

# Harrow Help Scheme Consultation Feedback

1<sup>st</sup> December, 2012 – 31<sup>st</sup> January, 2013



**Consultation carried out from  
December, 2012 to 31<sup>st</sup> January, 2013**



**Comment on the  
Web and feedback  
from hard back  
questionnaire**



**43 responses**

**Discussion  
Groups**



**13 meetings held with users of:**

- Xcite Employment Workshop
- Social Fund at JCP offices
- Mind in Harrow
- ADHD and Autism
- Domestic Violence Forum
- Harrow Association of Somali Voluntary Organisations
- Harrow Mencap users
- Northwick Park Hospital (Managers)
- The Harrow Housewarmers
- The Local Account Discussion Group (Adult Social Care)

# Feedback from consultation

## The Hardship Scheme



Harrow Help Scheme Principles	Feedback from consultation
<p>1. Do you agree with the principles of the Harrow Help Scheme?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ The scheme will be financially sustainable</li> <li>□ The scheme will help to increase financial independence and decrease formal support</li> <li>□ The fund will be monitored to continuously shape the scheme going forward</li> <li>□ The scheme will put in place a single view of the customer</li> <li>□ The scheme doesn't duplicate provision that is delivered elsewhere in the borough</li> </ul>	<p>93% of respondents agreed with the principles</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ <b>Gap in provision for somebody fleeing domestic violence and not having local connection</b></li> <li>□ <b>Need knowledgeable staff with sympathetic manner to be able to signpost people</b></li> <li>□ As long as it does not cross over with any other services.</li> <li>□ Funds should be ring fenced for Emergency Relief Scheme</li> <li>□ Any funds remaining at end year should be rolled over for Emergency Relief Scheme</li> <li>□ As long as we are aware of all agencies pots of funding</li> <li>□ No point sending people to services that are not being funded by Harrow anymore</li> <li>□ Fear that as no face to face support people will turn to voluntary sector who have no funding</li> <li>□ Concern about information being kept up to date</li> <li>□ Cutting costs and stricter criteria puts vulnerable people at risk</li> </ul>

# Feedback from consultation

## The Hardship Scheme



Question	Feedback from consultation
<p>2. Do you know of any support/funds provided in the community to help people in emergency situations?</p>	<p>32% of people said they were aware of other funds/support provided in the community and suggestions included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>□ All internal/external organisations/services should have access to a directory so they know who deals with each area for signposting and call routing</li><li>□ Harrow Women’s Centre used to have a small emergency fund</li><li>□ Police and Social Services for emergencies</li><li>□ Family Fund</li><li>□ Community Care Grant and Crisis Loans</li><li>□ CAB have small fund</li><li>□ LB Brent One Stop Shop Willesden High Rd</li><li>□ Churches (wellbeing support), Religious Groups/Temples sometimes provide meals</li><li>□ Community Centres – may offer translation services.</li><li>□ Some supermarkets offer free food when sell by date are reached.</li><li>□ St Luke’s offer assistance to families of terminally ill patients.</li><li>□ Libraries should be approached for details of any local schemes in place that they may be advertising.</li><li>□ Harrow Baptist church used to offer a soup run.</li><li>□ Drug &amp; Alcohol Support group</li><li>□ Homestart Group</li></ul>

# Feedback from consultation

## The Emergency Relief Scheme



Question	Feedback from consultation
<p><b>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?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>q Experienced, well trained staff to assist those wishing to access the scheme.</li> <li>q Freephone telephone lines at various council access points</li> <li>q Not 0870 or 0845 number as this is expensive to call from a mobile.</li> <li>q Dedicated self-service PCs for public use.</li> <li>q Contact number for any difficulties with the website</li> <li>q Simple forms, easy to read, no jargon. One or two clicks max from home page to scheme, step by step guide</li> <li>q Make the application for funds process as quick and non bureaucratic as possible, with safeguards</li> <li>q Many vulnerable people do not use the internet or find it daunting. Need easy access to support these people. Need to provide support to take people through process and support groups with information so can help with applications</li> <li>q Have face to face or post as well to make it easy to apply for old, frail and disabled.</li> <li>q How will people of no fixed abode apply as they will not have an address in Harrow</li> <li>q Advertising so people will know of its existence. Helpline with an easy to remember number.</li> <li>q Tele-presence kiosks in libraries.</li> <li>q Need to consider literacy and language skills</li> <li>q Easily available support - staff specifically for this purpose at front line desks in Access Harrow</li> <li>q Acknowledgement of application and time scale with a response.</li> <li>q Suggestion to make it mandatory that the applicant should be known to a social worker or key support worker in a local voluntary sector agency to verify their situation if possible.</li> <li>q Email, link on Facebook/Twitter, Text message</li> <li>q Extended phone hours to offer time outside of normal business hours</li> <li>q Postal requests for any application forms. Many people do not have access to computer or don't know how to download</li> <li>q Document verification over the web/telephone will be difficult</li> <li>q Should have face to face available for people who are vulnerable and people with language difficulties</li> <li>q Visits should be considered – may be expensive up front but will ensure applications are valid</li> </ul>

# Feedback from consultation

## The Emergency Relief Scheme



Question	Feedback from consultation
<p>4. We are proposing to only support Harrow Residents through this scheme. Do you see any problem with this decision?</p>	<p>55% of respondents felt there was not a problem only supporting Harrow residents through the scheme. Comments included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ Only if the person fleeing domestic violence is new to the borough and not been a resident for 3 months – proof of residency and eligibility may also be very difficult for this group as they often leave their home with nothing</li> <li>□ People who have not lived in the borough for 3 months may slip through net</li> <li>□ People passing through / no fixed abodes / new arrivals</li> <li>□ For people that have recently moved away from Harrow should be eligible if they cannot access at the new borough. If they move into Harrow they should claim at the previous borough to save falling through the net</li> <li>□ The money is given to Harrow from the Government &amp; should be used for the benefit of Harrow residents (not relations in another Borough or overseas). Residency qualification is important.</li> <li>□ Agreed but residency should be at least 6 months to a year long</li> <li>□ Some families do not have residency &amp; are, therefore, more in need of emergency funds.</li> <li>□ The borough should only help it's residents as tax payers money being used</li> <li>□ Give it to all, not just Harrow residents</li> <li>□ If a grant is awarded then Harrow resident should agree to remain in Harrow for at least 2 years after the award</li> </ul>

# Feedback from consultation

## The Emergency Relief Scheme



Question	Feedback from consultation
<p><b>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:</b></p> <p><b>1 award per year</b> <b>2 awards per year</b></p>	<p><b>18% agreed with 1 award per year</b> <b>71% agreed with 2 awards per year and comments included:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>q <b>Voucher system means less abuse.</b></li> <li>q Somali community often has large families, including extended families, so may require more than 2 awards a year.</li> <li>q A provision for exceptional cases is needed.</li> <li>q Awareness of Emergency Relief Scheme is needed as due to language barriers people do not always request what they need.</li> <li>q What if somebody was supplied white goods and then they break down within the 1 year period and they have used all their chances up</li> <li>q Should be based on need</li> <li>q Should be consideration of value of claims, if someone has had two low value claims, why cant they have a 3rd?</li> <li>q Discretion should be given dependant on nature of previous awards</li> <li>q A cap on awards needs to be in place/Need to maximise output within allocated funds.</li> <li>q Maybe 3 or 4 instead.</li> <li>q If the need is there – can you cap it?</li> <li>q How do you turn a desperate person down?</li> <li>q When you are in a bad situation it can take time to get out of it.</li> <li>q Vulnerable people are an emergency all the time.</li> <li>q Give 1 of each type of support available per household in a year’s allocation.</li> <li>q When desperate people are put through many hurdles only the really desperate ones will persist.</li> </ul>

# Feedback from consultation

## The Emergency Relief Scheme

Question	Feedback from consultation
<p>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 fund runs out we will have to limit support. Please order the following in order of priority:</p> <p>Food Payment for fuel, heating or cooking White goods Furnishings Travel Expenses Other</p>	<p><b>Food</b> - Priority 1 = 31/Priority 2 = 3/Priority 3 = 0/Priority 4 = 0/Priority 5 = 0      Priority 6 – 0</p> <p><b>Payment for fuel, heating or cooking</b> – Priority 1 = 4/Priority 2 = 22/Priority 3 = 2/Priority 4 = 3/Priority 5 = 0/Priority 6 = 0</p> <p><b>White goods</b> - Priority 1 = 1/Priority 2 = 2/Priority 3 = 13/Priority 4 = 8/Priority 5 = 2/      Priority 6 - 3</p> <p><b>Furnishings</b> - Priority 1 = 0/Priority 2 = 1/Priority 3 = 8/Priority 4 = 10/Priority 5 = 9/      Priority 6 = 1</p> <p><b>Travel Expenses</b> - Priority 1 = 1/Priority 2 = 2/Priority 3 = 7/Priority 4 = 5/ Priority 5 = 14/Priority 6 = 4</p> <p><b>Other</b> - Priority 1= 0/Priority 2 = 1/Priority 3 = 3/Priority 4 = 2/Priority 5 = 3/ Priority 6 =10</p> <p>Other suggestions includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ What about clothing</li> <li>□ Disabled equipment</li> <li>□ Housing costs/rent/mortgage</li> </ul>



# Feedback from consultation

## The Emergency Relief Scheme

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<p>7. In appropriate cases should people be asked to pay back the money to the value of the support they receive from the Emergency Relief Scheme?</p>	<p>Yes = 70%    No = 20%    Don't know = 10%</p> <p><b>Comments from respondents included:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ Crisis loans could be paid back out of benefits at £2/week, maybe this could be considered</li> <li>□ Payback loans if you cant pay full - pay back half or part</li> <li>□ Repayment can be done once in employment - people are in desperate situations, so need the help</li> <li>□ Payback should be for awards of over £100</li> <li>□ Should we ask them to get a loan out – some people have good credit</li> <li>□ Credit Union could have repercussions. What about interest rates?</li> <li>□ Money allocated towards loans will no longer be available to crisis families</li> <li>□ Peoples health and ability to repay an issue</li> <li>□ Credit Union admin costs will be high so no payback scheme should be in place</li> <li>□ As long as they made aware of repayment scheme and what has to be paid back to Credit Union</li> <li>□ Depends on the situation</li> </ul>

# Feedback from consultation



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<p>8. Is there anything else we should think about?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>q Not having an out of hours service will be an issue/ extended phone hours to offer time outside of normal business hours</li> <li>q Is this to be a means tested award? It will require verification of documents &amp; need to prove emergency – how is it going to work on a practical level?</li> <li>q Does it mean many assessments for each customer?</li> <li>q The ability to assess the claims very quickly. Letting clients know which documents are required. Flexibility about the criteria in a crisis situation (documents unavailable as lost in fire etc.). Quality response time of an hour should be set.</li> <li>q Older people should be able to have more savings as unable to work – all DWP benefit guidance allows them this for numerous reasons</li> <li>q Criteria should be less strict for older people</li> <li>q Should consider vulnerable people, those with mental and physical disabilities/older people/people who are not computer literate or unable to handle too much information over the telephone</li> <li>q How will you prove that support should be provided by family and friends?</li> <li>q Concerns that if people turned down first time due to not fitting criteria – they may not re-apply in future emergencies.</li> <li>q The principles are line with Universal Credit theme – a universal pot of funding to help people help themselves.</li> <li>q Enforcement of signposted advice should be done to check people go to signposted areas for relevant help/support</li> <li>q All new incoming residents should be provided with a list of services available within Harrow by Access Harrow – this would warn of the scheme restrictions to avoid fraud</li> <li>q As benefit cap &amp; LHA rates affects more people, they will be encouraged to move out of Harrow –so maybe a one off payment towards essentials will help those people and they wont need further help</li> <li>q Referrals to other sections(signposting) should be done by the Emergency Relief Scheme Team who could contact customer directly to avoid extra administrative costs</li> </ul>