

By: Graham Gibbens, Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Public Health
Andrew Ireland, Corporate Director for Social Care, Health and Wellbeing

To: Adult Social Care and Health Cabinet Committee – 11 July 2014

Subject: Kent Support and Assistance Service

Classification: Unrestricted

Summary

The report sets out the current position with regard to the Kent Support and Assistance Scheme (KSAS) and options for the future.

Recommendation

Cabinet Committee is asked to:

- i. NOTE the report and the need for a future formal decision on the service.
- ii. ENDORSE or COMMENT on the preferred option of providing a sustainable solution by further investigating option 8.3, possibly via a Voluntary Sector Organisation.

1 Introduction

- 1.1 Prior to 1 April 2013, the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) ran a national scheme providing Community Care Grants to support people to remain in or move into independent living accommodation; and Crisis Loans to support people faced with an emergency situation who have no recourse to other funding. These two funding schemes were part of the discretionary Social Fund.
- 1.2 The Social Fund was designed to give cash awards and loans to people based on a telephone application process.
- 1.3 The provision of the Social Fund was devolved to upper-tier and unitary local authorities with the intention that they design their own local scheme to better meet the needs of the local population.
- 1.4 The **£2.85m** funding received was lower than previously available to the DWP and local authorities were expected to concentrate the funding on those facing greatest difficulty in managing their income and to create a more flexible response to local need.

2 KSAS Delivery Model

- 2.1 It was proposed to run a county-wide assistance pilot scheme commencing 2 April 2013 which would run for one year commissioned by Customer and Communities Directorate. This was subsequently extended to two years.
- 2.2 Applications could be made via an online form available on Kent.gov or by telephone using a designated 0300 number. Referrals into the scheme would be from other agencies as well as self-referrals.

- 2.3 Eligibility is restricted to Kent residents over 18 who are in receipt of certain means-tested benefits or those who have a low income.
- 2.4 The support KSAS offers falls under three broad headings:
- Information and Signposting – this is the most important part of the scheme as it offers long term help and support from agencies around the county. Information is provided on a variety of themes including the DWP Budgeting Advance schemes, Discretionary Housing Benefits Payments, debt management support, advocacy or access to help with employment and training.
 - Emergency Support – provision of grocery products, reconnection of fuel supply charges, travelling expenses etc. The grocery products are delivered through a partnership with ASDA who deliver a grocery pack to last for seven days. Energy vouchers, travel vouchers and cash (in very exceptional circumstances) are delivered through the PayPoint Network.
 - Non-emergency Support – provision of household items such as furniture, white goods and cookers most of which is delivered via the Kent Furniture Re-use Sector.
- 2.5 This service model was intended, and has proved to provide a real opportunity for developing working relationships with a range of agencies/stakeholders. It has also helped to improve the existing arrangements to deliver a more integrated preventative service that not only meets the presenting need but also addresses any other underlying circumstances or causal factors to prevent reoccurrences.

3 Staffing

- 3.1 As this was a new scheme the demand was uncertain and conservative staffing levels were initially mobilised. It soon became clear that to meet the realistic demand staffing levels would need to increase.
- 3.2 The current staffing level of 15 and the introduction of a new IT system is meeting the current demand.

4 Demand

- 4.1 For the year 2013/14:
- **9,601** applications received, involving **22,408** total individuals (**9,601** applicants & **12,807** dependants);
 - **11,315** awards granted to **6,133** households across Kent;
 - **8,466** children (under 16 years of age) feature in applications;
 - **4,223** young children (under 5 years-of-age) feature in applications;
 - **3,302** applications received featuring mental health issues within the household;
 - **216** applications received from ex-armed forces personnel.
- 4.2 The KSAS programme actual spend in 2013-2014 was £1,140,911 resulting in an underspend of **£1,722,089** for financial year 2013-2014. The overall position of the KSAS programme is one of increasing volumes and the value of awards has increased on a quarterly basis.

5 Evaluation

- 5.1 An evaluation of the first twelve months was completed in May 2014.
- 5.2 The analysis of the available quantitative and qualitative data shows that KSAS is generally a well-designed service which meets its objectives.
- 5.3 When considering the first objective – whether KSAS is supporting to meet or is meeting an immediate short-term need in a crisis or emergency – the evidence shows that the prompt processing of high-risk applications for support, and the goods and services offered, meet the needs of particularly vulnerable residents in a crisis in Kent.
- 5.4 With regard to its second objective – the extent to which KSAS is supporting to meet or meeting a need for support to stay in the community rather than going into care or an institution – the available evidence is limited, but it indicates that KSAS may be helping particularly vulnerable people to stay in the community. It is clear that the service is enabling people to move on from higher care settings such as supported housing and women’s refuges.
- 5.5 With regard to its third objective – the impact that signposting is having on alleviating applicant’s hardship – the available evidence suggests that KSAS’s engagement with other agencies is supporting people in crisis.
- 5.6 KSAS has played a pivotal role in alleviating the distress caused by the floods in December 13 and January 14. KSAS was able to offer both immediate and longer term support to the victims displaced by the floods as it had in previous civil emergencies such as a fire outbreak in a house of multiple occupation.
- 5.7 A protocol detailing how KSAS can be used in civil emergencies is in place with emergency planning services.
- 5.8 Feedback from professionals also indicates that a key strength of the service is that it is an easily identifiable and accessible service with a single point of contact that can promptly co-ordinate the provision of different goods and services to meet the needs of people in crisis.

6 KSAS Achievements

- 6.1 KSAS was set up within a very short timeframe and quickly established a good reputation with partners and other agencies as a service of first and last resort when Kent residents are faced with a crisis or have no other recourse.
- 6.2 The signposting part of the service has dealt with 34,000 enquiries and KSAS has assessed the health and wellbeing needs of over 20,000 people in Kent of which 8,000 were children. It has successfully provided goods and services to 9,600 households in Kent dealing with emergencies with an immediacy not catered for by any other council services .
- 6.3 In the first twelve months the demography of the service changed from 70% applicants aged 18-34 and single to over 62% applications from households with children. KSAS had the flexibility to recognise the change and adopt a risk matrix to ensure all applications involving children were prioritised.
- 6.4 KSAS has been used by districts and KCC as part its civil emergency response providing support to families displaced by fires and delivering tangible support in

the KCC response to flooding in Yalding. The actions of KSAS were recognised with a Chairman's Commendation Award presented to the service in March 2014

- 6.6 Case studies indicate that the service has enabled residents of Kent to recover from a crisis and get on with their lives without any further help.

7. Conclusion

- 7.1 There will be no further ring-fenced grants available to the county council to deliver the service from 2015 onwards. As the evaluation shows, stakeholders have expressed concern about a future without the service.
- 7.2 In common with other authorities, the county council must decide how it envisages that this need should be met in future.

8. Options

- 8.1 Do nothing and allow the KSAS pilot to end March 2015. Risk of increased demand for other services that KCC provide.
- 8.2 Continue service for year 3 (15/16) using underspend from 2013/14 and 2014/15. This extends the service for a further year but is not a sustainable solution and may not be the best use of resource.
- 8.3 Commission a new service focussing on information and signposting. This fits strategically with KCC's wider responsibility for providing Advice, Information and Guidance and could provide a sustainable solution.

9. Recommendation

- 9.1 Cabinet Committee is asked to:
- i. NOTE the report and the need for a future formal decision on the service.
 - ii. ENDORSE or COMMENT on the preferred option of providing a sustainable solution by further investigating option 8.3, possibly via a Voluntary Sector Organisation.

10. Background Documents - None

Author Contact details:

Diane Wright
Head of Commissioned Services
Tel: 01622 691767
Email: diane.wright@kent.gov.uk