

North Yorkshire County Council
Young People Overview & Scrutiny Committee

24 October 2014

North Yorkshire Local Assistance Fund

1 Purpose of report

- 1.1 To outline to the Committee the progress of the North Yorkshire Local Assistance Fund (NYLAF) to date, and plans for stakeholder engagement on the future of the NYLAF in October 2014.
- 1.2 To seek the views of the Committee about the options for the future of the NYLAF ahead of a decision being sought from the Executive in December 2014 or January 2015.

2 Background

- 2.1 As Members will be aware, the North Yorkshire Local Assistance Fund (NYLAF) was established in April 2013 following the abolition of Crisis Loans and Community Care Grants under the Department for Work and Pensions' (DWP) Social Fund scheme.
- 2.2 Although the DWP has allocated additional funding to the county council for the NYLAF, the amount provided for awards in 2013/14 and 2014/15 was £793k per year, compared to the DWP expenditure of £915k on awards in North Yorkshire in 2011/12 – a reduction of 13%.
- 2.3 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. The NYLAF does not replicate what was previously provided by DWP. No cash payments, crisis loans or community care grants are available. 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.
- 2.4 To be eligible to apply to the NYLAF, customers must initially meet certain basic criteria around age, residency in the county, income levels/income support and they must also have a need that cannot be met by other forms of support. In addition, the customer must also fall within at least one of our target vulnerability categories. These include, for example, vulnerable client groups such as those at risk of homelessness, victims of domestic abuse and

people with learning or physical disabilities. Full details of the basic eligibility criteria and the vulnerability categories can be found in the NYLAF information leaflet, attached at Appendix 1 and available from the county council website www.northyorks.gov.uk/nylaf.

- 2.5 Applications to the NYLAF are made through authorised agencies, including selected county council front line services such as Children's Centres, registered social landlords, and voluntary organisations. It is the role of the authorised agencies to assess the applicant and check that they are both eligible and vulnerable. It is expected that authorised agencies will see an application to the NYLAF as part of a package of support. Only in exceptional circumstances is it possible to apply without going through an authorised agency.
- 2.6 A customer may apply for up to two awards of emergency food and/or utility top-ups in any twelve month period. For other items provided under the NYLAF, a maximum entitlement of three items (including a maximum of one white good) may also be awarded within the same twelve month period.
- 2.7 Day to day management of the NYLAF is undertaken by Charis Grants Ltd, in line with a contract awarded following competitive tendering. This includes administering the application process, making the decision on awards within the criteria specified by the county council, ensuring consistency across authorised agencies, and arranging the supply and delivery of all items that are awarded. A random sample of applications made by authorised agencies is audited and other measures are in place to minimise the risk that items awarded are sold on.
- 2.8 Attached at Appendix 2, for information, is a copy of the first year report (2013/14) on the NYLAF, which includes a summary of applications and awards made, along with an overview of where the greatest demand fell within North Yorkshire within this period and for which types of goods.

3 Progress of the NYLAF to date

- 3.1 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. This directly addresses a key issue with the DWP Social Fund scheme identified by the House of Commons Select Committee. The DWP scheme effectively provided a 'quick fix' to customers with no follow-up as to how that financial support had been used or how effective that had been. With the exception of provision for emergency food or utility top-ups, the NYLAF is not about simply providing a 'quick fix' solution for a vulnerable person. The NYLAF has just under 20 different authorised agencies acting as points of support across the county for vulnerable people and where NYLAF applications can be made.

- 3.2 The scheme has developed to be responsive to the needs of people in the most vulnerable situations and to adapt across areas where demand is highest. For example, following a large number of calls to the county council's Customer Services from potential customers and also requests from partner agencies, utility top-ups were introduced in November 2013. These enable customers to access urgent credit to their gas or electricity accounts. Additionally, we have broadened out provision of emergency food in the Scarborough area – where demand for this has been highest – by developing a partnership with the Rainbow Centre to provide NYLAF funded food parcels for eligible customers from its premises in central Scarborough. The Rainbow Centre has provided 985 food parcels on behalf of the NYLAF between August 2013 and August 2014.
- 3.3 Using the categories of the NYLAF, the client groups with the biggest take-up of the Fund during April to August 2014 are families under exceptional pressure (44% of awards), those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness (13%), and those with mental health problems (10%).
- 3.4 The districts with the greatest number of awards are Scarborough (49% of awards), Harrogate (13%), and Selby (12%).
- 3.5 The items most in demand from the NYLAF during April to August 2014 are food (35% of awards), utility top-ups (26%), white goods (18%), furniture and beds (14%), and clothing (7%).
- 3.6 The profile of expenditure is different because of the relative cost of items. During April to August 2014 the expenditure on white goods was £114k (41% of total), furniture and beds £62k (22%), food £39k (14%) clothing £38k (14%), utility top-ups £24k (9%).
- 3.7 The NYLAF has had to adapt to ensure that expenditure does not exceed budget. This has included removing rent deposits and rent in advance from its provision and restricting white goods to one award per application. As a result, during April to August 2014 the monthly spend has averaged around 82% of potential monthly budget. However, based on the experience in 2013/14, expenditure in the last six months of the financial year will increase significantly.

4 Challenges for 2015/16 onwards and stakeholder consultation

- 4.1 For 2013/14 and 2014/15 central government provided a separately identified sum, just under £800k, to be used as awards funding for each year plus around £150k for administration. However, the government said in December 2013 that from 2015/16, the funding to be used to support NYLAF will be incorporated into the mainstream grant for all local authorities. The council's MTFs, agreed by full council in February 2014, assumes expenditure on NYLAF at current levels for 2015/16 and beyond.

4.2 A judicial review was recently sought by a disabled man, supported by Islington Council, against the government's decision to no longer separately identify the funding allocated for local assistance funds run by local authorities (in total £174 million nationally). The government has agreed to revisit its decision in the light of an ongoing review of local welfare provision, proper consultation with stakeholders and due consideration of equalities implications - all of which it had previously failed to do - and to announce its new decision in time for the provisional local government finance settlement, expected in December 2014.

4.3 Subject to the new decision that has to be taken by the government, there are potentially three options that the county council will need to consider:

A. *Continue with the NYLAF as currently.* This would involve the NYLAF continuing to provide awards up to the amount that has been provided to date by central government and as such to potentially provide the same range of items, using the same eligibility criteria and targeting the current range of customers.

B. *Reduce funding for NYLAF awards in line with the overall reduction in council budgets.* An alternative would be to reduce funding to the NYLAF equivalent to the reductions to be met in overall county council budgets, taking into account the 13% reduction made by the government prior to the budget being transferred to the county council in April 2013. This could be a 20% reduction in the amount available for awards under the NYLAF and to be able to meet this challenge, there would clearly need to be further decisions about key elements of the current scheme and its provision, including:

- The type and range of items available to customers
- The number of items that eligible customers are entitled to apply for each year
- The key client groups that are currently targeted by the NYLAF.

C. *Abolish the NYLAF.* Pursuing this option would mean that the county council would no longer have funding commitments to meet for local welfare provision. Additionally, any monies provided by central government for the purposes of local welfare provision could be retained by the county council and used for other purposes. However, as demonstrated above and in the attached report on the performance of the NYLAF in 2013/14, there is clearly high demand for such support from vulnerable people within our communities. This option would potentially leave a large gap in emergency welfare support across North Yorkshire.

4.4 The Executive will need to consider in December 2014 or January 2015 what level of budget should be allocated for the NYLAF from 2015/16 and beyond. To support the Executive's decision-making process:

- a stakeholder review session is being held on 1 October 2014;
- views are being sought from the Care & Independence Overview & Scrutiny Committee and the Young People Overview & Scrutiny Committee; and

- an equality impact assessment is being undertaken.

- 4.5 The stakeholder review session will include representatives from our authorised agencies, along with agencies who play a role in signposting clients to support from the NYLAF, such as Citizens Advice. This will provide an opportunity for partners to discuss and contribute views on their (and their clients') experiences of the NYLAF during the previous twelve months, but also, critically, to comment on how they feel the NYLAF could evolve going forward. Ahead of the workshop, a series of questions will be issued to partners to help them reflect on the key issues. A copy of the questions to be used is attached at Appendix 3. Additionally, a short survey based around these questions will be sent out electronically to all partners involved in, or with an interest in, the NYLAF, to ensure the views of those not attending the session are captured.
- 4.6 The Young People Overview & Scrutiny Committee is invited to comment on the NYLAF and the potential three options outlined above. The Committee may find it useful to reflect on the questions to be used with stakeholders, as set out in Appendix 3.

5 Recommendations

- 5.1 The Committee is recommended to:
- (a) note the overview provided by the report; and
 - (b) provide any comments about the potential future options for the NYLAF, as outlined in section 4.

Appendix 1 – North Yorkshire Local Assistance Fund information leaflet for agents and customers.

Appendix 2 - North Yorkshire Local Assistance Fund: First Year Report 2013/14

Appendix 3 – NYLAF stakeholder review, 1 October 2014 – Preparatory questions for stakeholders regarding planning for 2015/16.

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16 October 2014

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North

Yorkshire County Council

APPENDIX 1

North Yorkshire Local Assistance Fund



What is it?

The North Yorkshire Local Assistance Fund ("the Fund") provides support for vulnerable adults to move into or remain in the community, and for families under exceptional pressure to stay together.

Awards are made in the form of goods, not cash. Items requested must be essential and critical to your needs or those of your family. They include essential items of household furniture and equipment, beds and bedding, food vouchers, clothing vouchers, utility top-ups, utility reconnection charges and essential home repairs.

Can I apply?

You can apply if:

1. you are over 16 years old; **and**
2. you live in or are moving to North Yorkshire (including if you are leaving an institution and resettling in North Yorkshire); **and**
3. you are in receipt of specific means-tested benefits or you have a household income below the government's 'low income threshold' (for 2013/14 this is £15,910) and have less than £1,000 in capital; **and**
4. you have a need that cannot be met from other forms of support; **and**
5. you fall into one or more of the following categories:
 - Homeless
 - Learning / physical disabilities
 - Mental health problems

- Recently released from prison / supervised on Community Order
- Victim of domestic abuse
- Carer
- Drugs or alcohol dependent
- Couples and single parents with children and people caring for children, who are under exceptional pressure ('Exceptional pressure' may be the result of acute domestic difficulties. An award under this category would normally be to help members of a family to stay together).

If you have an urgent need for food or a utility top-up (that is, credit added to your gas or electricity account) but do not strictly fall within one of our categories above, then we may be able to provide a one-off food voucher and/or a utility top-up (see also "How do I apply for food and/or utility top-up?" below).

Each case will be looked at individually and awards depend on funds available. Support will be given to those most in need.



How can I apply?

You will need to contact North Yorkshire County Council's Customer Services Centre on **0845 8 72 73 74** to talk about your circumstances and what support you feel you need.

Lines are open Monday to Friday from 8am to 5:30pm.

If you have an urgent need for support, the County Council will put you in contact with an organisation in your local area who will want to discuss your needs with you a bit more and talk about the kind of support that they may be able to help you access. This may include the agency completing an online application for the Fund for you, if you are eligible for assistance.

Can I apply myself, without seeing another agency?

In exceptional circumstances, we can help individuals who need to make their own application, without the need for them to attend another agency in their area. For example, this might be because:

- the local agency is unable to urgently get access to the internet;
- there is an access issue and the individual simply can't get to the local agency; or
- there isn't an agency who has access to the online application form in that area.

This process can be slightly slower though, as individuals will need to make

sure they send all the documentary evidence required to support their application (see the criteria in "Can I apply?", above). Online applications through an agency are preferred, to make sure we get assistance urgently to people who need it.

If an individual application is needed, then please call NYCC Customer Services on **0845 8 72 73 74**.

How often can I apply?

You will only be able to apply for a maximum of three items in any rolling 12 month period, unless your circumstances change, and this can be demonstrated to the agency that is helping you to apply.

The exception to this rule is for people who have an urgent need purely for food or utility top-up and who are eligible for support from the Fund. If you need a food voucher or a utility top-up, you will be able to apply to the Fund for both of these, if needed, up to two occasions within 12 months. You will also be able to submit an additional application that year for other items from the Fund, such as household goods or clothing, up to a maximum of three items.

Additionally, if you meet all of our basic criteria around age, residency and income and have an urgent need for food or utility top-up but do not strictly fall within one of our categories at point 5 above, then you may still be able to apply for a one-off food voucher or a

one-off utility top-up (see “How do I apply for food?” below). This exception is only made for food vouchers and utility top-ups from the Fund.

How do I apply for food and/or utility top-up?

You will need to contact NYCC Customer Services (**0845 8 72 73 74**) to ask about any kind of support from the Fund, including food and utility top-up. You can call us between 8am and 5:30pm, Monday to Friday.

When you call for the first time to ask for either food or utility top-up, Customer Services will obtain your details and ask you some questions to identify whether you meet all of the key eligibility criteria for the Fund. If you do then we will put you through to the company who process our applications. If you cannot pay for the full call, we will take a number from you and ask the company to get in touch with you urgently. They will speak to you to ask you a few more questions about your circumstances, but you will not need to visit an agency in your area, nor will you be asked to send evidence of your circumstances. The application will be automatically approved and, depending on your application, either a food voucher will be sent out to you directly or a PayPoint voucher will be issued to you via email, text or post, for you to take to a PayPoint outlet to scan and credit your energy account. For more information about how this process works, please see “How does utility top-up work?”, below.

If you'd like to apply for food or utility top-up a second time within twelve months, you will need to contact NYCC Customer Services again, but this time we will ask you to make contact with another agency in your area as you may have a need for longer term support. This will involve you providing some documentary evidence of your circumstances to the agency that helps you to apply.

Food vouchers are credited with enough money to enable you to purchase enough food to last for at least five days. The value of the voucher is enough to buy a healthy diet and it is hoped this will be spent on a mixture of fresh and preserved foods. We guarantee that a voucher will be delivered to you within 24 hours, if your call is received before 11:30am, Monday to Friday. We cannot guarantee to get a food voucher to you within a shorter period of time so if your need is urgent then you may need to get support from another agency. NYCC Customer Services may be able to help with information about other places which provide food in your area.

How does utility top-up work?

Once your application for utility top-up has been approved (either by phone, for the first application, or via an online application through an agent for the second application), you will be sent a pre-credited voucher or code with a set amount to help top up your energy supply. You will be able to receive the voucher by post or email. You will be

able to specify how you would like to receive your voucher or code when you apply. Vouchers will need to be taken to any PayPoint outlet, such as a local newsagent, along with your gas prepayment card or electricity key. Outlets offering the PayPoint service can be identified with the PayPoint logo in the window. Once the voucher barcode has been scanned against your card or key, this will automatically credit your account with one of the amounts below.

- Individual - £28
- Family (more than one adult in the household) - £45

You will not be required to provide identification to the PayPoint merchant and as such it is important that you make sure that we know what is the best way of sending the voucher on to you. Repeat vouchers cannot be provided in the event that you mislay your voucher. Each voucher will only work once and, once redeemed, cannot be used again.

In circumstances where a customer only has access to a coin meter or requires other fuel such as coal, it may be possible to provide utility top-up in the form of a voucher which can be redeemed for cash at a PayPoint outlet. Customers requiring a voucher for a coin meter or other fuel must indicate this to NYCC Customer Services or to the referring agent when requesting support.

Please note that where a standard voucher is issued by us for direct top up of gas or electricity accounts, these cannot be exchanged for cash and the PayPoint merchant will be unable to provide you with a cash alternative.

If you desire a utility top-up voucher to be sent to you in the post we guarantee a next day delivery providing your call is received before 1:45pm, Monday to Friday. If you desire a utility top-up voucher to be issued by email we can guarantee the voucher will be issued within 24 hours providing your call is received before 3:45pm, Monday to Friday. Unfortunately we cannot guarantee to help you within a shorter period of time.

Please note that utility top-up vouchers will expire after a month of the date they were issued.

Can I still get some support if I don't meet all of the criteria?

If you do not strictly fall within one of our categories (see "Can I apply" on page 1) but meet our other criteria and have an urgent need for food or utility top-up which cannot be met through other forms of support, then we may be able to issue a food voucher and/or utility top-up to you on a one-off basis. To apply for this, you will need to contact NYCC Customer Services in the usual way to discuss your circumstances. These applications will be processed in the same way as other first-time applications for food or utility top-up from the Fund.

I don't have money to pay for a call to NYCC Customer Services - how do I get in touch?

You can go to any NYCC Library and Information Centre in North Yorkshire and ask them to put you through to NYCC Customer Services. Alternatively, if you call the Customer Services Centre and give a phone number that we can contact you on then we will call you back directly so that you are not charged for the full call.

What if I apply to the Fund for assistance and I am not happy with the decision?

You can ask for the decision to be looked at again. Details about how to get the decision reviewed will be provided in the response to your application.



Where can I get urgent help if my application is not successful or if I am not eligible?

Information will be available for those who are not eligible for the Fund or not successful with their application to get other forms of support elsewhere in the county.

Where can I get help with other costs that aren't included within the Fund?

The Department for Work and Pensions are responsible for providing a number of payments and advances for those who meet the eligibility criteria. These include:

- Funeral Payments
- Sure Start Maternity Grants
- Winter Fuel and Cold Weather Payments
- Short-term Benefit Advances
- Budgeting Advances

For further information please speak to your local JobCentre Plus office.

Contact us

North Yorkshire County Council, County Hall, Northallerton, North Yorkshire, DL7 8AD

Our Customer Service Centre is open Monday to Friday 8.00am - 5.30pm (closed weekends and bank holidays).

Tel: **0845 8727374** email: **customer.services@northyorks.gov.uk**

Or visit our website at: **www.northyorks.gov.uk**

If you would like this information in another language or format such as Braille, large print or audio, please ask us.

Tel: 01609 532917 Email: communications@northyorks.gov.uk





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Background

The North Yorkshire Local Assistance Fund (NYLAF) was launched on 1 April 2013 by North Yorkshire County Council to replace the discretionary Social Fund scheme managed by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). The Welfare Reform Act 2012 abolished the Social Fund and meant that new locally based provision would now be delivered by local authorities instead of the DWP.

The Social Fund previously provided crisis loans, crisis loan alignment payments and community care grants – cash for general living expenses and to see people through during times when there were issues with their benefits.

The NYLAF provides emergency support for vulnerable adults to move into or remain in the community, and to help families under exceptional pressure to stay together. The NYLAF does not replicate what was previously provided by DWP. No cash payments, crisis loans or community care grants are available. Awards are made in kind, for example by supplying vital household goods and basic necessities. 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.

A customer may apply for up to two awards of emergency food and/or utility top-ups in any twelve month period. For other items provided under the fund, a maximum entitlement of three items (including a maximum of one white good) may also be awarded within the same twelve month period.

Charis Grants Ltd are responsible for the day to day management of the fund. This includes managing the application process, making the decision on awards within the criteria specified by the

county council, and ensuring the supply and delivery of all items that are awarded. Charis were appointed following procurement in 2012/13 and have so far provided a good service.

Applications to the fund are made through authorised agencies (e.g. selected county council front line services, registered social landlords, and voluntary organisations). These agencies include the Rainbow Centre Food Bank in Scarborough, Foundation, Horton Housing, NYCC adult social care etc. It is the role of authorised agencies to assess the applicant and identify them as eligible and vulnerable. It is expected the authorised agencies will see an application to the NYLAF as part of a package of support. The application takes the form of an online form which was designed by Charis specifically for the NYLAF. The agent is responsible for filling out the details of the form with the applicant present.

However, if there is an urgent need for food/utility top-up but the applicant does not strictly fall into one of the vulnerability categories then the NYLAF may be able to issue a one-off food/utility top-up voucher without going through an authorised agency. Instead customers can call the Customer Service Centre who will then forward the call direct to Charis. Any second request must go through an authorised agency and meet the full requirements.

It is hoped a potential applicant to the NYLAF will already be in contact with an authorised agency however, if this is not the case it is possible for a customer to ring through to the Customer Service Centre where they will be briefly assessed and directed towards a suitable agency. When an applicant is making an emergency application for food and/or utility top-up the Customer Service Centre will similarly briefly assess the applicant before putting them through to Charis Grants to further assess and issue the award. The awards are delivered direct to the customer unless specified otherwise (some customers may choose to have their goods delivered to the agency). Charis Grants are responsible for communicating with the customer when the goods will be delivered. Food vouchers and utility top-up vouchers can be delivered within 24 hours. For other items such as white goods and furniture these are usually delivered within 11 days of the application reaching Charis Grants. The average delivery time is 7 days.

Consultation with stakeholders was undertaken prior to the establishment of the NYLAF and again six months into the fund's lifespan. Constant communication is maintained with stakeholders and supporting agencies such as Citizen Advice Bureaux. This is two way communication and includes regular updates on our part and comments relating to possible improvements and problems on theirs. The NYLAF [webpage](#) contains a leaflet advertising the fund which is regularly updated, a leaflet listing other possible avenues for support and a list outlining what items are available from the NYLAF.

Unsuccessful applicants can ask for the decision to be reviewed. Initially this is undertaken by Charis Grants Ltd, but any subsequent review would be undertaken by the county council.

Summary of activity 2013/14

Total applicants:	2,796
Total applications:	3,211
Total unsuccessful applications:	20

The total applicants is different to the total amount of applications as the total amount of applications includes applicants who have applied more than once on separate occasions. The unsuccessful applications were either due to being deemed ineligible, out of region or they are applicants who have already received their maximum entitlement from the NYLAF.

Total items awarded (including food):	4,616
Food awards:	1,581

The total budget for 2013/14 was £947,006. This was separated into two separate budgets: the awards budget £793,346 and the administration budget £153,660. Total spend for the financial year 2013/14 was £628,243. This equates to 79.2% of the total awards budget.

Expenditure was low in the first few months of the year, but in the second half of the year the NYLAF came under increasing financial pressure and the total spend was 105.7% of the equivalent budget for these six months. Due to the high spend a decision was made to remove rent deposits and rent in advance from its provision and to restrict white goods to one award per application.

Changes to the fund

The fund has had to adapt and evolve throughout its first year in order to better serve its client group, deliver on budget and react to issues.

Rainbow Centre

In August 2013 the NYLAF entered into a partnership with the Rainbow Centre food bank in Scarborough. The Rainbow Centre is responsible for providing first time food parcels to applicants in Scarborough town. The Rainbow Centre is open five days a week and is well placed within the community to assess an applicant's needs and provide them with extra support and advice in addition to the food parcel provided by the NYLAF. On top of this they offer value for money, particularly when offset against our food parcel/vouchers distributed throughout the rest of the county.

Rainbow Centre food awards:	741
Rainbow Centre funding (Aug – March):	£7,800
Average award cost:	£10.53
Average food parcel/voucher cost (excluding Rainbow Centre):	£57.19

Utility top-up

Utility top-up was introduced in November 2013. This provides the applicant with the option of applying for an emergency voucher to pay for their gas and/or electricity. The fund provides £28 for an individual and £45 for a family. These amounts were reached by looking at the average household energy bill. It is hoped a utility top-up will last the customer for a minimum of a week. Since introduction utility top-up has proved very popular. 721 awards have been made accounting for 25% of the total number of awards made since November 2013.

Rent deposit

From February 2014 rent deposits / bonds were removed as an available item from the NYLAF. This decision was taken due to the increasing financial pressure on the fund and also due to the fact that district councils have the option to provide this using Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP). Before its removal 43 awards had been made at an average cost of £354.88. Rent deposits were one of the funds most expensive awards and it was hoped removing them would relieve some financial pressure on the fund.

White goods

Beginning in March 2014 applications were restricted to one white good per application as opposed to the previous possible three. Applicants are still eligible to apply for three goods but only one of these can now be a white good. This decision was taken to relieve financial pressures on the fund and try to keep the fund within its monthly budget. White goods account for the most popular award and the most expensive.

White good awards:	1,593
As a percentage of all awards:	34.5%
Total white good spend:	£412,571
As a percentage of total spend:	65.7%
Average cost per item:	£258.99

Food awards

In March 2014 the way the NYLAF provided food awards changed. Up until this point food awards were made in the form of a food parcel. These parcels were delivered to the applicants address and varied in size dependent on the size of the family. Enough food was contained within the parcel to last for at least five days.

Unfortunately the supplier of these parcels withdrew for financial reasons and alternative suppliers have proved hard to find. As a replacement the NYLAF now provides food vouchers to applicants. These vouchers are set at a certain value depending on the size of the family. When making the application the applicant is asked to state which supermarket is the most accessible for them and a voucher is issued for use at that supermarket. The supermarket can either be ASDA, Morrisons, Sainsbury's or Tesco. These vouchers are cheaper than the previous provision of food parcels and provide the applicant with the opportunity to buy fresh produce.

Food awards are the second most popular requested type of item behind white goods, but are the most requested single item.

Breakdown of Awards

1 Items awarded in 2013/14 (% of awards)

White goods:	35%
Food (Including food issued by the Rainbow Centre):	34%
Utility top-up (started November 2013):	16%
Furniture & beds:	11%
Clothing:	3%
Rent deposits (withdrawn February 2014):	1%

2 Overall cost of awards by item in 2013/14 (% of total spend)

White goods:	65.7%
Furniture & beds:	14.8%
Food (Not including food issued by the Rainbow Centre):	7.6%
Clothing:	4.9%
Utility top-up (started November 2013):	4.4%
Rent deposits (Withdrawn February 2014):	2.4%

3 Vulnerability groups assisted in 2013/14 (% of awards)

Family under exceptional pressure:	40%
Homeless / Risk of homelessness:	12%
Mental health problem:	10%
Physical disability:	8%
Domestic abuse:	3%
Drugs / Alcohol dependency:	3%
Learning disability:	2%
Released from prison / Supervised on community order:	2%
Carer:	1%

(Please note these percentages are incomplete as the remaining percentage (19%) was awarded via the Rainbow Centre food bank, Scarborough. The Rainbow Centre's main client group are 'Homeless / Risk of homelessness'.)

4 Location of successful applicants in 2013/14 (% of awards)

Scarborough:	46%
Harrogate:	13%

Selby:	11%
Hambleton:	10%
Ryedale:	8%
Richmondshire:	6%
Craven:	5%

Examples of help provided by NYLAF

1. "J" is a single male who came to the Rainbow Centre for support after he had recently experienced a fire at his accommodation and had, effectively, lost everything. It transpired that the Landlord was not insured and absconded from the town – leaving the property inaccessible and the client effectively homeless.

The Rainbow Centre undertook a full assessment of the individual's case and issued him with clothing, access to a telephone to make practical arrangements and under the NYLAF programme, a food parcel. The emergency food parcel allowed the client to eat for a week whilst staying in temporary accommodation until more permanent accommodation could be found.
2. "P" is a single mother with two young children dealing with the fall-out from an abusive relationship with her partner. She was initially referred to the Rainbow Centre's money advice service due to spiralling debts and compounded fines for late payment but was only in receipt of child benefit and child tax credits. As part of the intervention by the Rainbow Centre she was assessed as in need of practical support and was issued with a family food pack under the NYLAF programme.

Although still a distance from a stable family situation, the food pack and intensive support from the Rainbow Centre have ensured the family have been able to stay together and the children's situations have been closely monitored. The food provision bought time in a crisis and chaotic situation and ensured that some practical needs were addressed quickly.
3. "K" was a teenage parent and now has two children, boys aged four and three. She has a very troubled past and lost her home when she was sent to prison. For the last two years she has been living in her parents' home with the children. Conditions were very poor due to overcrowding. When "K" finally became homeless she was given a new house but was still on benefits and couldn't afford to furnish it. A NYLAF grant got her off to a good start. She was given a washing machine and a bed for her youngest child who had never had a bed of his own. A utility top-up also helped her through the first few days when finances were particularly tight.

Her son is now sleeping in his own bed in his own room. Mum, who has not been in trouble for more than four years, is keeping on top of the washing and the house is clean and tidy. The children were able to have their first ever tea party.
4. "A" is on Pension Credit and fled domestic violence, taking her granddaughter with her under the recommendation of Social Services. The expectation was for "A" to keep her

granddaughter safe from witnessing or being involved in any abusive situations. The pair initially moved into refuge accommodation but have since moved into a local authority house.

“A” received a fridge/freezer and a washing machine from the NYLAF as she was unable to fund these items herself due to her limited funds and her only income being her pension credit. The items she received have contributed to “A” and her granddaughter being able to make a fresh start.

5. “G” receives DLA, Mobility and Carers allowance. He was abused both physically and mentally at his previous home and so fled to Scarborough. Whilst in Scarborough he was supported in fully furnished refuge accommodation where he had a six month tenancy. When this came to an end “G” moved to an unfurnished local authority permanent accommodation. “G” had saved some money in this time from benefits but needed help with a fridge/freezer and a food pack which the NYLAF awarded. The items reduced the burden on “G” during his transition to permanent accommodation.

6. “J”, a young single parent to three girls, has used the children’s centre for years but has only ever engaged with two-year funding. Despite our efforts, she would not engage with courses or family activities. “J” problems started when she took out a loan with an on-line loans company. . It spiralled out of control and she needed the help of a charity to apply for a debt relief order. She turned to the Children’s Centre in desperation when she couldn’t afford her electricity bill. A utility top-up got her back on her feet and we were also able to get her a replacement bed for one of the children. NYLAF helped again when her cooker burnt out and she had no way to fund a replacement.
While completing the NYLAF application, the Parent Support Adviser spoke to mum about her future and what she could do to become more financially independent. Mum said she lacked the qualifications needed to get a job. The PSA suggested she should try a Functional Maths course. Mum agreed and is still studying. She says she wouldn’t have been on this path without the conversation sparked by the NYLAF application.

**North Yorkshire Local Assistance Fund
Stakeholder review questions**

A full list of current provision made available under NYLAF will be made available to each group.

1. If the NYLAF were to discontinue, would any similar support be available from other sources?

Yes - (Please list any you think applicable)

No - (Any further comments?)

2. What does the NYLAF provide for vulnerable clients that other resources do not? (i.e. if the NYLAF were discontinued – what would be lost?)

3. It is likely that the scheme budget will need to be reduced considerably from 2015/16 and as such there is a need to review how the scheme is targeted and the range of provision available.

- 3(a) Are there particular client groups that we should prioritise?

Yes / No

If 'yes', please list these.

If 'no', please provide any further comments below.

- 3(b) Which goods and services should we prioritise as part of the NYLAF offer? Using the list below, please rank in order of priority with '1' as most important.

White goods

Furniture, household items, beds and bedding

Utility top-up and reconnection

Clothing

Food

Essential home repairs

- 3(c) Are there any goods or services that you think we could remove from the NYLAF offer?

Yes / No

If 'yes', please indicate what these goods or services are.

If 'no', please provide any further comments below.

4. Could the NYLAF prioritise certain client groups and allocate more items to some groups than others?

Yes / No

If 'Yes' – please tick against all those groups that you feel should be prioritised from the list below.

Homelessness/risk of homelessness

Learning/physical disabilities

Mental health problems

Recently released from prison/supervised on Community Order

Victim of domestic abuse

Carer

Drugs or alcohol dependent

Couples and single parents with children and people caring for children, who are under exceptional pressure

If 'No', please provide any further comments below.

5. Do you have any suggestions as to how we could best manage the transition for clients and agencies in 2015/16? Please provide any comments in the box below.