

Crisis Support in Buckinghamshire

A report by the Buckinghamshire County Council Finance, Performance and Resources Select Committee



Inquiry Group: Brian Roberts (Chairman)
Bill Bendyshe-Brown
Bill Chapple
Steven Lambert

Date: December 2014

Buckinghamshire County Council



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Executive Summary

The main aim of the inquiry into crisis support in Buckinghamshire was to review what provision is already in place and to highlight any gaps in the existing provision. These findings are designed to inform any future discussions around what should be in place if Government funding for local welfare assistance is withdrawn from 2015/16 (this issue is currently being consulted on and the Government will make a decision on funding for 2015-16 in time for the provisional local government finance settlement in December 2014).

In 2013/14, the County Council received £479,510 programme funding and the same amount in 2014/15. The funding for 2015/16 has not been received from Central Government for Local Welfare Provision as funding was for two years only. The county council's budget for this provision in 2015/16 has been agreed at £300k. The budget spend so far in this financial year is currently £79,348.80 (April to October). The report aims to make suggestions as to how this money can be spent more effectively by directing it to those people and organisations most in need.

The report focusses on both qualitative and quantitative research and draws on the findings from visits to a local charity, speaking to officers and evidence gathering sessions with a number of partner agencies.

A number of existing studies have been used as background information, including "Nowhere to turn? Changes to emergency support" by Sam Royston and Laura Rodrigue; Household Food Security in the UK: A Review of Food Aid (February 2014) and the Local Welfare provision in 2015/16 – a consultation document from Central Government.

It soon became apparent to the inquiry group that crisis support is a highly complex area with many different strands to it. Due to the relatively short timeframe for the inquiry (September to December), it was agreed that this report would serve as the first phase in highlighting a number of issues and it would recommend some areas for further development. It is worth noting that the inquiry group has not undertaken any in depth interviews with service users at this stage. However, the LES team carried out a customer survey but the response rate to date is too small to draw any reasonable conclusions. A more in-depth customer survey could be commissioned as part of a second phase to test the validity of some of the recommendations.

The Inquiry Group would like to thank all the officers and the many partner organisations and agencies for their time and valuable contributions to the compilation of this report.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1: That the local emergency team promotes the local number alongside the 0845 number. These numbers should be promoted to all partner agencies and District Councils as well as promoted to all County Councillors and service areas within the county council (particularly Children and Families). The LES number and information about local emergency support (with links to partner agencies and organisations) needs to be given prominence on the county council’s website. The LES team to develop the idea of “Bucks Support” to help improve access to emergency support services for people in crisis via the county council’s website. (paragraphs 18-21)

Recommendation 2: That the Local Emergency Support team works with the relevant partner agencies to share their current processes with the aim of reducing duplication of effort where possible. (paragraphs 25-27)

Recommendation 3: That the local emergency support team considers administering the red voucher system along with other partner agencies so that the needs of those facing a ‘level one’ crisis can be met immediately and statistical information relating to the use of Foodbanks is collected, on a quarterly basis, in a central place. Encourage partner agencies to “sign-up” to the red voucher system to ensure a consistent approach which will help to establish the size, demand and complexity of the issue. (paragraphs 28-35)

Recommendation 4: That the Local Emergency support team explores in conjunction with the CAB, the possibility of offering free, one-off bus vouchers for people in rural areas to allow them to access crisis support more easily. The policy needs to include this and it should define what emergency travel includes. Discuss with the CAB, the possibility of them administering the vouchers from their offices as one of the CAB’s has already expressed an interest in doing this. (paragraphs 36-37)

Recommendation 5: That the County Council actively promotes Credit Unions as a method of saving and also as an alternative to the existing payday loans. The LES team, in conjunction with other partner agencies, should seek assistance from the corporate communications team to develop a communications and engagement plan to target relevant groups and organisations. (paragraphs 59-62)

Recommendation 6: That the County Council explores the possibility of depositing a sum of money from the LES budget with the Swan Credit Union and M for Money Credit Union to allow people to convert their existing payday loans to more manageable loans. This scheme would need to be monitored by the LES team. (paragraphs 59-62)

Recommendation 7: That the Local Emergency Support team should explore with the Credit Union and the CAB, the possibility of setting up projects in local primary and secondary schools to educate children on how to manage

their money effectively and encourage them to save. Part of the LES budget could be assigned to help build on what is already offered to enable projects to be rolled out to a wider group. A sum of future LES money could be used to support setting up savings clubs in primary schools. (paragraphs 63-68)

Recommendation 8: That the County Council commits to strengthening its partnership working by fully engaging with the existing partner agency networks. Ensure representatives from the mental health team, social care, local emergency support team and the Health and Wellbeing Board are linked in with the relevant external partner agency meetings. (paragraphs 69-75)

Recommendation 9: That the County Council apportions the local emergency support budget to the different levels of support. Level one support to be administered via Service Level Agreements with the partner agencies for them to deliver services and support to people in crisis. Level two support to be allocated an amount of the budget to continue to support people to live independently and to receive the ongoing support and advice. Level three support to receive a proportion of the budget to focus on preventative measures to reduce the future demand on level one support. (paragraph 78)

Acronyms

AHAG	Aylesbury Housing Action Group
AVDC	Aylesbury Vale District Council
CAB	Citizen's Advice Bureau
CIS	Customer Information System
CRM	Customer Relationship Management (system used by the contact centre to record and log calls)
DHP	Discretionary Housing Payments
DWP	Department of Work and Pensions
LES	Local Emergency Support
PSHE	Personal, Social and Health Education

Introduction

1. The Welfare Reform Act 2012 was the biggest overhaul for the benefits systems since the 1940s. Around 40,000 people receive benefits in Buckinghamshire and the groups most affected by the changes include working-age unemployed people, working-age people on low wages, large households (households with children are expected to be among the worst affected), sick and disabled people (including those with mental health issues), sofa surfers/homeless and social housing tenants.
2. In August 2012, the Minister for Pensions, Steve Webb described the Government's intentions for the local welfare assistance funding:

“.....we expect the funding to be concentrated on those facing greatest difficulty in managing their income, and to enable a more flexible response to unavoidable need, perhaps through a mix of cash or goods..... In short, the funding is to allow [local authorities] to give flexible help to those in genuine need.”

3. The Local Welfare Assistance fund was introduced in 2013 to replace Government provided crisis loans and community care grants, with each local authority being allocated money from the £347 million total. The Government believes that local authorities, with their existing social care strategies and duties are better placed to determine the support needs of local vulnerable people.
4. Under the Local Government Act 2000, the County Council has been expected to utilise the non-ring fenced grant to provide assistance and emergency provision. In 2013/14, the County Council received £479,510 programme funding and the same amount in 2014/15.
5. It was intended that, from April 2015, local welfare provision would be funded from general grant to Local Government, instead of an identifiable sum being made available specifically for this purpose. This decision was recently challenged in judicial review proceedings which have now been settled. The Government has committed to making a fresh decision as to how local welfare provision should be funded in 2015/16.
6. The Select Committee received a report on 5 December 2013 which updated Members on Buckinghamshire County Council's approach to local welfare assistance, which it refers to as Local Emergency Support. Two full-time local emergency support officers manage the referrals by reviewing the CRM system which is used by the contact centre to record details of claimants. Out of hours support for residents is provided by the out-of-hours team using local emergency support funding.
7. The demand for assistance was lower than anticipated resulting in a considerable underspend. Only 10% of the budget was spent after the first 7 months of 2013/14. By the end of the financial year, £122,928.90 of the overall budget (£479,510) had been spent.

8. A dataset of 1,100 claims for assistance were analysed and 37% of claims made were made from households within Aylesbury, 31% were from Wycombe, 17% were from Chiltern with the remaining 15% divided across LU (Luton), SL (Slough), MK (Milton Keynes) and UB (Uxbridge) postcode areas. 62% received a solution funded directly from local emergency support monies. Those who did not receive a directly funded solution were sign posted to food banks, advised of their eligibility to benefits or other resources and provided with verbal and written instructions on how to do so.
9. 55% of claimants were referred to the local emergency support team by the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP). The team has access to 'CIS' which is the DWP's system for validating a claimant's information.
10. In February 2014, a Cabinet Member decision was taken to enable funding to be given directly to organisations within Buckinghamshire that support residents in crisis. The aim of providing funding to organisations was to strengthen the infrastructure across the County. A number of organisations have benefitted from one-off payments to assist them with supporting people in crisis.

Inquiry Scope

11. The key areas which were investigated as part of the review were as follows.

- Whether the key aims of the current Local Emergency Support policy are being met.
- How the Local Emergency Support is currently being used and how it is accessed by those most in need and the level of awareness of the Local Emergency Support facility.
- The effectiveness of signposting by partner agencies and the Local Emergency team to the other services (including mental health, alcohol and drug dependency support, domestic violence and child exploitation support groups).
- The level of support across the county and the identification of gaps in the existing provision.
- Any trends in who accesses crisis support and the key drivers of demand. Potential barriers were also identified.
- Exploring the “crisis offer” with partner agencies and looking into early intervention measures to reduce the number of people finding themselves in crisis situations.
- The level of partnership working amongst the different agencies and the local authorities and the level of duplication across these areas.

Evidence

12. The inquiry group comprised Bill Bendyshe-Brown, Bill Chapple, Steven Lambert and Brian Roberts (Chairman). Liz Wheaton, Democratic Services Officer, provided the officer support for the inquiry.

13. Over the last three months, the inquiry group has held a number of evidence gathering sessions and carried out a number of visits.

14. In addition to this, the inquiry also draws on a number of recent national reports on the impact of the changes to emergency support, a review of food aid and the Government’s consultation document on local welfare provision 2015/16.

- The All-Party Parliamentary Inquiry into Hunger and Food Poverty in Britain – the inquiry launched its final report on 8 December 2014
<http://foodpovertyinquiry.org/>
- Nowhere to turn? Changes to emergency support by Sam Royston and Laura Rodrigues
<http://www.childrenssociety.org.uk/sites/default/files/tcs/nowhere-to-turn-final.pdf>
- Household Food Security in the UK: A Review of Food Aid (February 2014)
https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/283072/household-food-security-uk-executive-summary-140219.pdf

- Local Welfare provision in 2015/16 – a consultation document from Government
https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/362995/141010_Consultation_on_how_LWP_should_be_funded_in_15-16.pdf
- Emergency Use Only: Understanding and reducing the use of Foodbanks in the UK (research commissioned by Oxfam, Child Poverty Action Group, Church of England and the Trussell Trust.
<http://policy-practice.oxfam.org.uk/publications/emergency-use-only-understanding-and-reducing-the-use-of-food-banks-in-the-uk-335731>

Key findings and recommendations

15. Crisis support across the county is both wide ranging and diverse in its offering. The County Council, District Councils and many other partner agencies and charities are all working hard to help and support those people most in need. People can find themselves in crisis situations for many different reasons but during the inquiry process, it became apparent that the two main reasons are around benefit sanctions being applied or stopped completely due to a change in the person's circumstances and a person's debts spiralling out of control, including the impact of payday loans.

This finding was reinforced by recent national research which states that delays and gaps in the welfare state are behind the soaring numbers of people turning to Foodbanks. According to the research, which was commissioned by Oxfam, Child Poverty Action Group, the Church of England and the Trussell Trust, most people who used Foodbanks did so as a last resort, often after their benefits were stopped or reduced.

16. The growth of zero hours contracts has also had a detrimental impact on people who are trying to budget effectively but their income varies.
17. The inquiry group concluded that no-one is immune from finding themselves in a crisis situation. It can affect people on both high and low incomes. The group heard some anecdotal evidence about a Director working in London who was made redundant and kept the news from his family until the time came when he could no longer pay the mortgage or support them. He then relied upon the help of the Foodbank and other sources of support to help get him and his family get back on track.

This was reinforced by a comment from a volunteer at one of the Trussell Trust's (source: Food Family Living Tesco magazine, Christmas 2014) who said the following:

"In 2013, I'd started volunteering for The Trussell Trust foodbanks. When a well-dressed woman turned up one day I soon learned not to judge a book by its cover. I assumed she'd come to donate but, in fact, she'd left an abusive husband, was broke and living in her car. When someone loses a job or a partner, or is struck by depression, their world can change in an instant."

18. The Local Emergency Support provision which is provided by the county council currently sits within the Support Service Centre and the two officers report to the Finance Assessment Welfare Benefit and Local Emergency Support Team Manager. The team is currently located on the top floor which was questioned by a number of people during the evidence gathering and has led the Inquiry Group to question whether the team should be relocated closer to reception so that they could be more accessible to people requiring their help (particularly for partner organisations who need to collect vouchers on behalf of claimants). The group recognised that this needs to be considered as part of a bigger decision but wanted the issue around accessibility of the team to be raised in this report.

Currently, the LES telephone number is not publicised on the county council's website and people trying to reach the team would have difficulty finding the number. The inquiry group felt that access to the team needs to be easy and the number should be on the front page of the website with a link to further information about what the Local Emergency offering is and how it can help people. The inquiry group suggested developing the idea of "Bucks Support" which would be the "umbrella organisation" for all the partner agencies and organisations who support people in crisis to feed into and it would become, over time, the single point of contact for people who need assistance. The inquiry group acknowledged that there is a lot of partnership working already in existence but the group felt that by creating a "Bucks Support", it would help to reduce duplication of effort and ease some of the pressure on resources. It would also simplify the process for people who are in crisis.

19. The contact centre confirmed the process by which calls are currently handled on behalf of the Local Emergency Support team. From April 2013, calls requesting assistance through Local Emergency Support come through the contact centre on telephone number 0845 505 1121. The contact centre take full customer details, details of the emergency and explain to the caller that the team will be in touch either by telephone or letter. The contact centre call handler is asked not to promise a timescale as all claims are assessed individually and there is a five day SLA (Standard Level Agreement). If a caller is claiming they have no food or electricity and they have a child, the contact centre will give them the First Response number for more immediate assistance.
20. The inquiry group was concerned to hear that the local emergency support number is not a Freephone number. One of the partner agencies commented that they had called the LES team on behalf of a client and the call had lasted around 20 minutes (this is an expense which people in crisis cannot afford).

Currently, the county council's website does not actively promote the local emergency support number or describe the current services on offer to people in crisis. It would be useful for people accessing the website to be able to navigate very quickly to the crisis support number and not to have to "hunt" for the information.

21. The issue around the use of Freephone numbers was discussed further with the County Council's Contact Centre Operations Manager who provided the following advice.

- If a service were to deploy an 0800 number (Freephone), this would only be free to callers from landlines and not callers from mobiles. 0800 numbers are more expensive from mobiles.
- The recommendation would be to publish both the current 0845 number and the 01296 number alongside each other. People can then use the local number and will be charged at the local rate or it would be included in free call minutes on some mobiles.

Recommendation 1: That the local emergency team promotes the local number alongside the 0845 number. These numbers should be promoted to all partner agencies and District Councils as well as promoted to all County Councillors and service areas within the county council (particularly Children and Families). The LES number and information about local emergency support (with links to partner agencies and organisations) needs to be given prominence on the county council's website. The LES team to develop the idea of "Bucks Support" to help improve access to emergency support services for people in crisis via the county council's website.

22. For the purposes of this report and to enable the recommendations to be grouped together, the inquiry group has identified three different levels of crisis support.

- **Level One support** – individuals and families who need immediate help with food, heating/electricity and shelter (page 9)
- **Level Two support** – the provision of white goods and furniture for people in a "start-up" situation and to provide advice and support for sustainable living (page 17)
- **Level Three support** – strengthening preventative measures and proactively targeting people and groups to help reduce the number of people requiring level one support (page 18)

Level One support – individuals and families who need immediate help

23. The inquiry group has identified "level one" support as those individuals and families who require immediate help and support with basic needs, such as:

- Food and other basic essential items;
- Help with paying for electricity and heating;
- People requiring shelter/housing on a short term basis.

12,000 children in Buckinghamshire live in income poverty*. Many people are struggling financially meaning often there is a decision between paying a major bill or eating. (Source: One Can Trust website)

* The Child Poverty Act 2010 defines a child as being in relative poverty if they "live in a household with an income of less than 60% of the national median income"

which is very similar, but different to, the definition of the Children in Low Income Families Local Measure. This is defined as the proportion of children living in families within the UK that are either in receipt of out-of-work benefits or in receipt of tax credits with a reported income which is less than 60% of national median income.

Level One - Access to food and other basic essential items

24. The inquiry group met the Local Emergency Support officers who are responsible for administering the local emergency budget in accordance with the county council's policy. The officers support people who are in crisis by providing supermarket store cards which claimants can use to buy essential items (only two awards in a financial year), help with paying for utilities (electricity, gas and oil) and also providing furniture and white goods for people who have secured housing but need help with the basic start-up goods (ie. cooker and fridge/freezer). Part of the budget is also used to make awards to partner organisations (mainly Foodbanks) to help sustain their work in supporting people in crisis. The inquiry group acknowledged the enthusiasm and hard work which the local emergency officers demonstrated when they met with them.

Local Emergency support activity over the last six months

Month	Referrals	Food*	Utilities*	Furniture*
Apr 14	380	80	50	11
May 14	301	86	52	14
Jun 14	248	48	30	11
Jul 14	228	50	34	25
Aug14	160	35	21	13
Sept14	236	59	28	15

*** Food – number of store cards issued to individual people**

*** Utilities – assistance with gas and electricity via post office barcode letter which is sent out first class to the applicant**

*** Furniture – includes essential white goods and is assessed on the individual's circumstances and CIS checks**

25. Once the LES team has established that a person is eligible for help with food, the team will send a supermarket store card (first class) to an address (they cannot be collected by the claimant). It can, therefore, take a few days' for the store card to arrive. The local emergency support team will send the store card (by first class post) to a named organisation (such as AHAG, Women's Aid) for them to pass onto the claimant but again, this is not an immediate response.

26. It became apparent from the evidence gathering sessions that there can be delays in people receiving level one support. As mentioned above, store cards can only be sent to an address which results in a delay in getting the help to the person in crisis. There was also a feeling amongst

some of the partner agencies that there is duplication of effort in terms of the application process for accessing LES funds and that duplication of effort could be a contributory factor in the length of time it takes to respond.

27. For example, AVDC's housing debt adviser explained that she completes an application form on behalf of a claimant which is then emailed to the LES mailbox for the team to check (the team has access to CIS which is the DWP's system so that they can verify a claimant's information).
28. People can also receive help with food and other basic essential items by being referred to a Foodbank by a partner agency (including the county council's LES team). The referral agency will assess a claimant and provide a red food voucher which can be exchanged for a food parcel at one of the distribution centres across the county.

The All-Party Parliamentary Inquiry (APPI) into Hunger and Food Poverty in Britain launched its final report on 8 December 2014. A full review of the Inquiry's evidence can be read at <http://foodpovertyinquiry.org/>

The evidence presented to the APPI overwhelmingly suggests that demand for emergency food assistance has rapidly increased over the last decade. This upshot in demand was felt across the board, both by well-established providers and those food banks that had opened more recently.

29. This supports the findings of the inquiry group who heard from a number of Foodbank providers across the County – the Vale of Aylesbury Vineyard (they accept people who have not been referred) and the Chiltern Foodbank (part of the Trussell Trust) to gain a greater understanding of how the Foodbank works, the level of demand and to hear from them whether there were any gaps in provision. Further information was obtained from the One Can Trust's website. One Can Trust are based in Wycombe
30. Chiltern Foodbank is part of the Trussell Trust's UK foodbank network and works in partnership with local churches and communities. There are over 400 foodbanks in the UK and between April to September 2013, UK Foodbanks fed over 35,000 people. According to Chiltern Foodbank's website, 13 million live below the poverty line in the UK.
31. Chiltern Foodbank fed over 700 in its first year, 35% of these were children. It provided over 6,300 meals to people in crisis. Last year, 1,500 people were given food parcels by the Foodbank, an increase of 50% since its first year. The representative from the Foodbank explained that he is expecting to see a 15% increase this year to around 1,700 people receiving food parcels from the Foodbank during 2014.
32. People cannot self-refer to the Chiltern Foodbank – people are referred by a number of agencies including social services, Citizen's Advice Bureau,

Churches, Job Centres, Housing Associations and the Local Emergency Support team. Chiltern Foodbank has around 80 referral partners in the Chiltern area, 15 in Chesham and 1 in Bicester (this is the New Leaf organisation which supports people coming out of prison). Chiltern Foodbank provide different food parcels dependent on the claimant's needs – for example, parcels for single people, parcels for couples, those with a small family and those with larger families. They will also provide parcels for homeless people which contain lighter items and ring-pull canned goods. The representative from the foodbank explained that different food parcels are pulled together for people with different religious beliefs so all needs are respected and met.

Appendix 2 shows an example of the red voucher used by the Chiltern Foodbank.

The Vale of Aylesbury Vineyard Centre



33. Usually people are referred to the Vineyard by the social services, the local council, community groups or through a personal contact in churches.
34. Members of the inquiry group visited the Vineyard Centre on a Thursday morning and saw the centre receive people – many of whom were looking for a safe, warm and friendly place to have a cup of coffee and a chat. The Centre distributes food parcels and provides clothing and a number of items of furniture and other white goods which have been donated by various people. The manager from the Centre explained that a local bakery provides bread and cakes for people to pick up on a Tuesday and Thursday morning. Whilst at the Centre, the inquiry group witnessed a “man with a van” turn up with a sofa which the Centre was unable to accept due to lack of storage space.
35. The One Can Trust works on a referral system with a registered agency or organisation who will complete a referral form and an individual would be invited to come to one of the PickUp Centres to collect their food parcel. They do not accept self-referrals.

Recommendation 2: That the Local Emergency Support team works with the relevant partner agencies to share their current processes with the aim of reducing duplication of effort where possible.

Recommendation 3: That the local emergency support team considers administering the red voucher system along with other partner agencies so that the needs of those facing a ‘level one’ crisis can be met immediately and statistical information relating to the use of Foodbanks is collected, on a quarterly basis, in a central place. Encourage partner agencies to “sign-up” to the red voucher system to ensure a consistent approach which will help to establish the size, demand and complexity of the issue.

Access to Foodbanks in rural areas

36. At one of the evidence gathering sessions, the inquiry group heard that access to Foodbanks can be difficult for people living in rural areas as the distribution centres tend to be based in the towns. For example, the representative from the Buckingham Winslow & District Citizens Advice Bureau suggested that it would be useful to provide a free bus voucher (one return trip) to those people who are living in rural areas and have been referred to a Foodbank by a partner agency. If this idea were to be implemented, then it would need careful monitoring to ensure it was being used effectively. The representative from the CAB said that it is something which they would consider administering on the county council’s behalf.

37. The following additional information has been provided by the Buckingham Winslow & District CAB. In terms of demand for this, the numbers currently stand at around 2-4 people per month but these are people who are in desperate need. Typically they are people who:

- Urgently need to get to a Job Centre (to prevent sanctions or supply documents to allow claims to be paid);
- Urgently need food – there is no Foodbank in Buckingham (although a local church will provide a food parcel but this takes time to organise) so local residents need to travel to the Foodbank in Aylesbury. Providing a voucher for bus travel would mean that it can only be used for this purpose.

Kent County Council’s Support and Assistance Service currently provide assistance with travel costs in certain circumstances (people fleeing domestic abuse, for example).

Recommendation 4: That the Local Emergency support team explores in conjunction with the CAB, the possibility of offering free bus vouchers for people in rural areas to allow them to access crisis support more easily. The policy needs to include this and it should define what emergency travel includes. Discuss with the CAB, the possibility of them administering the passes from their offices as one of the CAB’s has already expressed an interest in doing this.

Level One – access to temporary housing and shelter for people in crisis

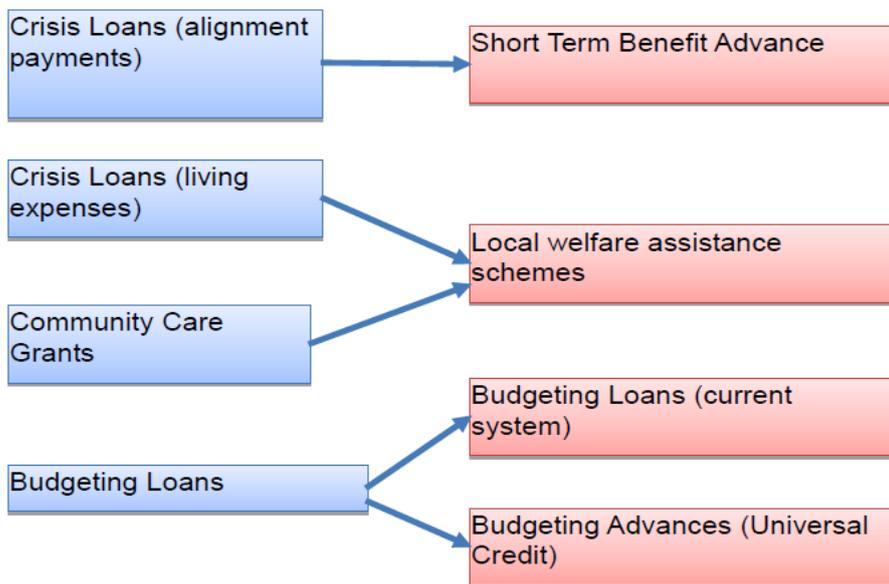
38. The DWP used to administer “Crisis loans” which could be used to cover living expenses, emergency travel expenses, fuel costs, board/lodging and

hostel charges and rent in advance. At present, “Budgeting Loans” are still available via the Department of Work and Pensions. Budgeting Loans help people to spread the cost of things which they need to buy every so often. It is a tax-free loan and no interest is charged but it has to be paid back. A person is eligible to apply for a loan if they are currently receiving income support, income-based Jobseeker’s Allowance, income-related Employment and Support Allowance or Pension Credit. A person (or their partner) has to have been receiving one of these benefits for at least 26 weeks’. This loan makes it inaccessible to people who have just been released from prison. However, a homeless person on benefits for 26 weeks or a person fleeing domestic violence would be eligible if they are entitled.

39. The Government has decided to major changes to the discretionary Social Fund. At present, Budgeting Loans will continue to be provided through the national loans budget. Under Universal Credit these will be replaced by ‘budgeting advances’ with some changes to eligibility criteria.

40. Crisis Loan ‘alignment payments’, made because of delays on the payment of benefits, have been replaced by ‘short term benefit advances’. From April 2013, funding for Community Care Grants and Crisis Loans for living expenses has been transferred to local authorities to establish local schemes of provision.

Figure 1: Changes to the discretionary Social Fund



(Source: Report entitled “Nowhere to turn? Changes to emergency support” by Sam Royston and Laura Rodrigues)

41. The Local Emergency Support policy states that the council will not be able to help people “to fund rent in advance/rental deposits”. The inquiry group heard that the demise of this has had a detrimental effect on the

homeless and the partner agencies involved in helping these people felt that they had lost their “quick fix” solution for these people.

What is currently available to cover requests for rent in advance

42. Discretionary Housing Payments (DHPs) are available to all those who are in receipt of Housing Benefit. All DHPs are discretionary; they are not guaranteed and there is no entitlement to receive one. Each local authority with the statutory responsibility for administering housing and housing benefit receives a fixed amount of annual grant from central government to fund the DHP pot.
43. The inquiry group heard from Aylesbury Vale District Council who currently operates a rent in advance scheme for people on low incomes to encourage eligible households in the Aylesbury Vale area to move into suitable properties, funded entirely from the Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP) pot. All those who are entitled to Housing Benefit are able to make a claim for a rent in advance payment under this scheme. In 2013/14, AVDC recognised that rent in advance was difficult to access for some people so the housing service negotiated a ring fenced sum of money from the overall DHP pot available to AVDC which could be used to cover rent in advance payments.
44. A ‘typical’ DHP is used to cover a shortfall in rent. For example, if a rent is £100 and housing benefit is £70, then the discretionary housing payment fund would cover the shortfall of £30 for a specified time, if approved by AVDC. The significant majority of the DHP pot at AVDC is held for ‘typical’ DHP requests.
45. There has been an increase in demand for rent in advance payments as landlords are now asking for this in order to secure the tenancy. At the end of the tenancy, there is an expectation that the landlord would repay any amount left ‘in credit’ on the tenant’s rent account (created as a result of the rent in advance payment) back to AVDC. This ‘recycling’ of the fund is intended to then enable AVDC assist other people in finding a housing solution. The allocation of funding rent in advance is intended as a tool for preventing homelessness.
46. So far in 2014/15, 49 claims for rent in advance have been received by AVDC of which only 2 were not paid out as they did not meet the criteria. 10 claims were carried over from the previous financial year. 47 successful tenancies were secured but it is estimated that there will be around 70 claims by the end of the financial year.
47. The rent in advance scheme is part of AVDC’s homeless prevention tool and the officers work closely with AHAG on the “winter warmth” initiative which aims to provide suitable tenancies for people who are homeless.
48. Wycombe District Council provides a rent guarantee scheme which aims to help people who are homeless or in housing need gain access to

privately rented accommodation by offering a guarantee against losses, damage or rent arrears in lieu of the usual deposit. To qualify for the scheme, the applicant has to have one month's rent in advance.

The Buckingham Winslow & District CAB has provided further evidence on rent in advance. This CAB typically sees between 10-12 people a month who require help with rent in advance. They will signpost people to the District Council for discretionary housing payments but feedback from service users has highlighted that it can be a little "hit and miss" as to whether this is available. The CAB confirmed that a lot of private landlords ask for a large amount of rent in advance – in some cases, up to six months. The CAB will also signpost people, who are eligible, to the Job Centre to apply for a Budgeting Loan – the maximum loan is £348 whilst a typical one-bed flat in Buckingham can cost around £500 per month.

49. The Housing Development & Strategy Manager from AVDC has offered to meet with the local emergency support officers to discuss the scheme in more detail and to raise the awareness of the scheme amongst the other District Councils and encourage a more co-ordinated and consistent approach across the county.

Area for further development – the County Council revisits the reasons behind the decision not to fund rent in advance/rental deposits and, in partnership with the District Councils and other agencies, the local emergency support team seeks to find a sustainable and manageable financial system to enable those who are homeless, or unable to find the rent in advance payments, with an opportunity to secure suitable housing.

Example of a specific project to help the homeless

50. The Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Single Homelessness project received funding from the Government under the "No Second Night Out" initiative. The total verified as homeless in Buckinghamshire during the project was 94 – previous homeless counts carried out in Buckinghamshire had indicated around 20 individuals. (Source: Minutes of the Prevention Partnership Board, 2 July 2014)

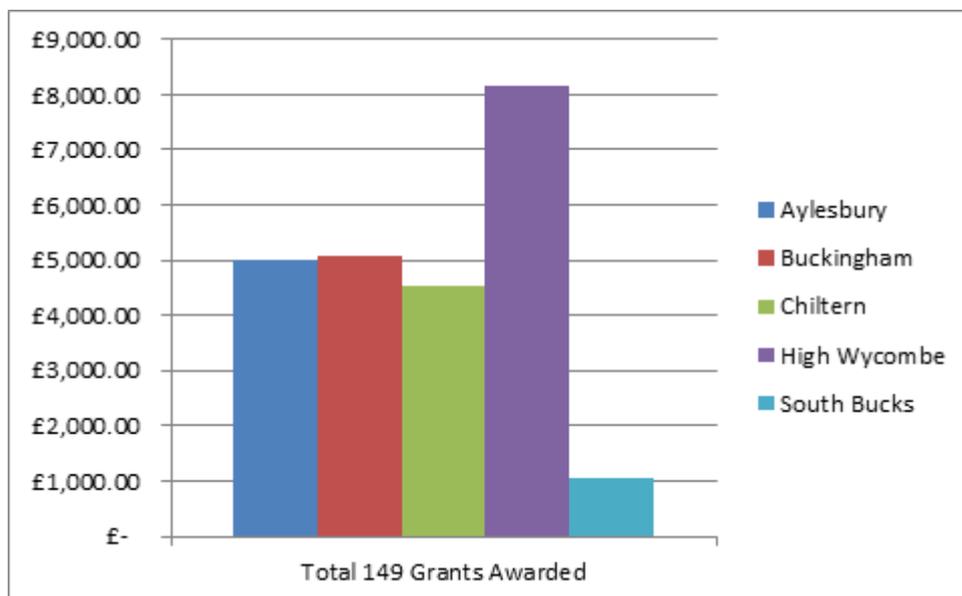
51. The current caseload is about 28 individuals – many of these are homeless due to drug or alcohol misuse, one person had been evicted due to the bedroom tax, five others had been evicted due to rent arrears and several were homeless due to family breakdown. The Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rate is not enough to cover private rents in Buckinghamshire.

Area for further development – the Local Emergency Support team to work with the local homeless charities and District Councils to facilitate an all year round 'night shelter' and not just for the Winter months (January, February and March).

Level One – provision of help with electricity and heating

52. In the last six months (April to September), the LES team has received between 21 and 50 applications per month from people requiring help with paying for their electricity and heating bills. [include information on how this is administered and the criteria used].
53. The inquiry group heard about a scheme currently being run by Bucks Money Advice Group (BMAG) who allocate fuel grants to clients in need throughout Buckinghamshire via Money Advisers, once a claimant has been fully assessed. The Group is made up of Chiltern, Buckingham, Aylesbury and High Wycombe Citizen Advice Bureau Money Adviser and the Housing options advisers from Wycombe District Council, Aylesbury Vale District Council, Chiltern District Council and South Bucks District Council. This has been of particular benefit to those in rural areas needing oil and gas bottles as this is very expensive. Bucks Community Foundation were managing these awards and asking members to donate their Winter Fuel Payment to the foundation for them to distribute to charities to help clients in fuel poverty. Through the foundation, a one-off grant of £20,000 was awarded to the Bucks Consortium for the Warmers Homes Project and this was added to the Bucks Money Advice Group Fuel Grant making a total of £28, 416.61 which has been spent over the last two and a half years. A total of 149 grants have been awarded.

The scheme has helped so many people over the past few years to keep them warm and to ensure that they do not default on other priority debts and impact on other services.



Source: Graph provided by Bucks Money Advice Group

Funding is about to cease for this scheme so this may be an area which the Local Emergency Support budget could support going forward. An

option would be to provide financial support to BMAG for them to continue to provide the fuel grants and the LES team can signpost people to this provider rather than administering it themselves.

Summary of level one support

54. People requiring level one support need access to support services as quickly as possible (within 24 hours). Evidence has shown that this is not always the case and whilst the work of the LES team is highly regarded, it would be worth exploring whether part of the LES budget could be assigned to front-line partner agencies for them to administer support to people in level one crisis so that the immediacy of their need is met.
55. One option for further consideration would be for the LES team not to award money directly to individuals requiring level one support but for this to be done via a Service Level Agreement (SLA) with partner agencies so that support is administered on behalf of the LES team. The LES team would be responsible for monitoring the effectiveness of the SLA and part of the SLA would include an agreement to report back on relevant data. This would enable the LES team to compile statistics on a regular basis, in a consistent manner, to help build up a better picture of the size and complexity of the problem. The statistical data could also be used to better inform future decisions about where future funding should be directed. Each CAB currently produces a Dashboard which provides a breakdown of the main areas of work undertaken by the CAB and it profiles the people it gives advice to. A similar Dashboard could be developed to show, for example, the number of people accessing Crisis Support through the Foodbank numbers, Fuel and Electricity assistance, travel passes administered by CABs and requests for assistance with housing (including rent in advance). Obviously more work would be required around this as it would rely on excellent partnership working and agreement by all those involved to administer support in a similar way.

Level Two support – providing white goods, services and debt advice with the aim of reducing the use of payday loans

56. The inquiry group has defined “level two” support as providing goods and services which will improve living conditions to enable someone to remain in their own home; resettle into more suitable accommodation or meet needs caused by domestic abuse. The idea is that level two support should be designed to ensure people do not require level one support. It needs to be sustained help over a longer timeframe than people requiring level one support.
57. The local emergency support team currently provides support to people in level two by providing white goods and furniture.

The team has developed good relationships with local tradesman who can provide second-hand furniture. The team identified a problem with storing large pieces of furniture but this has now been resolved through obtaining

a storage facility. The LES team have also been working with Aylesbury Vineyard ad BHV/Storage to facilitate further recycling of furniture and other goods.

Area for further development - explore the possibility of sponsoring an apprentice scheme at a local college to undertake regular testing of white goods. Promote recycling of goods and encourage people to call the local tradesman to collect any goods for recycling.

58. As mentioned earlier, one of the triggers for people finding themselves at crisis point is the spiralling costs of debt. Recent research showed that most participants described how using credit and debt formed part of their immediate coping strategy, but also how repayments of long-term debts had a significant impact on their household's disposable income.

The Aylesbury & District CAB has identified the top 10 debt issues over a full year, as below.



Source: Aylesbury & District CAB, Dashboard

59. Payday loans have been used by many people as a “quick fix” to an immediate cash flow problem. The interest rates associated with payday loans are astronomically high with some payday loan companies stating interest rates of around 2216% APR. People can easily fall into the trap of using payday loans to get through a short term problem but then find the repayment terms crippling which leads them into more debt.

Representatives from the Credit Unions have visited a number of Local Area Forums (LAF) to engage with local people and to discuss the work of the Credit Unions. At one of the LAF meetings (Beeches LAF), one of the members of the LAF asked why people choose payday loan companies over a Credit Union. The representative from the Credit Union responded by saying that payday loan companies appear to be a simple operation and some people are taking out loans in desperation, for instance, in relation to rent arrears. The representative cited an instance where the Credit Union had taken urgent action by helping a person who was in rent arrears by persuading them to open a credit union savings account and, at

the same time, negotiated reduced payments on their rent arrears. The result was that the debt was paid and the person had accrued savings at the same time.

60. The inquiry group was concerned about the impact of payday loans and whilst it was acknowledged that, whilst payday loan companies were still around, the problem could not be eradicated. The inquiry group would like to see more work around promoting the alternatives to payday loans so that people can be encouraged to make alternative choices. The inquiry group felt that closer partnership working could help to signpost people to the right place and greater publicity around the alternatives would help people make a more informed decision.

61. The inquiry group heard from the Local Welfare Provision Manager at Milton Keynes Council who has set up a facility to provide affordable loans to people where the need is not met through the Local Welfare Provision. The Council has deposited funds with the Swan Credit Union (it is referred to as the Swan Scheme). The Credit Union takes an amount for setting up the loan and an amount to enable them to offer the loan at 1.5% rather than the normal 2% that loans are offered at for first time borrowers. The Council has agreed to underwrite any loss on the loan through non-payment which enables the Credit Union to dispense with the need for the applicant to have saved for three months. The maximum loan is £600.

62. Milton Keynes Council envisage the loans being used for converting expensive payday loans/hire purchase agreements to affordable agreements or for replacement items where the applicant is not eligible for a DWP budgeting loan.

Recommendation 5: That the County Council actively promotes Credit Unions as a method of saving and also as an alternative to the existing payday loans. The LES team, in conjunction with other partner agencies, should seek assistance from the corporate communications team to develop a communications and engagement plan to target relevant groups and organisations.

Recommendation 6: That the County Council explores the possibility of depositing a sum of money from the LES budget with the Swan Credit Union and M for Money Credit Union to allow people to convert their existing payday loans to more manageable loans. This scheme would need to be monitored by the LES team.

Level Three support – Strengthening preventative measures and proactively targeting people and groups to reduce the number of people requiring level one support

63. The inquiry group has identified “level three” support as proactively targeting people and groups where short term help is likely to prevent longer term problems. By providing greater funding to organisations and

services which are working on preventative measures, the overall aim would be to reduce the number of people requiring level one support.

64. Whilst the local emergency support officers have developed good relationships with local supermarkets, schools and partner agencies, the inquiry group felt that more needs to be done to link in with the corporate partners and tap into their corporate social responsibility policies. Whilst it was acknowledged by the inquiry group that some local supermarkets are already playing a role in supporting the work of local charities by providing products which have come to the end of their shelf life, it was felt that more could be done.

By way of example, local charitable organization SOFEA (South Oxfordshire Food and Education Alliance), works with national charity FareShare to provide its food rescue and redistribution services. Like SOFEA, FareShare provides local charities with access to fresh, nutritional food while reducing food insecurity in the community:

- Food retailers redirect food to FareShare from their surplus stock. This is food that is in date and good to eat, but has become surplus for simple reasons such as over-production, labelling errors or short shelf-life.
- Rather than wasting it, the retailers give it to FareShare to redistribute.
- Volunteers sort the food as it arrives, and fill orders sent in by local charities.
- The food is then sent out to charities and community organisations who provide meals to their users. This means charities save money and feed more people – on average, they save £13,000 per year in food costs, and last year the organisation helped make 12 million meals.

Food worth £1bn is wasted in the UK every year before it even reaches our fridges, according to figures obtained by Sky News (*source: SOFEA's website*). Damage, flawed appearance and the cost of recycling are just some of the justifications used for throwing food away. Growers, producers and retailers together bin an average of 400,000 tons annually, or more than 950 million meals.

Area for further development – the LES team explores in more detail the work of SOFEA and FareShare to see whether the concept could be expanded to include the local supermarkets and charities in Buckinghamshire with the aim of reducing food waste and redirecting food products which cannot be sold in the supermarket to the foodbanks.

65. The CAB currently runs a programme aimed at schools to provide money management skills training in both primary and secondary schools. The inquiry group felt that this initiative could be further supported by funding from the LES budget so that it could be rolled out further to more schools and local colleges.

This idea was reinforced by a Governor in a local school who said that financial education is included within the PSHE curriculum (Personal, Social,

Health and Economic Education) but PSHE itself is a non-statutory subject. There is guidance on what to include but the emphasis seems to be down to each school to decide. The Governor reported that they had run a small focus group with pupils in Year 8, 9 and 10 and the general feeling was that they wanted to have more input on this type of thing, but it competes with a lot of other topics.

66. On 13 November 2014, the Church of England launched its plans to introduce savings clubs in primary schools in an attempt to prevent children getting into debt later in life. The Church of England is proposing a network of clubs, run by Credit Unions, in primary schools to help raise children's financial awareness. Under the plans, they would be able to save small, regular amounts of money. It is hoping to secure funding for the pilot scheme, which would run in six schools for nine months, from government and private companies. (*Source: BBC News website, 13 November 2014*)

67. This initiative is obviously in its very early stages but the inquiry group felt that further exploratory work with the CAB and the Credit Unions could be undertaken to see whether it is something which could be trialled within the county.

Example of current partnership working to help people manage their finances

68. Working with Aylesbury CAB and 9 partner agencies, the Buckingham Winslow & District CAB launched the ATLAS project. Its aim is to improve access to advice services for people residing in the Vale of Aylesbury. The project targets the most disadvantaged who would not otherwise have access to these services but who, by the very nature of their situation, are often the very people most in need of them. One of the major objectives of the project is to help people manage their finances effectively by providing access to financial capability, working towards reducing the need for future debt advice. (*Source: Buckingham Winslow & District Citizens Advice Bureau, Annual Report 2014*)

Recommendation 7: That the Local Emergency Support team should explore with the Credit Union and the CAB, the possibility of setting up projects in local primary and secondary schools to educate children on how to manage their money effectively and encourage them to save. Part of the LES budget could be assigned to help build on what is already offered to enable projects to be rolled out to a wider group. A sum of future LES money could be used to support setting up savings clubs in primary schools.

Linking the Local Emergency Support team with other key services

69. Work with Prison Service to improve the transition from prison back into the community and reduce the risk of reoffending. Brighton and Hove City Council operates a scheme of payment for prisoners at the point of release to provide some initial support for basic needs and minimise the risk of reoffending. It is a partnership arrangement with neighbouring authorities so prisoners are treated the same even if they return to a different local authority.

70. Existing Buckinghamshire County Council Adults & Family Wellbeing funding to provide preventative services is under considerable pressure. The population of Buckinghamshire is growing, its residents are living longer and thereby the number of vulnerable adults, older people and people with disabilities, sensory impairments, learning disabilities, mental health concerns and limiting long term conditions is also increasing.
71. A key requirement of the Care Act 2014 is that the care and support system works to actively promote wellbeing and independence through preventative services, and does not wait to respond when people reach a crisis point. Social Care in the future will have a key responsibility for the broader wellbeing of the whole population. This will result in further resource demand for preventative services. Pressure on public expenditure is rising at the same time as difficult cuts in public spending are being made.
72. Buckinghamshire County Council currently has a “Supporting People” service (SP) which provides housing related support to some of the most disadvantaged and vulnerable residents in Buckinghamshire, who if unsupported are more likely to need more intensive public sector service support in the future and therefore be the target of scarce resources to address any of their escalating needs or new concerns that arise. Supporting People is a key component of preventative services in Buckinghamshire.
73. Housing related support services can usually be described as being either:
- Floating support services which employ mobile staff who deliver housing support to wherever individuals are living, or
 - Accommodation based services which deliver housing support services on a fixed site or group of sites with the support tied to specific accommodation (e.g. refuges, foyers or supported housing).
74. Supporting People services in Buckinghamshire are currently delivered by 30 providers through 39 contracts. Key services currently being delivered through the Supporting People Programme in Buckinghamshire fall into 5 distinct areas – Sheltered Accommodation, Floating Support, Adult & Family Welfare related support, Homeless Support Services to people in short term accommodation and Dispersed Community alarms.

(Source: Extract from the report by Steve GoldenSmith on “Supporting People” which was presented to the Health and Adult Social Care Select Committee meeting on 28 October 2014).

75. At one of the evidence gathering sessions, the inquiry group heard that some partner agencies felt that the county council’s social services and mental health services should be more involved in the partner agency meetings. For example, there is a rough sleepers meeting every fortnight to which representatives from the Police, Oasis, the Job Centre and the District Council

attend. There is also a regular homeless prevention meeting which is held at Aylesbury Vale District Council offices. It was also suggested that the Local Emergency Support team should attend some of the meetings with partner agencies to facilitate appropriate feedback to the other county council services. This would also help the team to raise awareness of the local emergency support fund and to encourage partner agencies to apply for funding to support their activities.

Recommendation 8: That the County Council commits to strengthening its partnership working by fully engaging with the existing partner agency networks. Ensure representatives from the mental health team, social care, local emergency support team and the Health and Wellbeing Board are linked in with the relevant external partner agency meetings.

Conclusion

76. The inquiry has aimed to understand what provision is currently available for people who find themselves in a crisis situation and to better understand the work of the local emergency support team and the other partner agencies.
77. Whilst crisis support across the county is both wide ranging and diverse in its offering, the inquiry group recognises that people require direct access to support services when they are facing a crisis. Individuals and partner agencies need to know where to go to access different levels of support and funding. At present, there are many different routes into the support network and the inquiry group would like to see the amount of duplication of effort reduced through closer partnership working and introducing a one stop shop ("Bucks Support").
78. The inquiry group is concerned about the current underspend of the Local Emergency support budget and would like to see the money allocated to the different levels of crisis support which are outlined in the report. The suggestion is to administer level one support via Service Level Agreements so that it can enhance and support the work of the front-line agencies. There would need to be flexibility within this so that any level one request can be dealt with as a matter of priority.

Recommendation 9: That the County Council apportions the local emergency support budget to the different levels of support. Level one support to be administered via Service Level Agreements with the partner agencies for them to deliver services and support to people in crisis. Level two support to be allocated an amount of the budget to continue to support people to live independently and to receive the ongoing support and money management advice. Level three support to receive a proportion of the budget to focus on preventative measures to reduce the future demand on level one support.

Appendices

Appendix 1

Crisis Support in Buckinghamshire – inquiry proposal

Proposal subject	Crisis Support in Buckinghamshire
Possible title	'Crisis? What crisis?'
Committee chairman	Brian Roberts
Officer contact	Liz Wheaton 01296 383856 ewheaton@buckscc.gov.uk
Background to the item	<p>A scrutiny review into crisis support in Buckinghamshire will seek to inform what provision should be in place to assist people in crisis situations when government funding for local welfare assistance is withdrawn from 2015/16.</p> <p>Local welfare assistance was a new requirement of all County Councils with effect from 2013/14, replacing Community Care Grants and Crisis Loans, which were administered by the Department for Work and Pensions through Jobcentre Plus.</p> <p>A Local Government Association (LGA) briefing called 'Welfare Reform – Impact on Local Government' from February 2012 stated that:</p> <p><i>'Councils will be given the flexibility to re-design the emergency provision for vulnerable groups according to local circumstances in the way they think best. This could be payment in kind, i.e. the granting of second-hand furniture or white goods, or in cash'.</i></p> <p>The Select Committee received a report on 5 December 2013, which updated members on the Local Authority's approach to local welfare assistance, called Local Emergency Support. Demand for assistance was lower than anticipated, resulting in a considerable underspend. Only 10% of the budget was spent after the first 7 months of 2013/14, although demand was expected to increase during winter.</p> <p>In February 2014 a Cabinet Member decision was taken to enable funding to be given directly to organisations within Buckinghamshire that support residents in crisis, and to exclude asylum seekers, those who have been refused asylum and those subject to Section 17 of the Children's Act 1989 from receiving assistance.</p> <p>Local authorities were provided with a non-ring-fenced government grant for the first two years but this will not continue into 2015/16, when local authorities are expected to fund schemes from their general funds,</p>

	<p>although they have no statutory duty to do so. The decision to remove this funding was taken without a full assessment of local schemes and the LGA and the Children's Society have urged the government to rethink this decision.</p>
Key areas to address	<p>What we currently provide:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Key aims of the current Local Emergency Support policy. - How Local Emergency Support is currently being used. - Review how one off grants have been used to build capacity in the community and voluntary sector. - Investigate how easy it is for people who are genuinely in crisis to access the support they need quickly (effective signposting from other agencies etc.) - Capture and review service user feedback. <p>What other provision is available:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - In the statutory sector (BCC, Districts, DWP). - In the community and voluntary sector (food banks, CAB, charities, credit unions). <p>How effectively are local needs being met:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Identify who is accessing crisis support, are there any trends. - Identify the key drivers of demand. - Identify unmet needs / gaps in provision. <p>How crisis provision relates to our Strategic Plan:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Define what we mean by 'the most vulnerable' and 'crisis' in relation to crisis provision. - Explore how people can be supported to do more for them-selves e.g. budgeting advice, access to credit etc. <p>What crisis support should be available in future:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Determine what the local 'offer' to people in crisis should look like. - Suggest how different agencies should work in partnership to deliver this.
Anticipated outcomes	<p>The Select Committee produces an evidenced-based report and makes recommendations to Cabinet. This would include recommendations around what crisis support in Bucks should look like in 2015/16 and beyond, and how different agencies involved in supporting people in crisis situations should work together to ensure a joined up partnership approach.</p>
Link to Council Strategic Plan priority	<p>Strategic priority 6 – To encourage people to do more for themselves whilst providing a safety net for the most vulnerable members of the population.</p> <p>Strategic priority 7 – To provide excellent value for money.</p>

Methodology	<p>A scrutiny inquiry to be established by the Finance, Performance & Resources Select Committee. Evidence gathering could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reviewing the Council's current LES policy; questioning the Cabinet Member and responsible officers to understand the rationale and desired impacts/outcomes. - Engaging with partners/stakeholders to gauge their awareness, understanding and perceptions of LES and to identify what other support is available. - Engaging with service users to understand their experiences of accessing LES and how they were supported in their individual crises. - Consider what can be learnt from other local authorities. - Review outputs of 'The past and future of Local Welfare Provision' summit held in London on 2 June 2014. - Consider how resources can be targeted most effectively to address local priorities.
Public Engagement & Press	<p>A press release to promote the completed report going to Cabinet.</p> <p>Possible promotion of organisations listed in the 'Evidence provided by' section.</p>
Key background papers	<p>LES Select Committee reports (5 December 2013 and 3 June 2014).</p> <p>Nowhere to turn? Changes to emergency support – The Children's Society</p> <p>BCC Local Emergency Support flyer - http://www.buckscc.gov.uk/media/883294/LES-website-info-final-28march2013.pdf</p> <p>Overall Deprivation 2010 - http://www.buckscc.gov.uk/media/601260/deprivation-fact-sheet.pdf</p> <p>Buckinghamshire IMD ranks by area - http://www.buckscc.gov.uk/community/research/deprivation/</p> <p>Government should rethink scrapping of £347 million emergency welfare fund, councils urge - http://www.local.gov.uk/media-releases/-/journal_content/56/10180/5954063/NEWS</p> <p>Government to stop funding for low-income families facing emergencies - http://www.theguardian.com/society/2014/jan/03/government-stops-emergency-funds-low-income-families</p> <p>Local Welfare Provision: one year on and one year to go? - http://www.londonfunders.org.uk/sites/default/files/images/2April%20REPORT%20local%20welfare%20provision.pdf</p>

Use of demographics / needs	Volumes of applications by postcode
Evidence to be provided by:	Possible witnesses could include (this is not an exhaustive list): Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources; Service Director – Finance and Commercial Services; Team Leader – Assessments and Welfare Benefits Team; Team Leader responsible for LES in the Contact Centre; Citizens Advise Bureau; Job Centre Plus; District Councils representatives; Community Impact Bucks; Wycombe Homeless Connection; Children’s Society; Child Poverty Action Group.
Potential partners	BCC Policy and Partnerships Team BCC Local Emergency Support Team
Out of scope	Wider issues around welfare reform and the impacts of Universal Credit. Areas of District Council responsibility e.g. housing.
Resources required	Member and Scrutiny Officer time, witnesses’ time
Outline timetable	3 June 2014 – LES item and scope of inquiry considered by Select Committee. September/early October 2014 – Evidence gathering sessions take place. November 2014 – Report and recommendations drafted. 16 December 2014 – Report and recommendations agreed by Select Committee. January 2015 – Report and recommendations considered by Cabinet.
Reporting mechanism	Report and recommendations to be agreed by Select Committee before going to Cabinet.

Appendix 2

Example of a red voucher used by the Chiltern Foodbank

 Food Voucher	Chiltern Foodbank Office 71 Broadway Chesham Bucks HP5 1BX Tel: 01494 775688	Foodbank Centre Address 71 Broadway Chesham Bucks HP5 1BX More details overleaf	Foodbank Centre Opening Times Monday: 1:00 AM Tuesday: 10:30 AM - 12:30 AM Wednesday: 1:00 AM Thursday: 1:00 AM Friday: 10:30 AM - 12:30 AM Saturday: 1:00 AM Sunday: 1:00 AM
	Please complete form in BLOCK CAPITALS		
Distributor Name:		Authorised Signatory:	
Distributor Organisation:	Aylesbury Vale DC - Housing Debt Advice	Date:	
Telephone:		Client First Name:	
Client Address: (Please include Post Code)		Client Surname:	
		No. Adults (in words e.g. 'one')	
		No. Children (Under 16, in words)	
Nature of crisis - please only tick one crisis type		Is anyone in this household in paid employment?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
Benefit Changes	Benefit Delays	Delayed Wages	Debt
Homeless	Low Income	Unemployed	Domestic Violence
Sickness	Child Holiday/Meals	Other	Refused STBA
Ethnicity (please tick most appropriate box, one only)			
White <input type="checkbox"/>	Mixed <input type="checkbox"/>	Asian <input type="checkbox"/>	Black <input type="checkbox"/>
Chinese <input type="checkbox"/>	Other <input type="checkbox"/>		
Age Group (please tick most appropriate box, one only)			Voucher Number 69-3677
16 - 24 <input type="checkbox"/>	25 - 64 <input type="checkbox"/>	Over 65 <input type="checkbox"/>	
<small>It is important to correctly complete this voucher and to encourage all households with a young person to apply to ensure that young people are not left experiencing hardship. This form for vouchers will be available on our website and accompanied by leaflets that can be requested online. The original voucher may also be obtained.</small>			

Appendix 3

Access to Foodbanks

Aylesbury Vineyard

The Vineyard is open to provide food in an emergency situation on Tuesdays and Thursdays (except in school holidays) during the open sessions between 9.45am to 11.30am. One-off emergency food parcels may be obtained at other times (Monday to Friday) but they ask that people contact the Centre in advance to be sure that someone will be there.

Chiltern Foodbank

Red Vouchers can be exchanged for food at:

Chesham Distribution Centre

71 Broadway, Chesham HP5 1BX

Open Tuesdays & Fridays 10.30am – 12.30pm

Amersham Distribution Centre

The King's Church, Raans Road Amersham HP7 0DJ

Open Monday 10.00am – 14.00

Aylesbury (Central) Distribution Centre

3 Evett Close, Aylesbury HP20 1DW

Open Fri 13.30 - 17.00

Aylesbury (North) Distribution Centre

The Redeemed Christian Church Of God, Calvary Parish, Community Suite, Church Of England Primary School, Orchard Paradise, Berryfields, Aylesbury HP18 0WS

Open Fri 18.00 - 20.00 & Sundays 10.00 - 13.00

Little Chalfont Distribution Centre

St George's Church, White Lion Road, Little Chalfont HP7 9LW

Open Thursday 9.30 - 11.30am

Wendover Distribution Centre

Wendover Christian Centre, Aylesbury Road, Wendover, Bucks, HP22 6JG

Open Tuesday 10.00 - 12.00pm

Clients need a voucher available from a distributors or referral agencies

One Can Trust, Wycombe

The One Can Trust Foodbank operates on a referral system. They work with the organisations listed on their website who will contact them when their clients are in need of assistance. They then aim to deliver a food parcel direct to the client within 24 hours or to the organisation who will arrange to pass it on. They do not give out food parcels without a referral.