

## The Highland Council

### Resources Committee - 26 November 2014

Agenda Item	8ii
Report No	RES/62 /14

## Welfare Reform Fund Proposals

### Joint Report by the Director of Finance and the Head of Policy and Reform

#### Summary

This report recommends an allocation of £163,920 from the Council's Welfare Fund of £1.167m to support enhanced services for vulnerable people. Further proposals are under development for the remainder of the Fund, guided by the Council's Welfare Reform Working Group.

## 1. Background

- 1.1 At Resources Committee on 28 May 2014, Members considered the range of welfare budgets managed by the Council and approved the creation of a Welfare Fund. This fund draws on underspent Scottish Government budgets for the Council Tax Reduction Scheme and Discretionary Housing Payments. For 2014/15 it amounts to £1.167m, with flexibility for carry forward into 2015/16. This funding provides the prevention funding set out in the Council's programme for those struggling with deprivation.
- 1.2 The Council's Welfare Reform Working Group considered the evidence gathered to date from those affected by welfare reform and from the pressure points identified by staff. This led to the Group agreeing the following priorities for responding to welfare reform:
  1. Welfare reform actions need to continue to involve every service in the Council, be co-ordinated in a way that helps people most and be evaluated for impact.
  2. Vulnerable clients need enhanced support and hand holding to navigate the system, including appealing welfare decisions.
  3. Employability support needs to accommodate a diverse range of needs and include people furthest from the labour market and with challenging behaviour.
  4. Digital inclusion/participation/literacy is to be led as a corporate policy, co-ordinated across the Council, linked to the customer services strategy and agreed and delivered in collaboration with community planning partners, notably HIE given its lead in rolling out Next Generation Broadband.
  5. Financial capability /budgeting skills should be supported.
  6. Continue to lobby with UK Government.
- 1.3 The Working Group agreed that the Council's Welfare Fund should be used to support these priorities. Members noted this when the minutes of the Working

Group were reported to the Committee in August 2014. To date two firm proposals requiring support from the Council's Welfare Fund have been developed and work is underway for a further five proposals. These are described below.

## **2. Proposals Recommended for the Council's Welfare Fund**

2.1 Two proposals are recommended for funding under the second priority noted above: vulnerable clients need enhanced support and hand holding to navigate the system, including appealing welfare decisions. These proposals relate to people with mental ill health who are particularly vulnerable to the benefit changes.

2.2 The first proposal is to provide tailored welfare advice clinics through the CAB network delivered in local areas and settings to meet user needs. The stated objectives are:

- To deliver outreach services to people affected by mental illness throughout the Highlands, with a view to addressing advice needs created as a result of welfare reforms. The focus of the advice will, primarily, be on welfare benefits but a holistic approach will also provide access to advice on a wide range of other issues, to meet identified need;
- To liaise with organisations and individuals working to support people affected by mental ill health to ensure that those who require support from the CAB can access it appropriately;
- To identify the advice and support needs of people affected by mental ill health with a view to using this information to inform planning for future service provision;
- To work in partnership with external organisations to raise social policy concerns arising from the project.

These objectives fit well also with the first priority relating to joint working and evaluation of our actions.

2.3 The project outcomes are:

- Clients of the project will be better off financially;
- Clients will be more able to manage their finances more effectively and therefore be more financially stable;
- Levels of stress and anxiety will be reduced, leading to improved health and wellbeing and increases in confidence and self-esteem; and
- Partnership working with health and social care professionals and with appropriate third sector organisations will be enhanced.

2.4 All Wards would benefit from the additional services. The locations and associated costs are set out in the Appendix. The costs are based on paid

staff requiring the same amount of time to carry out the follow up work from a clinic as was required to deliver that clinic. It is also based on the fact that clients suffering from mental ill health are likely to require longer appointments than those who do not. The proposal can begin in January 2015 and run for 15 months; the period funding is currently available for. The total cost for that period is £160,920.

- 2.5 The second proposal is for front line staff (and volunteers) working in the CAB network, the Council and partner organisations to be supported in how best to provide advice to people presenting with mental ill health. The support would be through training delivered by HUG at various locations. HUG is the collective advocacy group representing the interests of users of mental health services across the Highlands. The proposal is for up to 10 sessions to be arranged at a total cost of £3,000.

### **3. Proposals Under Development for the Council's Welfare Fund**

- 3.1 Other vulnerable groups particularly affected by welfare reform include people with disabilities and long term health conditions, their carers, Council tenants, new and expectant mothers and people unable to use internet services for claiming benefits and job search. For these groups, proposals are under development for:
1. Additional support to claimants appealing Personal Independence Payments (PIP) decisions. We expect demand for this to increase from October 2015 onwards and the costs of any proposals are being quantified.
  2. Given the difficulties faced by tenants, including making rent payments, the Council's housing team is exploring a project to avoid poverty and support social inclusion for tenants which could be eligible for EU project funding. The welfare fund could provide match funding.
  3. Understanding if further resource is required to roll out advice to new and expectant mothers through a midwifery project currently being piloted in Ross-shire.
  4. Identifying how best to support digital inclusion.

Further information on these will be considered at a future Welfare Reform Working Group. Proposals would come back to committee for consideration.

### **4. Implications**

- 4.1 Resource implications:  
Not all new support for welfare reform requires additional resources. For example co-location of advice staff with other services such as in Job Centres is already underway, being effective and at no extra cost. The proposals quantified in this report do need additional resources to meet particular needs. New European Programmes from 2015-16 onwards targeting poverty and social inclusion will be helpful and future proposals to use the welfare fund as match funding will be developed.
- 4.2 Legal implications: There are no new legal implications arising from this report.

- 4.3 Equalities: The proposals targeting vulnerable groups will help the Council to comply with its duties under the Equality Act.
- 4.4 Climate Change/Carbon Clever: Clinics delivered in local areas where people are attending for other services will involve less travel and associated carbon emissions for people using the service.
- 4.5 Risk: There is a risk that externally funded time limited projects may lose external funding during 2015/16. The Welfare Reform Working Group has agreed that the Council should consider using its Welfare Fund to support continuation of projects only where they have had positive evaluations. The DWP have introduced a local support services framework to enable a smoother transition for welfare reform changes. However the Council's area has not been identified for this framework and this presents a risk to people and organisations affected. Members are asked to agree that we press the DWP for access to the local services support framework.
- 4.6 Gaelic: There are no Gaelic implications arising from this report.
- 4.7 Rural: The proposals recommended for funding will deliver clinics and support in rural and urban areas.

## **5. Recommendations**

- 5.1 Members are asked to approve funding for two proposals from the Council's Welfare Fund, namely: to provide tailored welfare advice clinics through the CAB network from January 2015 to end March 2016 to be run in GP surgeries, mental health drop in centres, other local facilities and New Craigs hospital, covering all Council wards, with total funding of £160,920; and £3,000 to provide up to 10 training events for front-line workers in responding to people presenting with mental ill-health.
- 5.2 Members are asked to note that further proposals will be developed and brought back to Committee for consideration as outlined in paragraph 3.1, and with the scope for EU programme funding explored.
- 5.3 Members are asked to agree that the Council seeks access to the DWP's local support services framework to enable a smoother transition for welfare reform changes.

Designation: Director of Finance and Head of Policy and Reform  
Date: 18 November 2014  
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Background Papers: Reports for the Council's Welfare Reform Working Group and submission from the CAB network from Carol Greer, CAS Development Officer.

**Appendix 1: Proposal for tailored advice clinics.**

CAB	"Clinic" Locations	Session Frequency	Jan-Mar 14/15 Staff Costs	Jan-Mar 14/15 Other Costs	Jan-Mar 14/15 Total	2015/16 Staff Costs	2015/16 Other Costs	2015/16 Total
Caithness Wards 1,2, 3 and 4	2 mental health drop in centres		£	£				
	1 in Wick	Weekly	2,702.00	680.00	3,382.00	11,619.00	2,720.00	14,339.00
	1 in Thurso	Weekly						
	1 in Tongue starting in 2015/16	Monthly				1,218.00	1,260.00	2,478.00
East Sutherland Wards 1 and 5	Drop in clinics 2 days a week at Golspie with referral process for outreach clinics at : Helmsdale, Brora, Dornoch, Bonar Bridge and Rosehall. Home Visits available. Partnership working with Gatehouse mental health drop in centre.	Twice Weekly	2,599.00	1,800.00	4,399.00	10,396.00	2,800.00	13,196.00
Inverness Wards 10, 13,14,15,16,17,18 and 20	New Craigs Hospital	Daily	6,597.50	200.00	6,797.50	26,390.00	800.00	27,190.00
	Drop in clinics with referrals to specialist services and Home Visits. Some Pan Highland referrals to other CABx						-	-
Badenoch and Strathspey Ward 21	4 mental health drop in centres							
	1 in Grantown on Spey/Aviemore	Weekly	1,320.00	250.00	1,570.00	5,280.00	1,000.00	6,280.00
	1 in Newtonmore/Kingussie	Weekly	1,320.00	250.00	1,570.00	5,280.00	1,000.00	6,280.00
Lochaber Wards 12,13 and 22	2 mental health clinics:		2,298.00	545.00	2,843.00	9,283.00	580.00	9,863.00
	Glengarry Centre	Weekly						
	Fort William Health Centre (with mental health team)	Weekly						
	Drop in and Appointments Home							

CAB	"Clinic" Locations	Session Frequency	Jan-Mar 14/15 Staff Costs	Jan-Mar 14/15 Other Costs	Jan-Mar 14/15 Total	2015/16 Staff Costs	2015/16 Other Costs	2015/16 Total
	Visits as required.							
Nairn Wards 18 and 19	Nairn Health Care Group including community mental health team, addictions team and GP Practice (2 sessions) and Richmond Fellowship one session per week.	3 Days a Week	3,890.25	-	3,890.25	15,561.00	-	15,561.00
NW Sutherland Ward 1	Monthly Drop in Clinic at Lochinver Increasing in 2015/16 to twice monthly	Monthly	299.25	180.00	479.25	2,394.00	1,440.00	3,834.00
Ross and Cromarty Wards 6,7,8,9 and 10	Drop in and appointments at Tain CAB Ullapool 1 day per week starting 15/16 Other Clinics in Alness, Dingwall, Invergordon Home Visits as required	1 Day a week Weekly Weekly	1,979.25	1000	2,979.25	4,681.60	3,000.00	7,681.60
					-	5,061.40		5,061.40
			2,643.87		2,643.87	5,442.00		5,442.00
Skye & Lochalsh Wards 6 and 11	Alternate Half days per week at Broadford Medical Practice Kyle Medical Practice Increasing to full day in 2015/16	Fortnightly Fortnightly	659.75	240.00	899.75	4,565.00	1,115.00	5,680.00
			659.75	240.00	899.75	4,565.00	1,115.00	5,680.00
			£ 26,968.62	£ 5,385.00	£ 32,353.62	£ 111,736.00	£ 16,830.00	£ 128,566.00
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