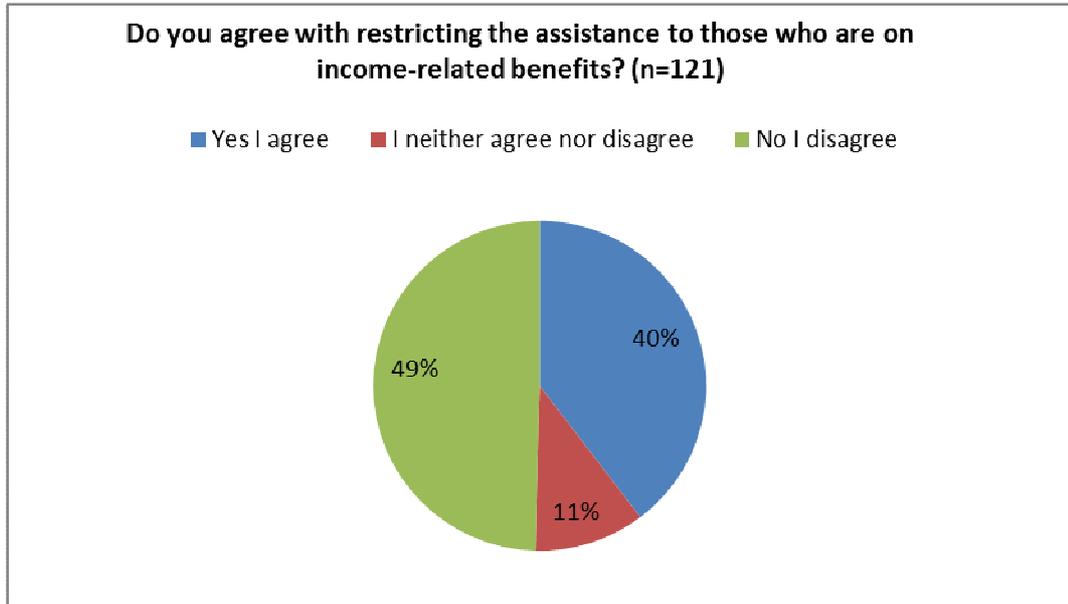


Eighty-two per cent of respondents agreed with the proposed foundations for the fund and only seven per cent disagreed.

When asked if there were any additional foundations that people thought should be included, or any omitted, comments were diverse. A couple referred to the possibility of restricting the fund for Brighton and Hove residents and many referred to different types of vulnerable people that they felt could be mentioned in the foundations, such as survivors of domestic violence, disabled and mentally ill people.

5.7 Eligibility criteria

Community Care Grants are only provided to those in receipt of an income based benefit. The social fund could be limited in this way, or it could be available to anyone, regardless of whether or not they are in receipt of an income based benefit. Respondents were asked if they agreed that the fund should be restricted to those on income-based benefits.



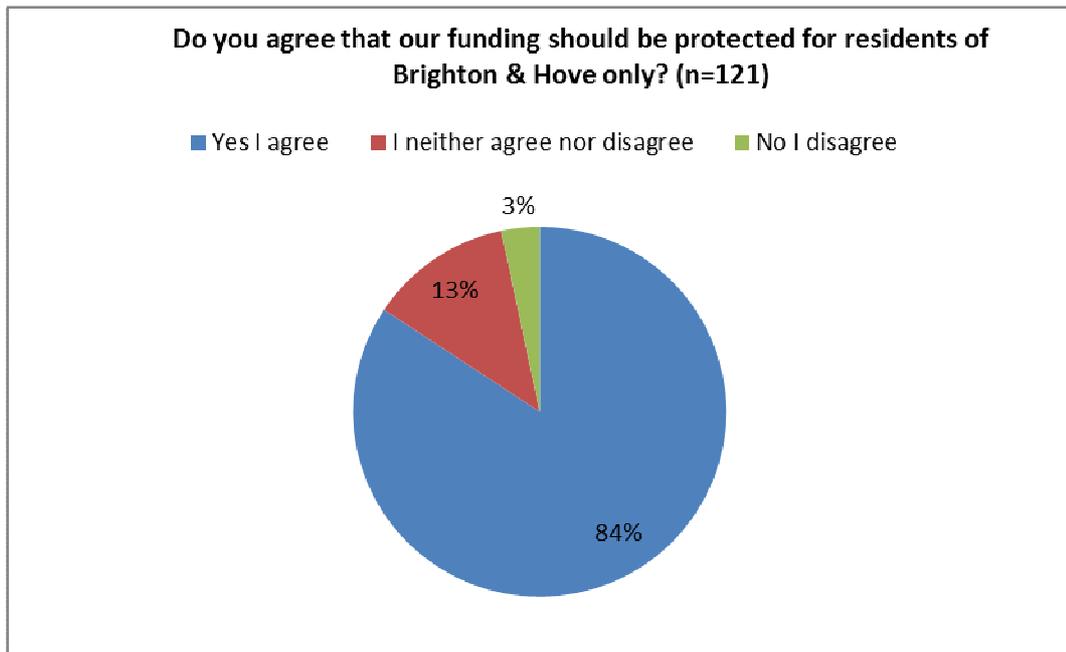
Respondents were divided on this issue with almost half, 49 per cent, thinking that assistance should not be restricted to those in receipt of income based benefits, but with only slightly fewer, 40 per cent, thinking that assistance should be restricted to claimants.

Those who felt that assistance should not be limited to those on benefits were keen to stress that anyone can experience need, no matter how temporary. They also felt that each case should be looked at on the basis of merit and that adding this eligibility criterion might discriminate against people on very low incomes.

“There will always be people at the edge of categories, I think discretion should be used.”

Respondents who agreed to restricting the fund tended not to provide comments.

Respondents were then asked if they felt the service in Brighton and Hove should only be available to Brighton and Hove residents.



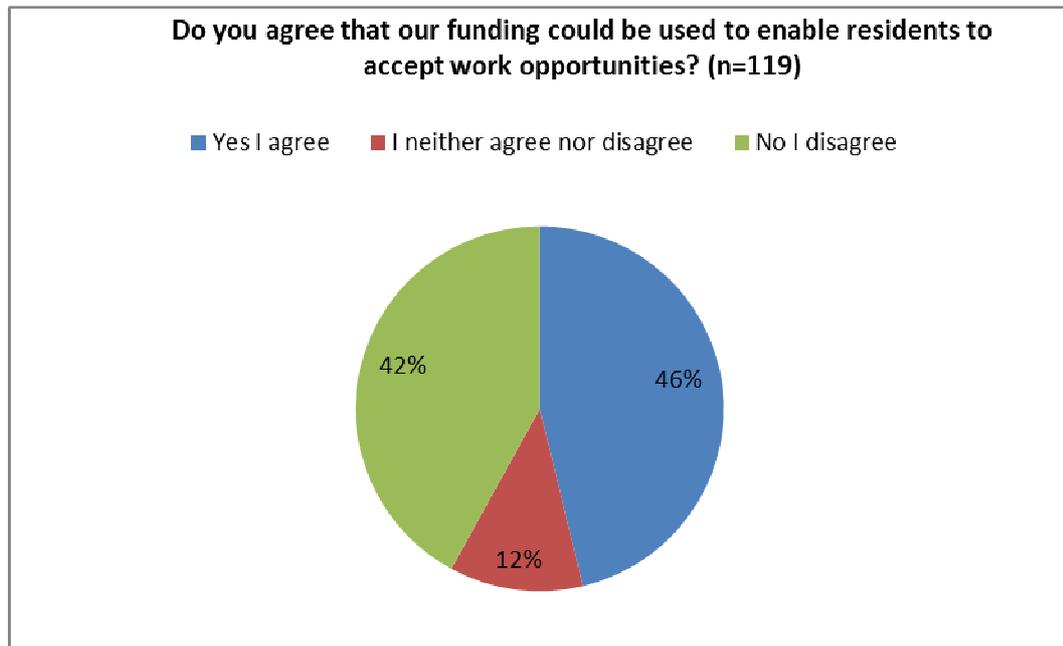
Only three per cent felt that the funding should be available to people who live outside of Brighton and Hove, with the vast majority, 84 per cent, thinking that it should be protected for people in the city.

When asked if they had concerns about applicants proving their residency status people tended to refer to the transient population who may be in Brighton and Hove but have no fixed address. Other groups singled out as potentially not being able to prove their residency in the city were those in temporary accommodation for any reason and those escaping domestic violence.

“There would need to be arrangements in place to support homeless people and those fleeing domestic violence.”

5.8 Support in moving to work

Although people moving into work can get support from Jobcentre Plus through their Flexible Support Scheme, the Social Fund could also support people in moving to work. People were asked to say whether they agreed that the fund could be used to enable residents to take up work.



Opinion was divided as to whether funding should be used to enable residents to take up work opportunities, with 46 per cent in favour and 42 per cent not in favour.

Those not in favour tended to think that this was not the role of the social fund and it would essentially reduce the amount in the fund for those most in need.

“You will have more than enough demand without widening the scope of the fund.”

They also felt that it was more properly the role of Jobcentre Plus to finance this kind of need.

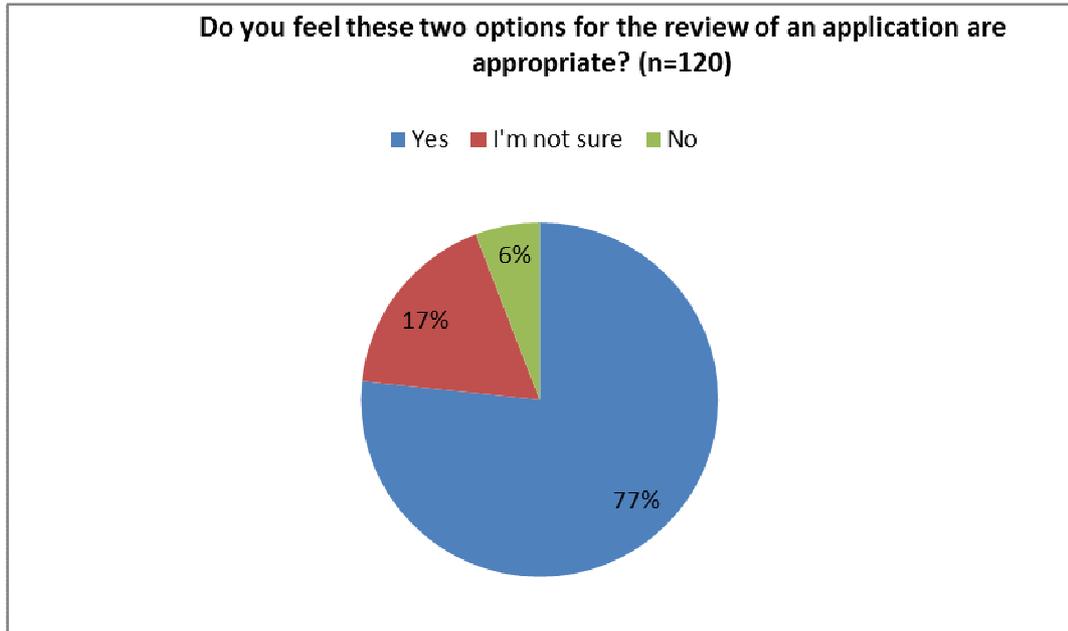
Those who were in favour felt that getting people back into work was important and that anything that could be done to that end should be done.

Respondents who were ambivalent felt that the social fund should not duplicate an existing fund.

“If this money is already available elsewhere, should it not come from there rather than eating into such a limited resource?”

5.9 Review of applications

If people disagreed with the council’s decision on their application, it is proposed that they will be able to ask for the council to review the decision. The rules for this are likely to be very similar to the appeals process currently used for Discretionary Housing Payments. Alternatively, applicants will also have the option of approaching the Local Government Ombudsman to look at their case. Respondents were asked if they agreed that these two options for the review of an application were appropriate.

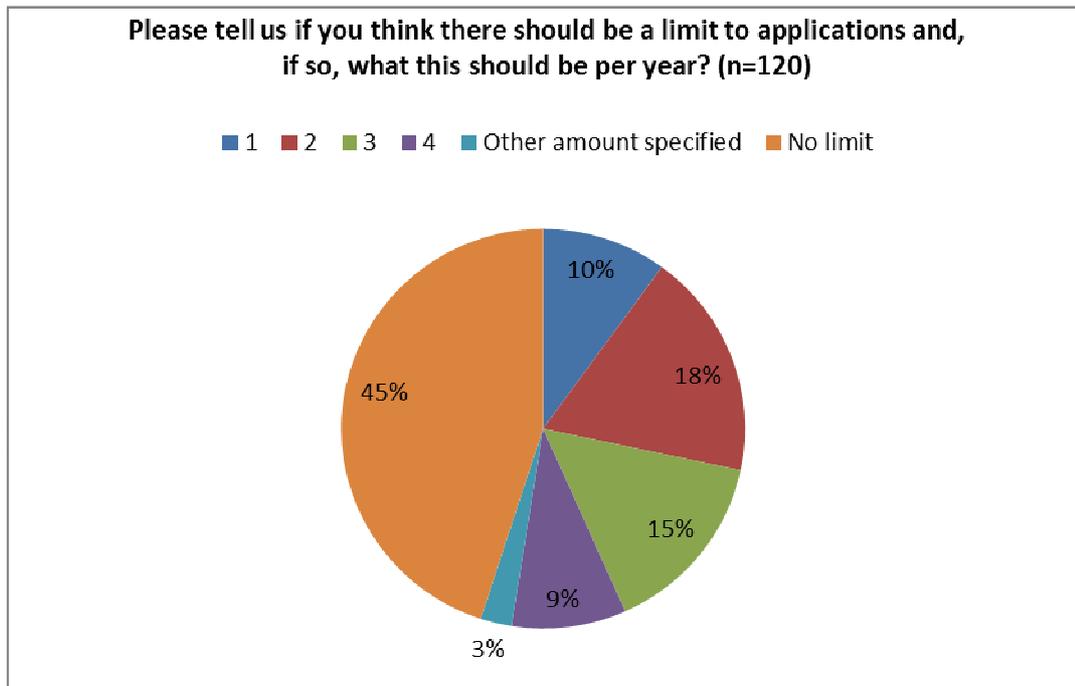


Just over three quarters, 77 per cent, agreed with the two options suggested for the review process, whilst just six per cent disagreed. Almost a fifth, 17 per cent, said they were not sure

Those respondents who were not sure tended to refer to the involvement of the Ombudsmen. People felt that this could take time and that as a local fund, a local panel may be more appropriate.

5.10 Limits to applications

People were asked if they felt there should be a limit to how many times a person could apply to the fund each year. Respondents were asked to choose from 1, 2, 3, 4, no limit or other amount.



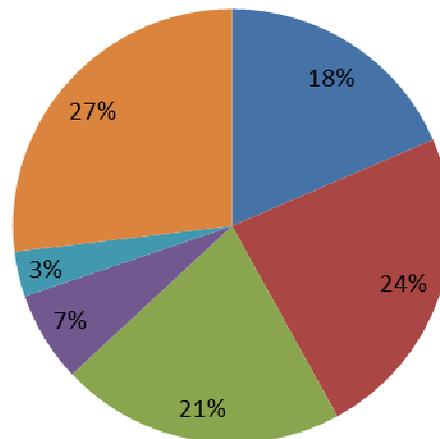
Views were split as to whether there should be a limit on how many times a person could apply for support from the fund. Forty-five per cent felt that there should be no limit with the remaining 55 per cent thinking there should be some limit. Forty-three per cent thought the limit should be three or less per year.

Of the three per cent who said “other amount” only one provided another amount – six. One said that people should not be able to make a new application until they had paid for the last. One referred to an inability to predict a crisis which entailed that no limits should be set.

They were then asked if there should be a limit to successful applications each year. Again respondents were asked to choose from 1, 2, 3, 4, no limit or other amount.

**Please tell us if you think there should be a limit to the amount of successful applications and, if so, what this should be per year?
(n=119)**

■ 1 ■ 2 ■ 3 ■ 4 ■ Other amount specified ■ No limit

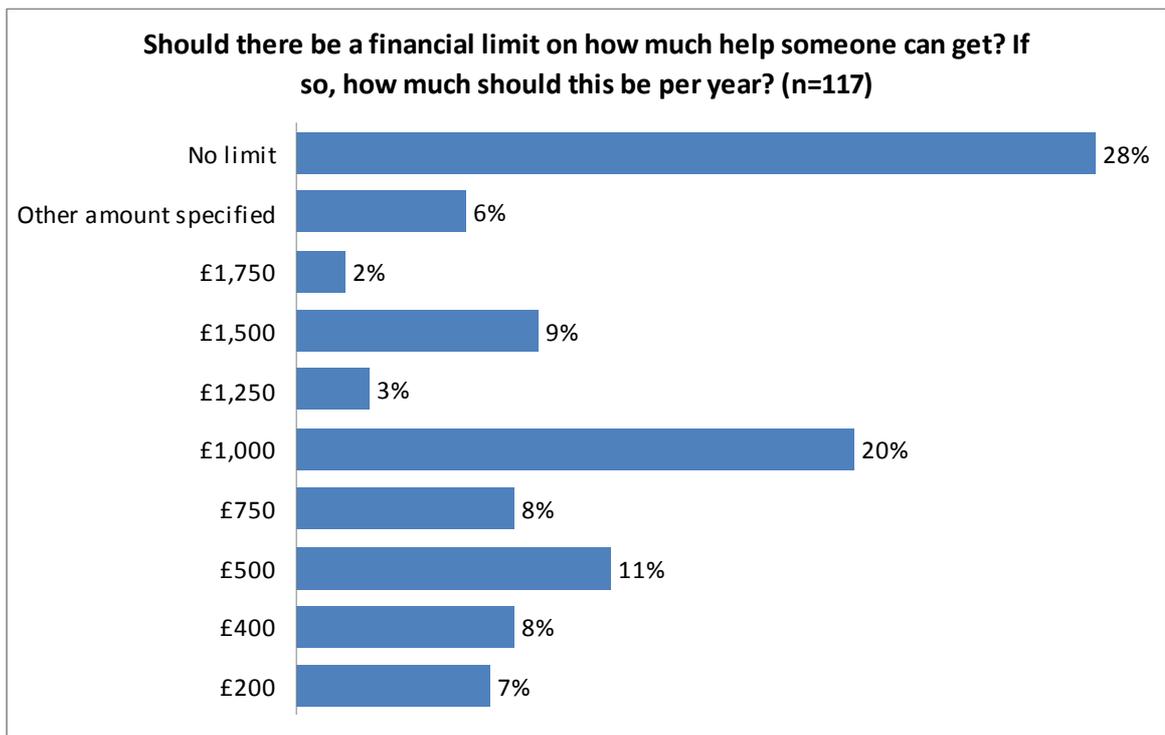


The picture was slightly different with regard to how many successful applications per year a person should be able to make, with just over a quarter, 27 per cent, thinking there should be no limit. Almost two thirds, 63 per cent, thought the limit should be three or less per year.

The same three per cent who specified another amount said the same answers as for the previous question.

5.11 Limits to awards

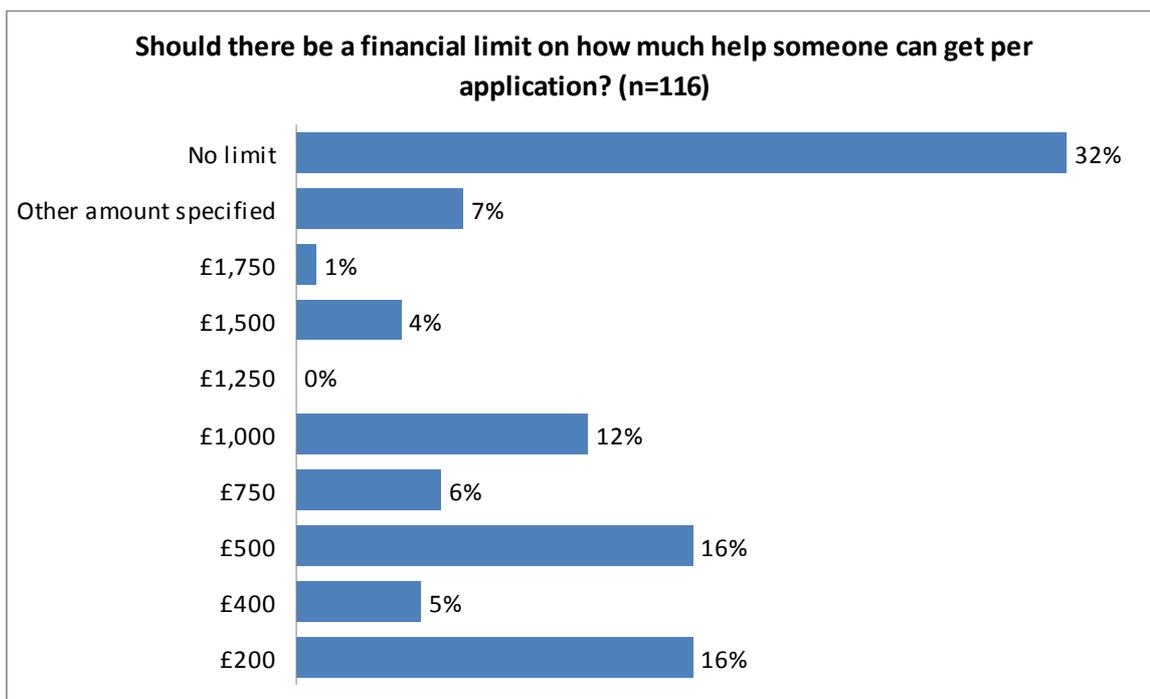
Respondents were then asked if they felt there should be a financial limit to the amount of support they received each year and asked to select from eight options.



Twenty-eight per cent felt that there shouldn't be a financial limit on the support someone could get per year, whilst 20 per cent felt that the limit should be £500 or less. Almost half, 48 per cent, felt the limit should be £1,000 or less per year.

Of the six per cent who specified another amount only two people actually gave an amount; one said £50 and at the other extreme, one said £4500. The others all referred to the need to determine this on a case by case basis apart from one respondent who said they didn't feel they knew enough about the average application to judge this.

Following on they were asked what the limit per application should be, if any.

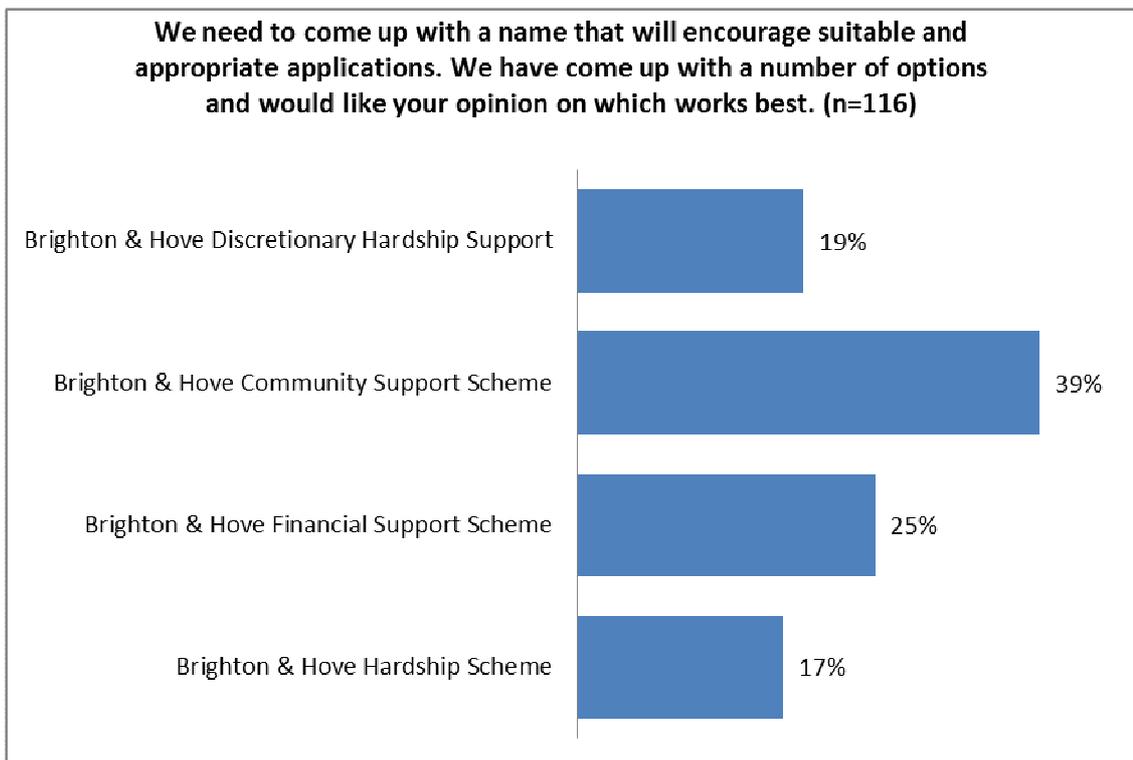


Almost a third felt that there shouldn't be a limit to the amount of assistance requested per application, whilst just over a third, 37 per cent felt that it should be limited to £500 or less. Fifty-five per cent felt it should be £1,000 or less.

Four respondents actually specified another amount; two said £50, one said £150 and one said £250. The remaining people who selected "other" referred again to paying as much as is needed in the circumstances.

5.12 Name of scheme

Respondents were asked to select which name they preferred from a choice of four, or to come up with their own.



The largest proportion, 39 per cent, felt that Brighton and Hove Community Support Scheme was the most appropriate name with Brighton and Hove Financial Support Scheme being the second favourite although 14 percentage points lower.

Those names with the term “hardship” included were less well liked.

“Anything with the term 'hardship' is demeaning for people.”

A few people felt that the existing term “Social Fund” was the best option.

Other suggestions were:

- Brighton & Hove Discretionary Community Support Scheme (DCSS)
- Brighton & Hove Hardship Fund
- Brighton & Hove Discretionary Financial Payment
- Brighton & Hove Discretionary Financial Support Scheme
- Brighton & Hove Discretionary Support Fund
- Brighton & Hove Future Community Investment / Brighton & Hove Sustainable Communities Fund
- Brighton & Hove Local Discretionary Social Fund
- Brighton & Hove Social Fund
- Brighton & Hove Social Fund
- Brighton & Hove Discretionary Fund
- Brighton & Hove Fund
- Brighton & Hove Hardship Scheme
- Brighton & Hove Social Fund
- Brighton & Hove Social Support Scheme
- Catch. (It's about catching people before it all goes completely wrong.)

To follow is a copy of the Consultation questionnaire:

Brighton & Hove

Local Discretionary Social Fund Consultation Questionnaire

What's happening

As part of the wider welfare reforms, the government will be abolishing Crisis Loans and Community Care Grants in April 2013. At the moment, the government administers these schemes as discretionary elements of the Social Fund through the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP).

The government's intention in localising the 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, such as moving on from care. It is also hoped that longer term support will be easier to access through local authorities. Finally, local control of a budget will ensure that best use is made of the limited funding.

There is not a requirement from the government for local authorities to deliver a service with the budget provided. However, if councils do seek to introduce a replacement scheme, they will be doing so with less funding than has previously been available.

The government have announced a provisional budget for Brighton & Hove of £630,000. In 2010/11, more than a million pounds was spent on Community Care Grants and Crisis Loans in this city. This means we are dealing with a budget that is approximately 40% less than it was two years ago.

Why we're consulting on a scheme for Brighton & Hove

We are consulting on how we can best design a local service for Brighton & Hove that will meet similar needs to those currently provided. Namely this will be:

- to meet short term needs in the event of a crisis or emergency
- to support vulnerable people to remain in, or return to, the community, and
- to ease exceptional pressure upon families

The budget is much reduced and fixed, which means there will be no additional funding available if we were to run out. So, the service we provide must make the money available to help as many people as widely as we can, throughout the year.

We need to explore a range of ideas to help us make sure we make the best use of the limited funding available. The timescales are also extremely tight to set up a new service in the city. As such, it is possible that we will not be able to deliver all the options agreed in the first year. However, the scheme will be reviewed throughout the first year to ensure we are using local information from applications to refine the scheme as we go.

We need your local knowledge and advice to help us develop a replacement scheme to the Social Fund that will meet the specific needs of the Brighton & Hove community, while making the best use of a limited pot of money.

We are considering basing our local scheme on the following foundations:

- ✓ To allow people to return to or remain in the community without the need for extra care
- ✓ To support the most vulnerable in urgent situations through signposting to appropriate support services, advice, or through provision and access to goods
- ✓ To use the funds in the short term in order to prevent further and higher impacts on other service budgets in the city
- ✓ To engage individuals with appropriate support services, where needed, to help identify underlying causes for needing assistance
- ✓ To meet standing statutory duties under Homeless, Equalities, Human Rights Act and Child Protection legislation

Background information

The DWP currently administers Crisis Loans and Community Care Grants 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 JobCentrePlus office.

1. **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, eg 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, eg following time in a homeless hostel or temporary accommodation, or
- assist with certain travelling expenses, eg for funerals of a family member or hospital visiting

2. Crisis Loans are currently supplied as interest-free loans to anyone (whether in receipt of benefit or not) who cannot meet a short term need in the event of an emergency or a disaster. A Crisis Loan should be the only means of avoiding serious damage or risk to the health or safety of the applicant or a member of the family.

Repayments are currently made directly from state benefits, where possible. Separate arrangements for repayments are made for people not on benefits.

Case studies

To give some context for the reasons why someone may apply for this help, we have provided two case studies. Both of these case studies were genuine applications to the government's discretionary Social Fund.

Case Study - Community Care Grants

Louise made an application for a Community Care Grant to purchase a cooker, curtains, washing machine and fridge freezer. Her application was made as a consequence of her involvement in a court action which resulted in violence and threats. The police provided her with a panic alarm for her old home. However, Louise still wished to move to new accommodation as her health was suffering because of the stress. Louise's support worker confirmed the details were accurate.

Case Study – Crisis Loans

Phil is a 43 year old married Jobseeker and he has an 18 month old son. He applied for a crisis loan of £50 to help him buy food and pay for fuel for four days. He had received his usual fortnightly Jobseeker's Allowance but four days before his next payment of benefit was due his son had become unwell suddenly and had to go into hospital. Phil lives in a semi-rural area with no car and as there was limited public transport. The hospital was unwilling to provide hospital transport, so Phil had to pay for a taxi to and from the hospital. This spent the final £50 of his benefit, which the family would normally expect to have lasted them for food until the next benefit payday.

Proposals to consider

Due to the limited amount of money we have available for the scheme, we will be unable to replicate the provisions currently in place by the DWP. We need to make sure we are achieving best value for money and helping as many people as possible. As such, a set of standards are being considered to reduce spending and ensure needs are targeted, while fitting in with the council's wider commitments to sustainability and tackling inequality. These are:

- where possible to provide applicants with the items that they have requested directly.
- where possible, to provide quality second hand items and through this, to ensure that full use is made of the funding
- to offer support, advice and signposting that will meet longer term needs
- to use the service to promote the use of recycling schemes in the city
- that the funding should be available only to people who are current residents of Brighton & Hove

We understand that some of these proposals are very different to what has happened previously, but they are ideas we would like to explore out of our commitment to ensure the money we have been entrusted with is well spent, appropriately targeted and efficiently managed.

We are consulting to hear your views on these ideas and the options available to us, and we welcome any ideas you have.

Please answer the following questions, covering the delivery, administration, management and the resourcing of the new service.

Local Discretionary Fund questions

Delivery of service

1. A face-to-face service is both staff intensive and expensive to run. The government has passed a small amount of administrative funding over to Brighton & Hove City Council to run this scheme but it is not enough to cope with processing the number of applications currently made to the Social Fund in the city. We anticipate that the money we have will be enough to employ approximately four members of staff. In 2010-11, there were 10,000 applications to the Social Fund in Brighton & Hove, which would require at least eight or nine officers to process, including appeals and enquiries. Although undoubtedly a preferable option, the government has not provided the council with enough money to provide a full face-to-face application process. A limited face-to-face service for people unable to apply by phone or in writing may be possible with the administrative funding we have been given.

With this in mind, please tell us how you think the service could best be delivered?

- Telephone
- Online
- Paper application
- Face-to-face

If you have answered face-to-face, please tell us any ideas you have about this service, for example how it might be run or where the money to run it might be found. Or please tell us any other comments you may have about this question.

Resources of service

2. To make the most effective use of the reduced budget we have been given, and ensure that we help the people in most need and directly meet the immediate needs of applicants, there is an option of providing applicants with the goods they need directly. This is known as in-kind provision.

For example:

On Sunday Jackie had to pay for an emergency plumber when her boiler broke. She paid him with the remaining cash she had, but was not due to receive her next benefit payment until Wednesday. Jackie requested money to pay for groceries until then and to top up her electricity meter.

The council approves her application, provides her with the food of her choice directly and makes a payment on to her electricity account.

We appreciate the proposal for an in-kind service is sensitive and there are a number of ways it could be done. We welcome your views on how, or if, this option can be realistically achieved. There are several questions relating to the direct provision of goods.

Bearing in mind that our intention in providing in-kind support is to ensure that a person's needs are directly met, do you agree with this proposal in relation to food?

- Yes I agree
- I neither agree nor disagree
- No I disagree

We realise that food will be a difficult area to provide directly. Please give us your ideas on how this may best be achieved or your general thoughts on this proposal.

3. We hope the council will be able to negotiate discounts on items with preferred stores if we purchase from them directly.

Do you agree with providing furniture and white goods directly?

- Yes I agree
- I neither agree nor disagree
- No I disagree

Please let us know your views on providing furniture and white goods in-kind.

4. In light of the fixed budget, one option would be to source quality second-hand goods from local, trusted providers. This would save the expense of buying products new. All electrical goods would be safety tested.

For example:

Three second-hand fridge freezers can be bought for the same price as one new fridge freezer. In real terms, this could mean that we make the money go three times as far, or help three families instead of just one.

Do you agree with the proposal to source reliable second-hand goods?

- Yes I agree
- I neither agree nor disagree
- No I disagree

Please tell us your views on the provision of second hand goods, in particular any concerns you may have.

5. Considering we will have 40% less money to spend compared to the 2010 budget, we need to look at imaginative ways to make the money spread further. The DWP provides Crisis Loans in small amounts, but the council would not be able to recover small amounts of money from applicants cost-effectively. However, across the year we may be able to help more people in need if we apply an interest-free loan system to some of the larger awards. This means that smaller awards could be given as grants (non-repayable) while larger awards could need repayments.

Do you agree that larger amounts should be repayable, enabling the funding to help more people throughout the year?

- Yes I agree
- I neither agree nor disagree
- No I disagree

Please give us any further comments you have about this proposal.

6. **If you agree that loans should be part of the scheme, please tell us at what amount the awards should become repayable:**

- £100
- £200
- £300
- £400
- £500
- Other amount - please tell us how much _____

Please tell us any other ideas or concerns you have in regard to issuing loans.

7. The government believes that local authorities are better placed than central government to provide further support to people in times of need and that we will have greater local knowledge of how to support them in the long term.

For example:

Terry is a 64 year old man who has recently been widowed. He has applied for assistance because he has run out of money four days before he is due to be paid again. Terry has never before learned how to cook and so most of his income is spent dining in cafes and buying expensive ready meals. This is the third time in six months that Terry has approached the council for financial help. His Social Worker has also visited him at home and noticed he has not had his heating on when it has been cold.

The council could provide him with the immediate help he needs with groceries, but also offer him budgeting advice and some basic cookery lessons to help his income go further.

Do you agree that applicants to the fund could be signposted on to further support in order to tackle underlying or additional problems, if the applicants agree?

- Yes I agree
- I neither agree nor disagree
- No I disagree

Please give us any further comments you have about this proposal.

Management of service

8. The government is not stating how councils should spend the Social Fund budgets. In theory, we have the option to use the funding to top-up other discretionary budgets run by the council which already help people on low incomes, such as Children's Services' Section 17 Payments or Revenue and Benefits' Discretionary Housing Payments.

Do you agree that the council should absorb the money into pre-existing funds instead of providing a specific service like the Social Fund?

- Yes I agree
- I neither agree nor disagree
- No I disagree

Please give us any further comments you have about this proposal.

Administration of service

9. The foundations on which we are proposing to base the scheme will guide how we spend this money and who will be prioritised for help. These foundations are:
- a. To allow people to return to or remain in the community without the need for extra care
 - b. To support the most vulnerable in urgent situations through signposting to appropriate support services, advice, or through provision and access to goods

- c. To use the funds in the short term in order to prevent further and higher impacts on other service budgets in the city
- d. To engage individuals with appropriate support services, where needed, to help identify underlying causes for needing assistance
- e. To meet standing statutory duties under Homeless, Equalities, Human Rights Act and Child Protection legislation

Do you agree with these proposed foundations?

- Yes I agree
- I neither agree nor disagree
- No I disagree

Are there any areas that you think we should include in our foundations or any part that you do not think should be part of the scheme?

10. Community Care Grants are currently only available to those in receipt of, or who will soon be in receipt of, income-based benefits, such as Income Support, Job Seeker's Allowance, Employment Support Allowance or Pension Credit. We could apply this restriction into our own scheme, or we could leave it out and offer the funding to anybody who applied.

Do you agree with restricting the assistance to those who are on income-related benefits?

- Yes I agree
- I neither agree nor disagree
- No I disagree

Please give us any further comments you have about this proposal.

11. Each local authority is free to come up with their own version of a Social Fund scheme, which could mean varying levels of awards, criteria and rules across our region. As such, the funding could be restricted to help residents of Brighton & Hove only. In order to ensure our funding helps local residents, we would need to verify that the applicants currently live in the city.

For example:

Helen lives in Council A's area. Helen made an application for a washing machine as she suffers from arthritis and is unable to carry her washing to and from the local laundrette. Her application was turned down due to a lack of funds in Council A for that month.

Helen has a sister who lives in the area of neighbouring Council B. Helen's sister suggests she try applying to Council B's scheme in case they have more available funds.

Council B has no residency criteria and so does not ask for proof that Helen lives in their catchment area. Helen's application to Council B is approved and she receives a washing machine from them.

Do you agree that our funding should be protected for residents of Brighton & Hove only?

- Yes I agree
- I neither agree nor disagree
- No I disagree

Please tell us if you have any concerns around requiring residency status of applicants.



12. The JobCentrePlus currently offers financial assistance through its Flexible Support Fund to people who are struggling to meet expenses relating to taking up a work opportunity. Do you think that Brighton & Hove could consider using some of the Social Fund money to also support people to move into work?

Do you agree that our funding could be used to enable residents to accept work opportunities?

- Yes I agree
- I neither agree nor disagree
- No I disagree

We would be pleased to hear any ideas that you may have in regards to this question.

13. If people disagreed with the council's decision on their application, we propose that they will be able to ask for the council to review the decision. The rules for this are likely to be very similar to the appeals process we currently use for Discretionary Housing Payments. Alternatively, applicants will also have the option of approaching the Local Government Ombudsman to look at their case.

Do you feel these two options for the review of an application are appropriate?

- Yes
- I'm not sure
- No

Please let us know if you have any suggestions or concerns relating to any review process.



14. Should there be a limit on the number of applications an individual can make each year or a limit on how many times a person can make a successful application each year?

Please tell us if you think there should be a limit and, if so, what this should be per year?

Applications per year		Successful applications per year	
<input type="checkbox"/>	1	<input type="checkbox"/>	1
<input type="checkbox"/>	2	<input type="checkbox"/>	2
<input type="checkbox"/>	3	<input type="checkbox"/>	3
<input type="checkbox"/>	4	<input type="checkbox"/>	4
<input type="checkbox"/>	Please specify _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	Please specify

<input type="checkbox"/>	No limit	<input type="checkbox"/>	No limit

15. Should there be a financial limit on how much help someone can get? If so, how much should this be per year and how much should this be per application?

Year		Application	
<input type="checkbox"/>	£200	<input type="checkbox"/>	£200
<input type="checkbox"/>	£400	<input type="checkbox"/>	£400
<input type="checkbox"/>	£500	<input type="checkbox"/>	£500
<input type="checkbox"/>	£750	<input type="checkbox"/>	£750
<input type="checkbox"/>	£1,000	<input type="checkbox"/>	£1,000
<input type="checkbox"/>	£1,250	<input type="checkbox"/>	£1,250

- | | | | |
|--------------------------|----------------------|--------------------------|----------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | £1,500 | <input type="checkbox"/> | £1,500 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | £1,750 | <input type="checkbox"/> | £1,750 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Please specify _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> | Please specify _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | No limit | <input type="checkbox"/> | No limit |

16. The name of our scheme

We need to come up with a name that will encourage suitable and appropriate applications. We have come up with a number of options and would like your opinion on which works best. Please tell us which option you prefer:

- Brighton & Hove Hardship Scheme
- Brighton & Hove Financial Support Scheme
- Brighton & Hove Community Support Scheme
- Brighton & Hove Discretionary Hardship Support

Do you have any other suggestion for the name?

If you have any other comments about the scheme, please tell us below.

About you

Are you completing this form on behalf of an organisation that supports people to make applications to Crisis Loans and Community Care Grants?

- Yes No

It would be helpful for us to know if you have experience of applying for a Community Care Grant or Crisis Loan before. If you feel comfortable doing so, please tell us if you have previously applied for a:

- Community Care Grant
- Crisis Loan
- My application was successful
- My application was not successful
- I prefer not to say

Consultation period

We are consulting for five weeks between Wednesday 26 September and Tuesday 30 October.

Consultation results

Responses to consultations may be made public on the internet or in a report. If you would prefer your response to be kept confidential, please tick here:

A summary of the results of this consultation will be made available, you will be able to view these at www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/ldsocalfund from December 2012 onwards.

If you wish to be notified when the results are published, please provide your **email address** below:

Email address:

Date:

Signature:

Equalities Monitoring Form

We want to make sure that our services are available to everyone in the community and that everyone is treated fairly when they use, or attempt to use, our services.

We will only use the information collected on this form to help us improve services and to identify gaps or barriers. You do not have to fill in this form and you can answer just some of the questions.

The answers you provide are anonymous and confidential.

The information collected using this form is combined together so it is not possible to link any responses back to a particular person.

What age are you? <input type="checkbox"/> Prefer not to say	
What gender are you?	<input type="checkbox"/> Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please state) <input type="checkbox"/> Prefer not to say	
Do you identify as the gender you were assigned at birth?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Prefer not to say	
How would you describe your ethnic origin?		
<p>White</p> <input type="checkbox"/> English / Welsh / Scottish / Northern Irish / British <input type="checkbox"/> Irish <input type="checkbox"/> Gypsy <input type="checkbox"/> Traveller <input type="checkbox"/> Polish <input type="checkbox"/> Portuguese <input type="checkbox"/> Sudanese <input type="checkbox"/> Any other White background (please give details) <p>Asian or Asian British</p> <input type="checkbox"/> Bangladeshi <input type="checkbox"/> Indian <input type="checkbox"/> Pakistani	<p>Black or Black British</p> <input type="checkbox"/> African <input type="checkbox"/> Caribbean <input type="checkbox"/> Sudanese <input type="checkbox"/> Any other Black background (please give details) <p>Mixed</p> <input type="checkbox"/> Asian & White <input type="checkbox"/> Asian & Black African <input type="checkbox"/> Asian & Black Caribbean <input type="checkbox"/> White & Black African <input type="checkbox"/> White & Black Caribbean	<p>Other Ethnic Group</p> <input type="checkbox"/> Turkish <input type="checkbox"/> Arab <input type="checkbox"/> Japanese <input type="checkbox"/> Any other ethnic group (please give details) <input type="checkbox"/> Prefer not to say After you have ticked a box: If there is an ethnic category that is not included here that you think should be, please tell us what it is:

<input type="checkbox"/> Chinese <input type="checkbox"/> Any other Asian background (please give details)	<input type="checkbox"/> Any other mixed background (please give details)
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Which of the following best describes your sexual orientation?		
<input type="checkbox"/> Heterosexual/ Straight <input type="checkbox"/> Lesbian/ Gay woman <input type="checkbox"/> Gay man <input type="checkbox"/> Bisexual <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please state) <input type="checkbox"/> Prefer not to say		
What is your religion or belief?		
<input type="checkbox"/> I have no particular religion <input type="checkbox"/> Buddhist <input type="checkbox"/> Christian <input type="checkbox"/> Hindu <input type="checkbox"/> Jain <input type="checkbox"/> Jewish <input type="checkbox"/> Muslim	<input type="checkbox"/> Pagan <input type="checkbox"/> Sikh <input type="checkbox"/> Agnostic <input type="checkbox"/> Atheist <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please state)	<input type="checkbox"/> Other philosophical belief (please state) <input type="checkbox"/> Prefer not to say
Are your day-to-day activities limited because of a health problem or disability which has lasted, or is expected to last, at least 12 months?		<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No (You do not need to answer the next question) <input type="checkbox"/> Prefer not to say (You do not need to answer the next question)
If you answered 'yes' to the last question, please state the type of impairment which applies to you. If you have more than one impairment please indicate all that apply. If none of the categories apply, please mark 'other' and write an answer in.		
<input type="checkbox"/> Physical Impairment <input type="checkbox"/> Sensory Impairment <input type="checkbox"/> Learning Disability/Difficulty <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please state)	<input type="checkbox"/> Long-standing Illness <input type="checkbox"/> Mental Health Condition	
Are you a carer? This means you look after or give help or support to family members, friends, neighbours or others because of either; long term physical or mental ill health because of a disability, a problem related to age. Please do not count anything you do as part of your employment.		<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Prefer not to say

If yes, do you care for a.....?

- Parent
- Child with special needs
- Other family member
- Partner / spouse
- Friend
- Other (please give details)
-

Thank you for completing this questionnaire.