

Help Scheme Review

Feedback

- q Emergency Relief Scheme sits under the umbrella of the Help Scheme and was implemented as a pilot in April 2013

- q Review focussed on the pilot Emergency Relief Scheme and has involved the following activity:
 - Data review
 - Face to face meetings with:
 - Emergency Relief Staff
 - Key referrers – CAB
 - Jobcentre Plus staff
 - A sub group of the Community Reference Group which includes membership from Harrow Association of Disabled People (HAD), Harrow Mencap, Mind in Harrow, Age UK, the Harrow Law Centre, National Landlords Association, CAB, Jobcentre Plus, Harrow Association of Somalie Organisations (HASVO), and representation from internal Council Services

- q Telephone questionnaire with a sample of applicants who were both successful/unsuccessful in getting support from the scheme.

Feedback from telephone survey with users



- q **Tried to contact 53 applicants to the scheme over the telephone**
- q **17 responded**
- q **14 had received awards and 3 had not received awards**

Question	Yes	No
Was the Emergency Relief Scheme application process simple to follow? What could be improved?	81%	19%
Feedback: <ul style="list-style-type: none">q Not really as a lot of information and documents required at the time which you may not haveq Lots of questions to answer and it is a bit difficult when English is not your first languageq Difficult if you are not very good at filling out forms and you do not like doing it.q Yes but not sure if made a mistake on the form as wasn't awarded help		

Feedback from telephone survey with users



Questions and Responses	Yes	No
Did you accept the support that was offered to you?	100%	
Feedback: ☐ No responses received as 100% of those that responded and had been offered support accepted the award		

Questions and Responses	Yes	No
Did the support you received meet your emergency need? If no please give your reasons	100%	
Feedback: ☐ Would have been grateful for any help given as needed food/fuel and the crisis loan has stopped. But do feel that should be able to receive more than one award (the person was advised that applicants can receive more than one award) ☐ Very grateful at the time but very worried that when money goes into the bank on Thursday it will be swallowed up with bank charges and will be in the same position again. Can I have some information regarding the Foodbank? ☐ Had been refused help from JCP and without food and fuel, very grateful		

Questions and Responses	Yes	No
Were you signposted to other services? If so advise the services you were signposted to		100%
Feedback: ☐ No responses received		
Did you go to the signposted services for help?	N/A	N/A
Did you find the services useful? If you have answered no please give your reasons	N/A	N/A

Feedback from telephone survey with users

Questions and Responses

Was there anything that could have been done differently/better?

Feedback:

- Most people stated how grateful they were for the support they received from the scheme at a time when they really needed the help
- The person I spoke to was really helpful. It is far better that the scheme doesn't give cash as that could mean the money could be used on anything not just the emergency....
- Having a limit of 2 awards a year is too low as you never know what your circumstances are going to be from one week to the next. You only have to have a JSA payment stopped and you are back to square one with no help. It does not just apply to people on benefits but also to people who work as someone I know is on a low income and still has to go to the Foodbank in order to feed their children.
- The lady who gave me my voucher was very helpful and I think that having experienced staff who have some experience of life is a good thing
- The staff were very helpful and helped me out when things were very difficult. I do not know what I would have done without the help at that time.
- I do not know what I would have done without the support for 2 days I was given
- ...there was mix-up between the JCP and the Job Club they were aware I attended college one day a week to do an electrical course but they still stopped my JSA. The food/fuel covered me for a few days when I didn't have any money.
- I had trouble finding anywhere that would take my Allpay card to top up the gas/electricity. As I have a pre-pay meter they would charge 50p but would not add it on and take the money off the card and only wanted me to pay with cash. I tried all the Post Offices in Harrow and the paypoint locations. I do not think the scheme should hand out cash. I also asked for a fridge and cooker on my application but didn't hear back
- Scheme excellent couldn't think of any ways could be improved
- Very impressed with the team as helped greatly when didn't know where else to turn. Do not know what I would have done if had been refused

Feedback from telephone survey with users



Questions and Responses

Was there anything that could have been done differently/better? Cont'd

Feedback:

q Grateful for the help. Also received £40 from Childrens Services and Foodbank. Very grateful for overall help that Council has provided. Would have been useful to see somebody face to face as it was an emergency situation sometimes need an answer there and then and cannot wait for a response.

q I was refused as not classed an emergency situation, I asked for a toddler bed but could only provide single beds

q I was refused as it was deemed I had enough disposable income to use myself. I cannot entirely remember as some time ago. At times felt very low and would be happy if did not wake up in the morning. Think maybe I have the wrong coloured skin to be awarded anything

q I was surprised not to be awarded as have 3 children to support. Receiving CB and CTC two weeks after applied. Was refused as had a student loan but had been without money so long had to use money to repay friends and catch up on bills.

Feedback from Organisations/ERS Team



Questions and Responses

What has worked well?

Feedback:

- q Scheme is better than the previous system
- q Scheme is easier to access than the previous social fund run by the DWP
- q In the beginning kept getting an answerphone however now telephones are answered all the time
- q Advisers go above and beyond with some clients
- q Staff very nice and helpful
- q Team go out of the way to help people
- q Small team works really well as aware of each others cases and able to take forward
- q Quite a subjective process – seeing people can help to balance and understand the need
- q Really good relationship with Access Harrow staff, very helpful and go out of their way to help
- q Great that Allpay blocks alcohol and cigarettes.
- q Easiest part of the scheme to administer is furniture and travel as able to work with other services/ organisations to confirm status of applicant

Feedback from Organisations/ERS Team



Questions and Responses

What hasn't worked so well?

Feedback:

- When the scheme started it was very difficult to get an award therefore staff have issues accessing the scheme and would rather try and find other funding
- Some issues regarding applicants not being able to apply after 4 pm
- A resident who couldn't speak English was sent from CAB to get help on the telephone and when they arrived at Access Harrow were given a form and told to go back to CAB to get completed
- Need to have a more holistic approach to how the scheme can help people rather than gatekeeping a benefits system
- Allpay cards – telephone line not always free. Put in number but doesn't tell you to put # key. System isn't always quick but Allpay do fix problems quickly
- System and paperwork take too much time – particularly when have a small award v resources required to administer
- If several applications received in the afternoon, even early afternoon, then there are problems with being able to administer all the applications. Sometimes have to do the paperwork the next day and that then impacts next days work
- Too many different log in sheets/spreadsheet doesn't follow the pattern of the application form
- Assist not always up to date – sometimes client would have more up to date information

Feedback from Organisations/ERS Team



Questions and Responses

Issues and suggestions raised regarding the criteria to access the scheme

Feedback:

- Scheme should allow people to keep some capital for emergencies/funerals and suggestion put forward Single person £150, Couple £200, Family £400
- All boroughs should have agreement on what happens when a person moves from one borough to another.
- Suggestion that if a person has been moved into Harrow by another who is responsible for paying the HB Harrow could provide the food/any other emergency support and responsible borough provide furniture etc.
- Scheme should provide support for people who have no recourse to public funds but are working – they are doing everything they should be but may be on very low income and experience an emergency – could be just in cases of fire, flood or burglaries.
- Only giving 2 awards per year can be a problem – need to have clear procedures to show when we have given support over a period of time and it only counts as 1 provision
- Means tested benefit is fair but maybe should consider people on low income who are working who have had a disaster (fire) as would not be able to get the goods in any other way
- Non dependants having issues with benefits but not getting support from parents

Feedback from Organisations/ERS Team



Questions and Responses

Issues/suggestions raised regarding the provision of support

Feedback:

- Coats should be provided in the winter
- School Uniforms should be provided
- Travel requests for funerals need more clarity – who can be given support to attend – do you ask for death certificate – do we pay for overnight accommodation?
- White goods should include fridges as priority item to everybody
- Flooring should be given – within Community Care Grants flooring was given dependant on medical information and if family had children. The CC Grant would only provide flooring for the relevant bedrooms and living room.
- Phone credit for single homeless people who have often used up all their phone credit and cannot make the calls they need to Landlords to secure accommodation
- Washing machines should be given to everybody with children
- Help should be given to people who have pest issues i.e. bed bugs, rats etc.
- People should be able to have a sofa – even if re-use. Difficult if child has come home from school and expected to sit on hard chair all evening.
- What happens with people who have lived in the property for years and have no furniture – do we help them?
- Require clear policy for replacing existing items
- Wardrobes should be given as clothes on damp floor is a risk to health and safety
- Why are we topping up metres and not helping people with their fuel bills
- Loss of money hard as very subjective – easy to go to Police Station and get police number

Feedback from Organisations/ERS Team



Questions and Responses

General issues/suggestions raised

Feedback:

- Team require contact details for all services
- Require contact details for all ERS schemes to enable effective signposting
- Require a contact with DWP to be able to resolve complex benefit issues
- Should explore Credit Union loans
- Should not be referring people to budgeting loans for emergency situations as gets them in more debt. Whilst they are interest free a large % is taken from benefits to pay off the loan. CAB would advise to refer for budgeting loans when person wants non essential items i.e. television
- Need to agree how long the scheme will support a person particularly if benefits have been sanctioned for a long period of time – 6 weeks/2 months? More detail in policy on allocation of awards
- JCP have seen an increase in applications for budgeting loans since the scheme started.
- Prisoners are having more input from DWP in prison before they leave in helping them into work – this might be the reason why the scheme is not getting many prisoners.
- Application form needs renewing
- Procedures need to have more detail to provide clarity