

HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION FIX IT FUND

Purpose of the Report

To provide the task group with an opportunity to discuss this scheme and how it will assist the new council in preventing people becoming homeless

1. Context

Homelessness gives rise to very significant costs to public services. These take the form of direct costs such as the provision of accommodation and indirect costs due to the use of health services where homelessness has a negative impact on the health of homeless households.

The Homelessness Prevention Fix-It Fund has been developed to support Wiltshire Council's preventative approach to homelessness. It enables the Council to spend relatively small amounts of money to prevent homelessness thereby saving large amounts of money that would otherwise be wasted on temporary accommodation.

The fund allows officers to assess the household's current situation and enable cost effective solutions to meet their housing needs.

Effective prevention schemes offer the potential to deliver not just a better quality of life for people at risk of homelessness but also real cost benefits for general and council tax payers.

2. Policy Objectives

The main objectives of the Homelessness Prevention Fix-It Fund are as follows:

- To provide financial assistance to households threatened with homelessness to enable them to retain their existing accommodation
- To provide financial assistance to households to enable them to access alternative housing
- To minimise the use of temporary accommodation
- To reduce the impact of homelessness on vulnerable people
- To provide cost effective housing option

3. Suitability Criteria

- Only to be used if failure to do so results in a household being placed in temporary accommodation
- Should be used, wherever possible, as an option to provide medium to long term solutions for homelessness/threat of homelessness
- Used only where there is reason to believe the household is homeless or threatened with homelessness, in priority need and unintentionally homeless
- A maximum of £300 (Payment may be increased in exceptional circumstances and agreed by the Housing Options Manager)
- Only one payment can be made per household
- No cash payments will be made

4. Use

Prevention Options which can be considered

Officers can consider any or a combination of the following options, up to the maximum financial cost of £300. This list is not seen as exhaustive as the purpose of the fund is to enable officers to identify innovative ways to prevent homelessness:

- Travel costs
- Court costs for private tenants
- Agency fee payments
- Payments in respect of shortfalls or delays in Housing Benefit payments
- Tenancy sustainment payments

5. Conditions

The following checks must be made before a payment can be made:

- That the applicant has no other resources available
- That the applicant is eligible for assistance
- That the applicant is homeless or threatened with homelessness
- That the accommodation the applicant is being assisted with is affordable
- That the applicant agrees a repayment agreement unless the Housing Options Manager feels that this would not be appropriate

6. Appeals

There is no right of appeal. All applications will be considered by the Housing Options Advisor under the guidance of the Housing Options Manager.

All payments made from the Homelessness Prevention Fix-It Fund are discretionary and based upon individual circumstances.

7. Monitoring

Records of payments and receipts will be recorded by the Housing Options Advisor and monitored by the Housing Options Manager.

8. Review

This policy will be reviewed every year or sooner if legislative or other changes require. The fund is subject to continuing funding from the CLG.

9. Equalities Statement

The policy aims to deliver quality services without prejudice and discrimination to meet the needs of all of the community regardless of age, cultural ethnic background, disability, gender, marital status, religious or political persuasion or sexual orientation.

The policy will adhere to the Equality and Diversity Policy developed by Wiltshire Council.