



Financial Insecurity Fund



How-to Guide

This guide offers more detailed information and advice for those who may be interested in adopting or adapting the initiative in their local area.

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Financial Insecurity Fund



Title	Financial Insecurity Fund
Organisation	Promising Practice
Category	Mitigation
Poverty Impact	Increase income from benefits.
Introduction to the Project	
<p>The Financial Insecurity Fund is a local fund which provides assistance to those on low incomes in the Perth and Kinross area. If a household is struggling due to the cost-of-living crisis and has no recourse to public funds, they can apply for financial assistance through the fund to pay back debts. The debts, for which the fund provides assistance include for example gas, electricity, broadband and Council Tax debts, as well as rent arrears. The Fund also makes one-off payments to those experiencing rural hardship and can contribute towards the cost of oil/gas and solid fuel. A comprehensive welfare benefit check is an integral part of the assessment criteria for the Fund ensuring that longer-term assistance is provided where possible from existing statutory provision.</p>	



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Initial Idea

Who had the initial idea?	
Nicola Sutherland.	
How did the idea for the project come about?	
The inspiration for the fund arose during the pandemic when an outbreak of covid-19 occurred in a meat-processing facility and left the employees from 21 different nationalities without income from employment. Those affected had no recourse to public funds, or access to statutory sick pay. The Welfare Rights Team asked the council for a sum of money to pay for two weeks equivalent of sick pay to those affected to protect their health and the health of the community during covid-19, and after the payments were successful this was expanded into the fund that it is currently.	
Were plans informed by any published reports / papers / research evidence or practice from elsewhere?	
No	✓
Yes	
No, however the Fund mirrors the Scottish Welfare Fund.	
Was anyone else involved in developing the initial idea of the project?	
No	
Yes	✓
The Welfare Rights Team.	
Were those with lived experience of poverty involved in developing the initial idea of the project?	
No	
Yes	
N/A	



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Was funding required to support the development of the initial idea of the project?			
No	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Please provide details of the funding that was used to support the development of the initial idea of the project.			
Which organisation provided funding?	The Scottish government.		
How much was required?	N/A		
What was the specific source of funding? (e.g., particular grant or policy)	Initially money from the Scottish Government given to localities to assist with debts.		
Were specific resources – other than funding - needed when developing the initial idea of the project?			
No	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>
Did any barriers have to be overcome when developing the initial idea of the project?			
			<i>No</i>
			Yes
There was hesitation to extend the fund to cover Council Tax debts, as those are attached to the person indefinitely and cover the cost of council services.			
How long did it take between having the initial idea and starting the project?			
The fund was established within the same month after receiving the money from the Scottish Government on the 10 th of December 2020.			
Who made the decision to introduce the project?			
The Welfare Rights Team.			

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Early Development – Pilot Project or Feasibility Study

Was there a pilot project or feasibility study?	
No	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Yes, a pilot project	<input type="checkbox"/>
Yes, a feasibility study	<input type="checkbox"/>

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Accessing the Service and Engaging with Service Users

Is there a referral process?	
No	✓
Yes	
Other than referral, how do potential clients come to know about the project?	
Those applying for the fund can do so online or by phoning the Welfare Rights Team.	
What is the most common way through which users typically access the service?	
Council websites, council's social media, shared with partners of the council and word of mouth.	
Do you take steps to keep in touch / reach out to service users?	
No	✓
Yes	
Not directly. Those who apply for the fund can state their preferred method of contact when submitting their application (email, phone, mail).	

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Working with People with Lived Experience of Poverty

Are those with lived experience of poverty involved in <u>delivering</u> the project?	
No	✓
Yes	
No, however there are staff from the Welfare Rights Team who have lived experience of poverty.	
Are people with lived experience of poverty involved in <u>managing</u> the project or project governance?	
No	✓
Yes	
No (apart from paid members of the Welfare Rights Team who have lived experience of poverty).	
Are people with lived experience of poverty involved <u>in any other aspect</u> of the project? <i>If so, please describe below.</i>	
No	✓
Yes	

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Leadership, Governance and Partnership Working

Who is responsible for managing the project?		
Nicola Sutherland.		
Is this the only responsibility of the person managing the project?		
	Yes	
	No	✓
As a Team Leader for Welfare Rights and Welfare Fund the person responsible for the fund has an array of other responsibilities over the two teams.		
Is there a Project Steering or Advisory Group?		
	No	
	Yes	✓
The fund has a working group that meets roughly every 6 weeks. The group involves for example the community justice team, a food bank, and the Welfare Rights team.		
Are any other governance arrangements in place to review strategy and performance?		
	No	✓
	Yes	

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Links to Wider Policies, Strategies and Statutory Requirements

In your opinion, is the project aligned with national and/or local anti-poverty strategies and priorities (e.g., local authority or health board priorities)?	
Don't know	
No	✓
Yes	
The fund was not incorporated as a part of a wider anti-poverty strategy due to it having been established and initiated from the bottom up.	
Is the project delivering a service that is a statutory commitment?	
No	✓
Yes	

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Funding

Has external funding been secured to support the work?	
No	✓
Yes	
Please provide details of the funding that was used secured from the host organisation to support this work?	
How much funding was secured?	In the 2022-2023 financial year the Financial Insecurity Fund made approximately £520,439 in payments. The fund had £638,000 earmarked for it the financial year and ended up receiving £999,000 with additional payments. The surplus has been used to carry the Financial Insecurity Fund over to the current financial year.
For how long has funding been secured?	Annual review.
Is future funding from the host organisation a possibility?	
Don't know	
No	
Yes	✓



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Is future funding from the host organisation based on pre-agreed outcomes or outputs being delivered?

	No	✓
	Yes	

What are the future - longer-term - prospects for this work if existing funding sources were no longer available?

The future of the Financial Insecurity Fund is not dependent on pre-agreed outcomes or outputs, and is demand-led and dependent on the council's willingness to fund it.

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Staffing and Resources

Do existing staff from the host organisation contribute toward the work of this project as part of their broader work for the organisation?			
		No	<input type="checkbox"/>
		Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
The paid staff in the Welfare Rights Team works on the Financial Insecurity Fund.			
Are existing staff from the host organisation paid extra (for example, taking on extra hours) to contribute toward the work of this project?			
		No	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
		Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are volunteers involved in delivering the project?			
		No	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
		Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are specific resources – other than staff/volunteer time and money - needed to support the delivery of the project?			
		No	<input type="checkbox"/>
		Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>
Please provide details of the resources that are required to deliver the project?			
Facilities / Workspace	N/A		
Equipment	N/A		
Local Knowledge	N/A		
Food and Drink	N/A		



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Was additional training – for staff or volunteers - required to deliver this project?	
No	<input type="checkbox"/>
Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
The assistance from IT was necessary to build the application and the systems necessary to administer the funds.	

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Monitoring and Evaluation

Is there baseline data to describe what things were like before the start of the project?	
No	✓
Yes	
No baseline data. The data would not be indicative due to the fund having been established as a response to the coronavirus pandemic and only been administered after that.	
Is the difference that the project is making measured or monitored by the host organisation?	
Yes	✓
No	
Who within the host organisation is responsible for monitoring the impact of the project?	
The Welfare Right Team.	
How often is the impact of the project monitored or measured by the host organisation?	
At point of access.	
What methods, techniques or strategies are used by the host organisation to measure the impact of the project?	
The data collected as a part of the Welfare Rights Team annual report. Most of the evidence is qualitative data in the form of case studies demonstrating the difference made in families who have received payments from the fund.	



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What information is collected by the host organisation about the project?				
Number of users	Yes	✓	No	
Profile of users	Yes	✓	No	
Experience of users	Yes	✓	No	
Outcomes for users	Yes		No	✓
Anything else	Yes		No	✓



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Has the data that has been collected by the host organisation been used to adapt the way the project works?	
No	
Yes	✓
<p>Yes. Due to the limited amount of money available the criteria for receiving payments is occasionally changed. This is also done to ensure support in the form of funding is not replicated. For example, the funds claimed for rural hardship is not a part of any other area of the benefits system which is evidenced by the high demand.</p>	
Has an external organisation been employed to formally evaluate the project?	
No	✓
Yes	
Is there an intention to employ an external organisation to evaluate the impact of the project in the future?	
Don't know / no current plans	✓
No	
Yes	
Is there an intention to undertake your own formal evaluation in the future to estimate the impact of the project?	
Don't know / no current plans	✓
No	
Yes	

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Impact

To what extent have the aims of the project been achieved?	
Fully met	
Making progress toward meeting Aims	✓
Not making progress	
What difference has the project made?	
<p>More people in contact with the Welfare Rights Team.</p> <p>With an approval rate of 52% (for 2022/23), the reasons for rejected applications were repeat applications where awards had already been made, insufficient evidence of debt status, or situations where the issue had already been resolved through the existing benefit system.</p> <p>The number of comprehensive benefit checks has increased as a part of the Financial Insecurity Fund that delivers them.</p> <p>More people are aware of what their entitlements are and are in receipt of them.</p> <p>Since April 2022 until October 2023, an additional £2.3 million in benefit gains was secured to the 521 applicants of the Financial Insecurity Fund through the associated benefit checks.</p> <p>Reduction in people’s debts. This has seemed a sustainable debt remedy as the service only provides assistance with debts less than £3,000, and with arrears from no earlier than April 2018 when Universal Credit was rolled out in PKC.</p>	
Have conditions or demand changed since the project was introduced?	
No	
Yes	✓
<p>The emergence of the cost-of-living crisis has increased the demand for the fund. This has also changed the nature of the needs of those applying for the fund towards more people not entitled to benefits applying for the fund.</p>	



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Has the project had the capacity to meet these changing conditions and demand?		
	Yes	✓
	No	
Has the project changed through time?		
	No	
	Yes (✓
What changed	The criteria for accessing financial assistance.	
Why has it changed	To reflect the changes in demand.	
Has the project had any unexpected or unintended outcomes?		
	No	✓
	Yes	
In your opinion, is the project having an impact on tackling poverty?		
	No	
	Yes	✓
Yes. It provides a holistic approach to accessing financial assistance and maximises their income.		

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Learning from Experience

What is working well?	
People getting their benefits checked as a part of applying for the fund.	
What, if anything, is working less well?	
Continuity in the funding for the Financial Insecurity Fund.	
What are the key learning points that you'd like to share with other practitioners?	
<p>Adjusting the criteria for claiming funds annually is required due to the changing socioeconomic conditions that affect the groups of people in receipt of the fund to ensure the areas with the biggest demand receive the most support.</p> <p>The demand for the Financial Insecurity Fund is created by the gaps in the benefits system; areas with little to no benefits addressed to them are payments towards debt, rural hardship and those with no recourse to public funds.</p> <p>The demand for the Financial Insecurity Fund is created by the gaps which exist in the benefits system; those with little to no financial assistance are directed to them including people with no recourse to public funds.</p> <p>Adjusting the criteria for claiming funds annually is required due to the changing socioeconomic conditions that affect the groups of people in receipt of the fund to ensure the areas with the biggest demand receive the most support.</p> <p>Those with no recourse to public funds have an array of needs for financial assistance. This ranges from rural hardship to child payments and paying off debts.</p>	
Are there plans to develop or expand the project in the future?	
No	✓
Yes	
Not currently, the Financial Insecurity Fund's existence is dependent on the council funding.	
How easily do you think this project could be replicated in another setting?	
Very easily. The delivery of the fund is dependent on the will of the local authority and funds available.	

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