

Local welfare assistance scheme checklist for local authorities and partners

Contact: Graham Whitham, Chief Executive, Greater Manchester Poverty Action, graham@gmpovertyaction.org

Background

Local welfare assistance schemes often play a vital role in supporting people facing a financial crisis in England. However, more could be done to realise the potential of schemes to respond to need, and in helping prevent people reaching a crisis in the first place.

GMPA's report – *Strengthening the role of local welfare assistance* – identifies a series of recommendations for local authorities and their partners in Greater Manchester to adopt. The report draws on good practice from both within and outside the city-region. Local authorities and partners are asked to review the recommendations that are relevant to them.

The checklist presented on the following page of this document reflects the recommendations and good practice set out in the report. It has been developed to act as a tool to help guide users through areas of possible local welfare assistance scheme improvement via a series of questions.

Please use this checklist in conjunction with the full report. Please [contact GMPA](#) if you would like to discuss the findings and recommendations from the report in full.

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Question/Area	Answer	Notes/Actions
1	Has a multi-year commitment been made to funding the LWAS and is that funding protected going forwards?	
2	Have you reviewed where your LWAS sits within your local authority? Could there be efficiencies (as described in section 4B) by moving it to a different area?	
3	Do you have a forum or group containing partners described in section 4D where LWAS can be discussed and is a regular agenda item?	
4	Is there a mechanism for capturing resident and LWAS users' feedback to feed into this group/forum?	
5	To what extent is your LWAS support built around the challenges and needs of residents? Can individuals receive wider advice/support as part of contacting the LWAS team? See section 4C for details about a case worker approach.	
6	Is LWAS advice and support offered in local neighbourhoods, close to those in most need?	
7	Are your eligibility criteria for the LWAS flexible enough to ensure that residents in financial crisis can receive support when appropriate?	
8	Does your LWAS adopt a 'cash first' approach to the delivery of support? This means giving people experiencing a financial crisis money to preserve choice, dignity and control rather than in-kind support such as energy vouchers and food parcels.	
9	Have you recently reviewed how your LWAS provides furniture? Provision could be improved and efficiencies made by considering options outlined in section 4E/appendix 2.	
10	Is your LWAS easy to apply for, requesting the minimum amount of information necessary? See section 4G.	
11	Is your welfare application available in other languages relevant to your area?	
12	Is there a phone number advertised on the welfare application page for residents who may struggle to fill out the form?	
13	Is your welfare support clearly and proactively communicated to partners and residents? Has the web content relating to LWAS, as well as other benefits including Council Tax Support and Discretionary Housing Payments been reviewed for clarity of communication?	
14	Can people with no recourse to public funds access support through the LWAS? If not, is there a clear plan of how other services can respond to their needs?	
15	Do you measure outcomes relating to the LWAS as well as outputs? Are these metrics seen by key partners outlined in section 4D and do they feed into local authority governance around poverty reduction? Section 4I outlines metrics that could be reported on.	
16	Are measures to prevent hardship regularly explored, including those detailed in section 5?	
17	Have discussions taken place with local credit union(s) about how their offer can be tailored to meet residents' needs?	