

The background of the slide features a large, light blue outline of the Scottish coat of arms. It includes a crown at the top with four thistles, a shield divided into four quarters (quarterly), and a motto scroll at the bottom. The quarters contain: a saltire (X-shaped cross) on a white field, a red stag's head on a white field, a white sailing ship on a blue sea, and a white eagle on a red field.

Agenda Item 12

Scottish Welfare Fund Update

Falkirk Council

Title: Scottish Welfare Fund Update
Meeting: Executive
Date: 10 December 2019
Submitted By: Director of Corporate and Housing Services

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1. This report provides an update on the Scottish Welfare Fund as requested by Council on 25th September.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1. It is recommended that Executive-
- 1) notes the contents of this report

3. Background

- 3.1. In July and August 2019 unplanned absences and staff turnover within the Scottish Welfare Team resulted in significant delays in the assessment of Community Care Grants. This impacted on some of our most vulnerable households. We aim to assess all such claims within 15 working days. (See appendix 1). During this period Crisis Grants were kept up to date.
- 3.2. The table below shows the position of Community Care Grant applications, and Crisis Grant applications, at end of each month from July to October 2019.

Month	Community Care Grants					Crisis Grants	
	Applications received	At month end				At month end	
		Total o/s at month end	No. out with target*	Earliest date		Applications received	No. out with target*
July	174	273	167	12/06/2019		431	431
August	161	139	31	07/08/2019		490	490
September	194	109	0	11/09/2019		495	495
October	177	84	0	16/10/2019		466	466
*	Target for Community Care Grants is 15 days and for Crisis Grants is by 5pm on the working day following the application						

- 3.3. The shortage in staff was mitigated, as much as was possible, with a combination of overtime and displacing staff from other roles (where they had previous experience of working in this area).

- 3.4. The individuals who were absent due to ill-health have both returned to work.
- 3.5. For the current financial year 2019/2020 the Scottish Government has allocated £922,729 to cover payments of CCG's & CG's and £136,415 to cover staff costs and the administration of the scheme.
- 3.6. The money allocated to cover staff costs has been relatively static and has not increased in line with inflation and/or demands with details of all years funding shown below.

Year	Admin Funding
2013/14	£137,390
2014/15	£144,140
2015/16	£137,781
2016/17	£137,781
2017/18	£138,562
2018/19	£139,343
2019/20	£136,415

- 3.7. The administration funding provided does not cover the full cost of delivering this statutory service and this is a common issue across most local authorities. Representations have been made by COSLA to seek more funding but they have not been successful to date.

4. Considerations

- 4.1. To prevent a repeat of these circumstances, which resulted in an unacceptable service to applicants, we are in process of training a small number of multi-skilled advisors, from our Advice and Support Hubs, to undertake this role, if required.
- 4.2. There are 4FTE permanent officers within this team currently supplemented by 2 temporary officers. While we are constantly looking for efficiencies it is unlikely that a team of 4 could be self-sufficient and would need regular support.
- 4.4. Demand on the service continues to grow (see appendix 2) with an 11% increase in Crisis Grants 13% increase in Community Care Grants in 2018, relative to 2017. The 2019 application volumes have seen a further increase, on 2018 volumes, of over 4% as at end October 2019.
- 4.4. The Scottish Government has also asked that we prepare for an increase of applications as a result of Brexit and have indicated that funds will be made available to support any increased demand.

5. Consultation

- 5.1 Scottish Welfare Fund is a crucial lifeline to our most vulnerable residents and as well as providing a direct support to these residents it also acts as a conduit to wider support that will help sustain tenancies and minimise risk of future crisis's.
- 5.2 Responses to a recent survey of Scottish local authorities indicate that a minimum of 6 officers would be expected for an authority of our size. Therefore we will extend the contracts of the temporary officers with a view to making one, or both, of these posts permanent by utilising savings elsewhere within service. This will further reduce risk and potentially create some reciprocal capacity to support Advice and Support Hubs.

6. Implications

Financial

- 6.1 No financial impact

Resources

- 6.2 No financial impact

Legal

- 6.3 There are no legal issues

Risk

- 6.4 There are no risks.

Equalities

- 6.5 There are no equalities issues

Sustainability/Environmental Impact

- 6.6 There is no sustainability or environmental impacts

7. Conclusions

- 7.1 The Scottish Welfare Fund is a critical service and demand for the service is growing.
- 7.2 We cannot risk a repeat of the position applicants encountered in July and August this year and mitigation will be put in place.

Director of Corporate and Housing Services

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Date: 27 November 2019

Scottish Welfare Fund

The Scottish Welfare Fund (SWF) scheme has replaced elements of the Social Fund scheme previously administered by the Government's Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). From 1 April 2013 instead of applying to the DWP for a Social Fund Crisis Loan or Community Care Grant, people can now apply to their local Council for Scottish Welfare Fund grants which do not have to be paid back.

There are two types of grants;

Crisis Grants: These grants are to meet an urgent need that poses an immediate and substantial risk to health and safety. These grants can help provide access to essential items such as food and energy supply (electricity or gas).

Guidance from the Scottish Government requires us to assess these claims by the end of the working day after application.

Community Care Grants: These grants are to help people remain in the community or move back into the community or help ease exceptional pressure. These grants can help provide access to a wide range of basic household items.

Guidance from the Scottish Government requires us to assess these claims within
15 working days following application

Appendix 2

Volume of applications

Crisis Grants	2017			2018			2019	
	In month	YTD		In month	YTD		In month	YTD
January	513	513		581	581		776	776
February	463	976		415	996		502	1278
March	490	1466		443	1439		495	1773
April	379	1845		420	1859		408	2181
May	395	2240		472	2331		454	2635
June	463	2703		447	2778		358	2993
July	396	3099		506	3284		431	3424
August	426	3525		522	3806		490	3914
September	384	3909		400	4206		495	4409
October	370	4279		472	4678		466	4875
November	433	4712		511	5189			
December	347	5059		421	5610			

Community Care Grants	2017			2018			2019	
	In month	YTD		In month	YTD		In month	YTD
January	162	162		162	162		236	236
February	165	327		155	317		198	434
March	188	515		190	507		194	628
April	132	647		156	663		171	799
May	143	790		197	860		173	972
June	164	954		189	1049		161	1133
July	161	1115		175	1224		174	1307
August	163	1278		192	1416		161	1468
September	150	1428		151	1567		194	1662
October	167	1595		194	1761		177	1839
November	144	1739		162	1923			
December	79	1818		139	2062			