

# ***Harrow Help Scheme***

## **Consultation Document**



## **Why are we consulting?**

The Social Fund is changing. The Government is abolishing Community Care Grants and Crisis Loans for general purposes as part of the overall welfare reforms. These services are currently provided by the Department of Work and Pensions, who will continue to deliver all the other parts of the Social Fund.

As a result of these changes, the Government will be giving the Council a small pot of funding to provide a 'welfare provision' in April 2013. The Government does not expect Councils to give the same support as currently provided through the Social Fund, however, Councils have been advised that they should give flexible help to meet unavoidable need. This money is not ring fenced which means that Councils could decide not to run a scheme with the money, but use it in other ways to make sure support is available.

We want to use this funding for an Emergency Relief Scheme which will provide short term support to people who are experiencing a risk to their safety and/or health because of an emergency situation. Because we have a limited pot of money we need to make sure that we have clear criteria setting out who can access this support. Therefore, within this consultation, we are going to be asking for your views on the criteria. There is more information about the Emergency Relief Scheme and the proposed criteria later in this booklet.

We understand that whilst some people will only need one off short term help in an emergency, many people will just need advice and support to help them to increase their independence and improve their current situation. Therefore, the Emergency Relief Scheme will be a part of an overall Harrow Help Scheme.

We want to make sure that the Harrow Help Scheme is inclusive and therefore we have developed a multi-agency group to help us to take forward the design and development of the scheme. This group includes membership from Jobcentre Plus, Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB), Harrow Mencap, Mind in Harrow, Age Concern, Harrow Association of Disabled People (HAD), the Landlords Association, Harrow Councillors and representatives from Harrow Council Services. The group have helped to shape the proposed principles of the scheme and the eligibility criteria for the Emergency Relief Scheme which are now included within the consultation we are carrying out with you.

## **What is the Harrow Help Scheme?**

The Welfare Reform Act is making significant changes to welfare benefits. As these changes take place we are expecting them to have an impact on low income and vulnerable households living in Harrow. We are developing the Harrow Help Scheme to support people who are going to be affected by these changes.

All organisations are facing cuts to their budgets, including the Council, and therefore we know that this scheme will not resolve all the issues that people will face. However, the Council wants to make the best use of all available resources by maximising the advice and support that is currently being provided and align this with the small pot of funding we are getting from the Government to provide emergency assistance to people most in need. We want to make sure that when a customer approaches the Council for support under the scheme they are assessed and then signposted to help that will best suit their needs.

The scheme will start as a pilot on the 1<sup>st</sup> April, 2013 and we will use the first year to help us understand how the scheme is working. We can then develop a long term scheme that meets the needs of the Harrow residents.

### **The main features of the Harrow Help Scheme**

There are some key principles for the Harrow Help Scheme which include the following:

- The scheme will be financially sustainable
- The scheme will help to increase financial independence and decrease formal support
- The fund will be monitored to continuously shape the scheme going forward
- The scheme will put in place a single view of the customer
- The scheme doesn't duplicate provision that is delivered elsewhere in the borough.

People will be able to access the scheme through the web, telephone or face to face. At this initial contact stage an eligibility check will be carried out. Dependant on the outcome of this check the person could either be directed to Advice and Support Services or, if the person is experiencing a crisis, they could be directed to the Emergency Relief Scheme. If the person is directed through to the Emergency Scheme further assessments will be carried out by a specialised team to make sure the applicant meets the specific criteria for this assistance, or whether the applicant could be directed to other advice or support. Further information on the criteria is available under the section Emergency Relief Scheme Eligibility Criteria.

The Council will monitor, on an ongoing basis, access to the scheme to make sure it can be developed in the future to meet the needs of applicants, whilst also keeping within the resources available. The Scheme is cash limited and will operate within monthly cash allocations so ensuring there is even financial budget availability throughout the year.

The main features of the scheme are explained below:

### **Advice and Support**

There are many advice and support services across Harrow, which are provided by several organisations. We will work with these organisations to share information about the services provided, understand whether there is any criteria for people to access the help and identify whether there are any gaps in provision. Where possible, we will then work with the community to bridge these gaps, by helping the community to help themselves.

We are currently bringing together some of the advice and support that is provided in Harrow. We will be asking you for your help in the consultation to identify any other advice and support, provided in Harrow that we need to be aware of.

### **Harrow Emergency Relief Scheme**

As stated earlier in this booklet we want to set up an accessible service that provides short term support to those most in need. The principles for the Emergency Relief Scheme are:

- The Emergency Relief Scheme is a discretionary service provided within the available funds
- The funding will be allocated on a monthly basis to minimise the risk of funds not being available throughout the year.
- It will be a service that meets urgent needs that cannot be met elsewhere
- An accessible service that provides short term support where there is a risk to the safety and/or health of the household to:
  - Assist people to remain or return to the community;
  - and/or
  - Help people who are suffering severe hardship

The Emergency Relief Scheme will provide 'in kind' support which could include food vouchers, repaying emergency credit on a pre-payment meter, white goods, furnishings (mattress or bed) and travel cards. The scheme will not provide cash except in exceptional circumstances.

We have developed the proposed criteria for access to this emergency support package below and will be asking for your views within the consultation on some of the eligibility criteria we should put in place.

- Period of residency for 3 months is needed (exceptions may be for street homeless/leaving residential/institutional care/prison/fleeing violence and about to move to Harrow)
- Qualifying age – over 16 years old
- Low income households – the Council will be developing further information on what low income means and will make sure this is available before the scheme begins in April 2013.
- The applicant must not have savings that could meet the need
- No other friends/family who could support the need
- If there have been two successful claims from the household for emergency support in the last year a further claim cannot be made
- There must be eligibility to access public funds

A person who is signposted to this scheme following the initial eligibility check will then undergo a further assessment by a specialist team by priority need. This will determine whether the safety and/or the health of the household would be at risk if the award was not granted. A successful applicant may also need to get advice and support from other agencies i.e. debt advice alongside their award if this is felt to be appropriate to address the issues they are experiencing. This service is accessible through the telephone, or by completing a form on the web only.

If a person is unsuccessful in getting this emergency support because more appropriate advice and support is already available they will be signposted in this direction.

If people disagree with the Council's decision then they will be able to ask the Council to review their decision. The review decision is final.

**Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP)** – The funding for this discretionary scheme is provided by central government. It is administered by the Council to provide additional assistance with housing costs to people experiencing hardship including those impacted by the programme of Welfare Reform. The help is available to people who are entitled to Housing Benefit. Applicants must meet criteria to be able to qualify for help from the fund, which is included within the Discretionary Housing Payment Policy 2012 (if you want a copy of this policy, please use the contact details at the end of the document). This pot of funding will sit alongside the Emergency Relief Scheme and therefore, the specialist team will also be able to assess an applicant against this criteria to be able to make sure that the right support is provided for people in time of need.

It is hoped that other pots of funding which currently provide support in an emergency will be brought into the Welfare Assistance Scheme in the future.

## **We want your views**

Whilst we are taking forward a one year pilot scheme and will be collecting information about how the scheme is working throughout the first year, Harrow Council is committed to making sure its residents get the opportunity to influence the development of the Harrow Help Scheme. We will be consulting with you from 3<sup>rd</sup> December, 2012 through to the 31<sup>st</sup> January, 2013.

You can give your views by:

**Questionnaires** - You can complete the questionnaire that came with this booklet.

**Discussion Groups** - We will be talking to the people most affected by the changes

**Workshops/Meetings** – We will be working with Voluntary Groups in the area to make sure users of the service get an opportunity to have their say

**Online** – Visit [http://www.harrow.gov.uk/info/200008/benefits/2739/harrow\\_help\\_scheme](http://www.harrow.gov.uk/info/200008/benefits/2739/harrow_help_scheme) to find information about this consultation, you can also complete the questionnaire on line as well.

### **Contact Details**

You can contact us with your views in the following way:

**Web:** [http://www.harrow.gov.uk/info/200008/benefits/2739/harrow\\_help\\_scheme](http://www.harrow.gov.uk/info/200008/benefits/2739/harrow_help_scheme)

**Email:** [HHSconsultation@harrow.gov.uk](mailto:HHSconsultation@harrow.gov.uk)

**Telephone:** 020 8416 8266 (Please note that after working hours there is an answer phone on this telephone. Please leave your contact number and we will call you back)

**Freepost:** London Borough of Harrow  
Freepost  
PO Box 730  
Civic Centre  
Harrow, Middlesex HA1 2DU

### **How the decisions will be made**

Once the consultation is complete the feedback will be collated, anonymised and presented to our partners who are working with us to make sure the consultation is transparent. They will then help us to make sure your feedback shapes the new scheme. A report will be written and presented at the Council's Cabinet meeting in March 2013 where the final decision on what the pilot scheme is going to look like will be made.

We will write a report about the views we have collected and how they have shaped the changes which will be available for you to read should you wish to.

## Questionnaire

We want you to give your views and help us to shape the new scheme. Please complete the following questionnaire and return it to us by Freepost to London Borough of Harrow, Freepost, P.O. Box 730, Civic Centre, Harrow, Middlesex HA1 2DU.

Questionnaires must be returned no later than Thursday 31<sup>st</sup> January, 2013

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1. Do you agree with the principles of the Harrow Help Scheme? (the principles are at the beginning of this booklet)

Yes  No

If you have answered no please let us know what you think they should be

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2. Do you know of any support/funds provided in the community to help people in emergency situations?

Yes  No

If you have answered yes, please let us know what they are, who provides them and contact details if possible

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**The following questions are in relation to the Emergency Relief Scheme**

3. People will be able to apply for Emergency Relief Scheme through the website or on the telephone. What will we need to put in place to make this an easy process?

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4. We are proposing to only support Harrow Residents through this scheme. Do you see any problems with this decision?

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5. We are proposing to limit the number of successful awards to the Emergency Relief Scheme per household in a year. Should we limit these to:

1 award a year	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>	Don't know	<input type="checkbox"/>
2 awards a year	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>	Don't know	<input type="checkbox"/>

6. We only have a limited amount of funds which will be allocated on a monthly basis to make sure we have enough to cover the year. If the fund starts to run out within a month we will have to limit the support that we provide for the remainder of the month. Please order the following support in order of priority 1-6 (1 – highest and 6 – lowest)

Food.....	<input type="checkbox"/>
Making a payment for fuel for heating or cooking .....	<input type="checkbox"/>
White goods (i.e. fridge, cooker).....	<input type="checkbox"/>
Furnishings (i.e. mattress, bed).....	<input type="checkbox"/>
Travel expenses.....	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other.....	<input type="checkbox"/>

If you have said that 'other' is a priority then please let us know what this is

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**Information about you**

9. 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

If you have answered yes please let us know the name of the organisation and if you are happy for us to contact you please leave your contact details below

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10. It would be helpful for us to know if you have experience of applying for a Community Care Grant or Crisis Loan before.

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

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**Monitoring Information**

Harrow Council is required by law, Equality Act 2010, to collate equality information. The collated information will not only help the council demonstrate compliance with the law but also assist the Council to assess the impact of the policies, services and decisions on all the Protected Characteristics covered by the Act and ensure our policies and services are fair and accessible. The information will also enable us to monitor our progress with regards to addressing inequality and allow our employees and service users see how we are performing on equality.

Should you wish to supply the information it will be kept confidential and separate from your consultation response and only be used for statistical analysis

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**Your age**

- 0-15    16-24    25-34    35-44    45-54    55 -64  
 65+    Prefer not to say
- 

**Do you consider yourself to have a disability according to the terms given in the Equality Act 2010?**

Under the Equality Act 2010 a person is disabled if they have a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long term effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities which would include things like using a telephone, reading a book or using public transport.

- Yes    No    Prefer not to say

If "yes" please specify:

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communication                | <input type="checkbox"/> Learning      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mobility                     | <input type="checkbox"/> Visual        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hearing                      | <input type="checkbox"/> Mental Health |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Physical                     |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify) _____ |  |
- 

**Your sex**

- Male    Female    Prefer not to say
- 

**Is your gender identity the same as the gender you were assigned at birth?**

- Yes    No    Prefer not to say
- 

**Your religion and belief (please tick appropriate box)**

- |                                       |                                   |                                      |                                   |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> No religion  | <input type="checkbox"/> Agnostic | <input type="checkbox"/> Baha'i      | <input type="checkbox"/> Buddhism |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Christianity | <input type="checkbox"/> Hinduism | <input type="checkbox"/> Humanist    | <input type="checkbox"/> Islam    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Jainism      | <input type="checkbox"/> Judaism  | <input type="checkbox"/> Rastafarian | <input type="checkbox"/> Sikhism  |

- Zoroastrian     Prefer not to say  
 Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_
- 

**Your sexual orientation**

- Bisexual     Gay man     Gay woman/Lesbian  
 Heterosexual     Prefer not to say     Other (please specify)
- 

**Your ethnic group**

These are based on the 2011 Census categories but include categories to reflect the communities of Harrow and are listed alphabetically below. Please choose ONE section from A to E then tick or write in appropriate box to indicate your ethnic background

A. Asian or Asian British

- Afghan     Bangladeshi     Indian     Pakistani  
 Sinhalese     Sri Lankan Tamil  
 Any other Asian background (please write in) \_\_\_\_\_

B. Black, Black British

- African     Caribbean     Somali  
 Any other ethnic group (please write in) \_\_\_\_\_

C. Other Ethnic Group

- Arab     Chinese     Iranian     Iraqi     Kurdish  
 Lebanese  
 Any other ethnic group (please write in) \_\_\_\_\_

D. Mixed

- White & Black African     White & Black Caribbean     White and Asian  
 Any other Mixed background (please write in) \_\_\_\_\_

E. White

- Albanian  British  English  Gypsy/Roma Traveller  
 Irish  Irish Traveller  Polish  Romanian  Scottish  
 Serbian  Welsh  Prefer not to say  
 Any other White background (please write in)
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**Your marital status:**

- Single  Civil partnership  Married  
 Prefer not to say
- 

**Pregnancy and Maternity: Have you been pregnant and/or on maternity leave in the past two years?**

- Yes  No  Prefer not to say
- 

**Caring Responsibilities**

A Carer is someone who spends a significant proportion of their time providing unpaid support to a family member, partner or friend, who is ill, disabled or has mental health or substance misuse problems.

**Do you regularly provide unpaid support caring for someone?**

- Yes  No
-