Measuring the effectiveness of local welfare assistance schemes

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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. While developing the report, it was found that several local authorities collect detailed data about who uses their local welfare assistance scheme, though it was unclear how these data were used by the local authority and partners.

Collecting and using data from local welfare assistance schemes is essential to:

- Ensure the benefit derived by residents from accessing schemes is understood and can be maximised.
- Better understand who is and who isn't accessing support – this can highlight inequalities of access which can be rectified.
- Prove the value of crisis support internally to policy makers, helping prevent schemes against budget cuts.
- Monitor individuals who come through the scheme, their demographics and the number of times the same person has accessed help.

The report recommends that local authorities should develop their reporting frameworks for schemes and distribute data periodically within the council and to local partners. To that end, the table on page two of this document sets out indicators and metrics that could be measured and how they could be used.

Please use this list of suggested indicators and metrics in conjunction with the full report. Please contact GMPA if you would like to discuss the findings and recommendations from the report in full.

Suggested indicators and metrics for measuring the effectiveness of local welfare assistance schemes

Metric/Fields	Theme	Notes
Demographic information about applications and successful applications to include gender, age, marital status, number of children, ethnicity, address and employment and benefit status.	Reach	Allows groups with high LWAS use, or who are not accessing LWAS or receiving awards to be identified
Housing status – owned, private tenant, housing association, other	Reach	
Number of applications per month	Reach	Give an impression of demand
Annual rate of applications by population subgroups, to include appropriate ethnic groups and under / over 65s.	Reach	Under access and whether certain groups are not accessing LWAS or receiving awards
Number of applicants in part or full time employment	Reach	
Number of applicants who aren't receiving income benefits	Reach	
Number of awards per month by award reason	Reach	Allows trends in the reason for awards to be understood
Awards as a percentage of applications per month	Reach	
Number of rejected applications per month by rejection reason	Reach	
Value of award per successful claim per month	Value	
Value of awards/month – total, split by type (Fuel, furniture, food, cash, other)	Value	
Average number of times an applicant applies for local welfare assistance during a rolling 12 month period	Root Causes	Gives an impression of whether residents' financial issues are getting resolved
Percentage of applicants receiving wider advice/support as part of their application.	Root Causes	Advice/support could include budgeting assistance or debt advice for example.
Number of formal/informal onward referrals to other services following local authority support	Root Causes	Detail the different services that have been referred into e.g. welfare rights, Council Tax Support, credit union,. housing, employment support, local charities etc.
Number of formal/informal onward referrals to other services without receiving local authority support	Root Causes	
Additional benefit income ascertained by residents per rolling 12 months	Root Causes	
Residents' debt consolidated or written off per rolling 12 months	Root Causes	
Number of unique foodbank fulfilled referrals per rolling 12 months	Root Causes	Can give an impression of the number of people using foodbanks who aren't accessing wider support such as LWASs, or other services.
Average number of foodbank visits per user over a rolling 12 month period.	Root Causes	If this number is high it suggests resident's financial challenges are going unresolved