

North Yorkshire County Council**Care and Independence Overview and Scrutiny Committee****21st January 2016****North Yorkshire Local Assistance Fund****1 Purpose of report**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update the Committee on the North Yorkshire Local Assistance Fund (NYLAF).

2 Background

- 2.1 The NYLAF provides emergency support for vulnerable people aged 16 or over to move into or remain in the community, and to help families under exceptional pressure to stay together. Awards are made in kind, in the form of goods or services. Items requested must be essential and critical to the needs of the applicant or those of their family. Available items include essential items of household furniture and equipment, beds and bedding, food vouchers, clothing vouchers, utility top-up vouchers, utility reconnection charges and essential home repairs.
- 2.2 For further information about the Local Assistance Fund, including eligibility criteria, which vulnerable groups are supported and how often and what people can apply for please visit our webpage at:
<http://www.northyorks.gov.uk/article/25908/Local-assistance-fund>
- 2.3 At the last update to the Committee on 2 October 2014, as part of a wider stakeholder engagement, Members were invited to comment on the future of the NYLAF ahead of a decision to be made by the Executive in February 2015.
- 2.4 Three options were presented to the Committee: to maintain the funding at its 2014/15 level; to reduce the funding by approximately 25% to bring it in line with the sum identified by Government in the December 2014 local government settlement; or to abolish the Fund entirely. Members of the Committee agreed that continuing the NYLAF at its 2014/15 level was the most appropriate and recommended the Executive supported this option.
- 2.5 The Executive on 3 February 2015 considered all the evidence provided and recognised the valued contribution the NYLAF made to vulnerable individuals and families across the County but in light of challenging financial circumstances and a reduction in many other services it was decided to

proceed with a 25% reduction in funding to bring it in line with the sum identified by Government in the December 2014 local government settlement. The Executive report and minutes for the meeting can be found here: <http://democracy.northyorks.gov.uk/committees.aspx?commid=18>

3 Re-procurement and contract award

- 3.1 With the future of the NYLAF secured County Council Officers could re-procure the service for a contract start date of 1 October 2015.
- 3.2 The Council received eight bids, up from five in 2012. One failed to meet mandatory thresholds for service and was subsequently disappplied.
- 3.3 Contracts were scored a maximum of 70% for quality and 30% for competitive pricing. Quality asked a range of questions about the company structure; implementation of the service; agreements with suppliers and best value; competency and impartial operation of the service on an on-going basis, and added social value that could be brought to North Yorkshire.
- 3.4 The standard of the tenders was very high, the evaluation panel, which assessed all of the tenders, were particularly impressed with Connect Assist, a social enterprise based in South Wales. As well as receiving the top score for quality, Connect Assist also offered the most competitive tender price showing a drive to reduce administration costs to ensure the Fund can help as many people as possible.
- 3.5 Since the contract start date NYCC have been very impressed with the standard and professional nature of the service Connect Assist has provided, building on the already good reputation of the NYLAF. New features have been added to the operation of the service to assist agencies making applications and to further speed up the time it takes between receiving an application and the award reaching the applicant. This was reflected in positive comments about Connect Assist from partner agencies, charities and NYCC colleagues at the NYLAF stakeholder workshop on 22 October 2015.

4 Awards made

- 4.1 As each local authority was given the discretion to mould its welfare assistance scheme in a way that was deemed appropriate for local communities, every authority has done something slightly different. The strength of the North Yorkshire scheme lies in someone getting some support from a specialist agency for an underlying issue and with it, potentially, some assistance from the NYLAF.
- 4.2 Frequent engagement with stakeholders, as well as experience from the first two years of the Fund has meant for steady improvements, implemented throughout the year and also incorporated into the procurement process and

contract. This includes, but is not limited to - expanding the number of authorised agencies, increasing the range of items that can be applied for, adding more information about wider sources of support and ensuring that the contractor is open between Christmas and New Year.

4.3 The partnership with the Rainbow Centre to provide emergency food parcels for residents in Scarborough has continued for the financial year 2015/16 due to the demand that was seen as well as the efficiency and cost effectiveness with which the Rainbow Centre operate. The Rainbow Centre have issued 2,141 food parcels to individuals, couples and families on behalf of the NYLAF since August 2013.

4.4 **The breakdown of applications received by District:**

| District | Year 1 1 April 2013 – 31 March 2014 | Year 2 1 April 2014 – 31 March 2015 | Year 3* 1 April 2015 – 30 November 2015 |
|---------------------------|--|--|--|
| Harrogate | 427 (13.3%) | 612 (11.5%) | 350 (13.5%) |
| Scarborough | 1,472 (45.8%) | 2,938 (55.3%) | 1,333 (51.3%) |
| Selby | 361 (11.2%) | 592 (11.1%) | 283 (10.9%) |
| Richmondshire | 206 (6.4%) | 278 (5.2%) | 151 (5.8%) |
| Craven | 175 (5.5%) | 227 (4.3%) | 103 (4.0%) |
| Hambleton | 313 (9.7%) | 336 (6.3%) | 163 (6.3%) |
| Ryedale | 257 (8.0%) | 333 (6.3%) | 214 (8.2%) |
| Total | 3,211 | 5,312 | 2,597 |
| Unsuccessful applications | 60 (1.9%) | 121 (2.4%) | 92 (3.5%) |

*Available data to date

These proportions have been consistent since the scheme began and broadly reflect the levels of demand seen under the DWP's Social Fund. Clearly, population plays a key part in driving this demand, as Scarborough and Harrogate represent the largest population settlements in North Yorkshire, followed by Selby. In terms of the particularly high volumes stemming from Scarborough district, there is similarly a strong link between issues such as levels of deprivation, unemployment and benefits take-up in this part of the county and the high demand for emergency NYLAF support.

The 2015 Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) identifies 23 Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs) within North Yorkshire which are amongst the 20% most deprived in England. 17 of these LSOAs are in Scarborough district alone. Scarborough also has the highest headline unemployment rate in North Yorkshire at 5.1% (as at end of June 2015). NYLAF figures suggest that applications under the two highest volume NYLAF categories – families under pressure and homelessness – are highest within Scarborough district.

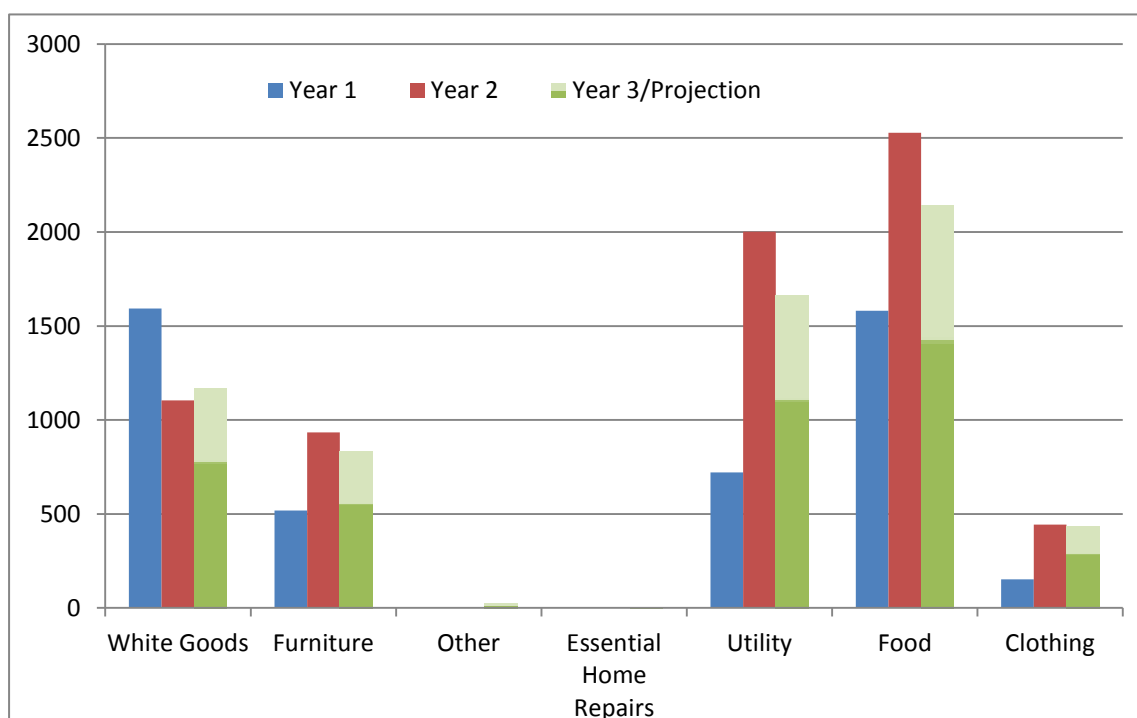
4.5 The breakdown of applications awarded by vulnerable groups:

| Vulnerable group+ | Year 1 1 April 2013 – 31 March 2014 | Year 2 1 April 2014 – 31 March 2015 | Year 3* 1 April 2015 – 30 November 2015 |
|--|--|--|--|
| Homeless/risk of homelessness | 371 (14.9%) | 852 (20.3%) | 541 (30.0%) |
| Learning disability | 46 (1.8%) | 54 (1.3%) | 15 (0.8%) |
| Released from prison/supervised on a community order | 67 (2.7%) | 105 (2.5%) | 65 (3.6%) |
| Drug/alcohol dependency | 82 (3.3%) | 124 (3.0%) | 39 (2.2%) |
| Family under exceptional pressure | 1,229 (49.2%) | 2,034 (48.5%) | 776 (43.0%) |
| Mental health problem | 308 (12.3%) | 455 (10.9%) | 180 (10.0%) |
| Victim of domestic abuse | 102 (4.1%) | 220 (5.2%) | 90 (5.0%) |
| Physical disability | 250 (10.0%) | 265 (6.3%) | 73 (4.0%) |
| Carer | 42 (1.7%) | 83 (2.0%) | 27 (1.5%) |

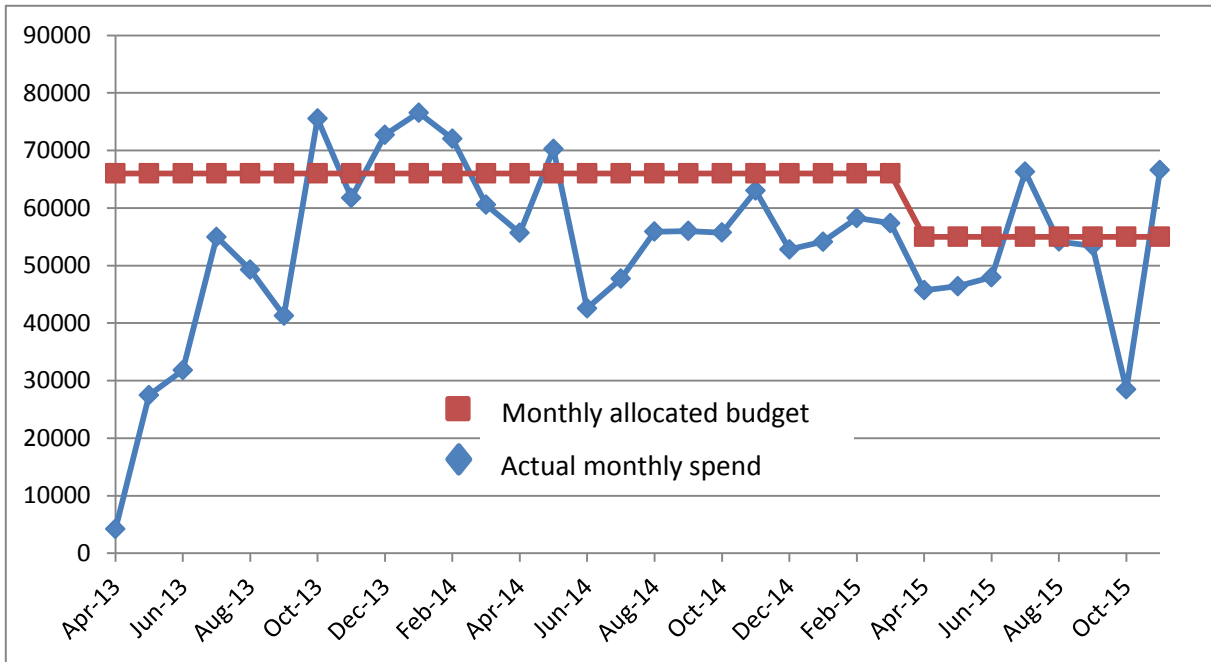
*Available data to date

+Please note this table does not contain data provided by the Rainbow Centre

4.6 The breakdown of awards:



4.7 Monthly spend breakdown (£):



5 Recommendation

5.1 That the report be noted.

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7 January 2016

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