

**7 July 2014****Agenda Item: 10****REPORT OF SERVICE DIRECTOR FOR ACCESS AND PUBLIC  
PROTECTION****RESOURCES REQUIRED TO DEVELOP THE EMERGENCY ADVICE  
PATHWAY****Purpose of the Report**

1. To propose and agree resources required to deal with the increased workload following the closure of the Nottinghamshire Welfare Assistance Fund

**Information and Advice****Background**

2. Following the transfer of responsibility of some elements of the Social Fund to the County Council a procurement process was undertaken for delivery of an award based scheme.
3. Northgate Information Systems were contracted to deliver a scheme for 2013/14. The fund made awards to individuals in emergency or crisis via a local rate telephone number. The eligibility criterion for the scheme was agreed in the County Council's policy committee on the 12<sup>th</sup> December 2012.
4. The Nottinghamshire Welfare Assistance Fund, (NWAFF) commenced operation on 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2013.
5. As part of the Budget Challenge consultation an outline business case was produced proposing the removal of the current scheme, informed by a significant under spend on awards and high administration costs during 2013/14 and the removal of this funding for 2015 onwards.
6. The funding available for 2014/15 will be utilised to support to vulnerable people by other means including retaining the 4 members of the Benefits Team, to provide support to these individuals in maximising the benefits available to them.
7. This Business Case was agreed at the Full Council meeting on 27<sup>th</sup> February 2014.

## Proposal for managing the scheme closure

8. The Consultation phase identified the risk that individuals in emergency and crisis situations would have little or no support available to them.
9. In response to this the Council developed an Emergency Advice pathway through the Customer Service Centre, with improved signposting to Third Sector and District Council support and offering, where appropriate, onward referrals to the Benefits Team and to the Adult Access Service. It is proposed this pathway will become known as the “Emergency Advice Service”, to distinguish it from the previous NAAF scheme.
10. The Work processes of the Benefits Team have been revised to reflect the support these calls will require and web based advice has been updated and expanded to enable signposting to this wherever appropriate.
11. Despite the previously reported low spend on awards to the NAAF; some 7340 telephone calls were received by Northgate in the period 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2013 – 31<sup>st</sup> January 2014.
12. The level of calls received will be influenced by the engagement of those signposting individuals to the Council for support. Whilst the DWP and jobcentres have been briefed on the removal of the fund, during 2014/15 the Council retains funding to support those in crisis consequently referrals may continue from these bodies.
13. Management Information provided by Northgate has highlighted that the calls received can be significant in length. With a longest call time of 79 minutes, whilst the reported average call time is low at 7 minutes.
14. Continued monitoring and reporting on the volumes of calls received as a result of the scheme removal has been built into the pathway.
15. As the situations of those calling for support are often complex, and by the nature of the eligibility criteria for the preceding scheme linked to emergencies, it is essential the Council has the resource to answer these calls and to adequately signpost or refer onwards quickly.
16. It has been identified that Level 2 advisors would be most appropriate to deal with the nature of calls likely to be received as a result of the removal of the NAAF. This is due to the fact that Level 2 advisors deal with Adult Social Care and Health (ASCH) calls and are able to identify situations where a referral to ASCH would be appropriate alongside advice on benefits. Level 2 advisors have access to the systems required to do this i.e. Framework
17. The additional post required is a temporary post for a 1 year period (until the end of March 2015).
18. The information below demonstrates the additional income gained for Nottinghamshire residents following the information and advice provided by the retained 4 benefits advisors. The team have kept recordings of the amount of money generated for residents since the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2014 to date as a direct result of support from the Benefits Team.

<b>Weekly Increase</b>	<b>Source of Increase Gained</b>	<b>Yearly Increase</b>	<b>Cumulative Total</b>
£26.85	Higher rate AA	£1,396.20	£1,396.20
£54.45	Standard Daily Living Component (PIP)	£2,834.40	£4,227.60
£81.30	Enhanced Daily Living Component (PIP)	£4,227.60	£8,455.20
£54.45	Lower rate AA	£2,831.40	£11,286.60
£187.90	Higher rate AA, CA, IS	£9,770.80	£21,057.40
£32.90	Standard Daily Living Component (PIP)	£1,710.80	£22,768.20
£62.79	Lower rate AA, Savings Credit	£3,265.08	£26,033.28
£61.35	Carer's Allowance	£3,190.20	£29,223.48
£32.90	Standard Daily Living Component (PIP)	£1,710.80	£30,934.28
£11.36	Savings Credit	£590.72	£31,525
£152.00	PIP, Standard daily living and Standard mobility	£1,824.00	£33,349
£56.75	Enhanced Mobility component PIP	£2,951.00	£36,300.00
£69.62	Savings Credit, middle rate DLA care	£3,620.24	£39,920.24
£34.20	CA, Carer premium - ESA	£1,778.40	£41,698.64
£7.00	Support group - ESA	£364.00	£42,062.64
£13.64	Pension Credit	£709.28	£46,999.52
£111.20	PIP - standard daily living, enhanced mobility	£5,782.40	£52,781.92
£98.70	Pension Credit, DLA middle rate care	£5,132.40	£57,914.32
£26.85	DLA - high rate care	£1,396.20	£59,310.52
£100.89	Pension Credit	£5,246.28	£64,556.80
£58.77	Income Support, Carers Allowance	£3,056.04	£67,612.84
£54.45	Attendance Allowance	£2,831.40	£70,444.24

Based on the figures above the projected annual increase of income generated for Nottinghamshire residents at the end of the financial year is £854,330.88. This figure does not include passported benefits gained such as Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support, which cannot be calculated. Nor does it include crisis situation support gained such as Funeral Payments, Short term Advance payments on benefit, council tax discounts for disabled people, energy saving schemes and food banks.

### **Other Options Considered**

19. The other option would be to absorb the calls within the existing capacity of the CSC. Without the additional resources the CSC will receive an increased call volume without sufficient advisers to respond, consequently waiting times on all calls to the Council will increase. This would have an adverse impact on service users and could have reputational impact on the Council.

### **Impact for Service Users**

20. Provision of additional resource within the CSC will ensure that service users, previously supported by NAAF will be able to access advice and signposting, and where required social care referrals from the Council.

21. Without this, service users could be left without any form of support or advice and their needs may escalate.

## **Statutory and Policy Implications**

22. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, finance, human resources, human rights, the NHS Constitution (Public Health only), the public sector equality duty, safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults, service users, sustainability and the environment and ways of working and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

## **Financial Implications**

23. A Service Advisor, Grade 4 SCP 19-23 (£17,980 - £20,400). The total cost of this will be met from the under spend carried forward from the Nottinghamshire Welfare Assistance Fund 2013/14.

## **Human Resources Implications**

24. This report proposes to establish the following temporary post s within the existing Adult Access Service: 1 FTE (37 hours) Service Advisor, Pay Grade 4 SCP 19-23 £17.980 - £20.400).

## **Ways of Working Implications**

25. The additional post will be based at the Customer Service Centre, Mercury House and will be accommodated within existing office space, making use of flexible working arrangements.

## **RECOMMENDATION/S**

26. It is recommended that the Adult Social care and Health Committee:

Approves the 1 FTE (37 hours) Service Advisor post, Grade 4 SCP 19 - 23 (£17,980 - £20,400) to be established on a temporary basis for 1 year.

**PAUL MCKAY**

**Service Director for Access and Public Protection**

**For any enquiries about this report please contact:**

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## **Constitutional Comments**

27. Adult social Care and Health Committee is the appropriate committee to consider the content of this report it is responsible for approving relevant staffing structures. The Council's Employment Procedure Rules requires Human Resources comments and Trade Union consultation where changes to staffing structures are proposed.

## **Financial Comments**

28. The financial implications are contained in paragraph 23 of the report.

## **Background Papers and Published Documents**

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with section 100D of the local Government Act 1972.

- None

## **Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected**

- All