

Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA)

Informing our approach to fairness

Proposal: Reducing the Supporting Independence Scheme

Date of assessment: November 2023

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Portfolio: Dynamic City and Thriving City

Version: 1

Planned review date: January 2024

Section A: Current service

1. What does the service / function / policy do?

The Supporting Independence Scheme (SIS) supports people experiencing poverty to move into and sustain a tenancy, where they have no alternative access to the essential household items which are required to live independently. The SIS contributes to our aim of preventing homelessness and is used to help people to:

- Resettle into the community following a stay in an institution.
- Resettle into the community rather than enter an institution.
- Set up home in the community, as part of a planned resettlement programme.
- Maintain their independence.

People can be referred to the scheme by a Newcastle-based support worker from a designated referral agency who makes the application on their behalf. Referrals are made through the Newcastle Gateway, an online portal used by agencies who support people at risk of homelessness and poverty across Newcastle. This is overseen by our Active Inclusion Unit (AIU), which coordinates our responses to preventing financial exclusion and homelessness.

The SIS is used to provide basic household items that help people to access or maintain independent accommodation, for example, beds, cookers, fridges, or emergency removal costs. The value of the awards depends on the needs and circumstances of the applicants.

Before making a referral, the referrer is asked to consider all other funding options, including charitable grants, secondhand items, affordable credit or support from family and friends.

To ensure the SIS is an integrated part of support planning and homelessness prevention, the scheme is linked into our case planning process so that funds are awarded to people who are being supported by our resettlement and tenancy sustainment programmes. As well as receiving discretionary funding, people referred through to the scheme also receive advice and support on other areas, including debt, benefits and housing.

This is an important part of our whole system approach to minimising the cost of homelessness whereby we aim to support people off the street, into a home, and to keep a home.

2. Who do we deliver this service / function / policy for?

This scheme supports people who are on a low income (means tested benefit) that meet the financial test of eligibility.

3. Why do we deliver this service / function / policy?

We deliver the SIS to help people to settle into or sustain a tenancy with the aim of reducing the likelihood that people will experience homelessness.

Although the SIS is not a statutory function, it forms an important part of our homelessness prevention approach by facilitating quicker moves from temporary accommodation and supporting residents to stay in their homes.

The SIS is linked to our priorities of tackling poverty and the cost-of-living crisis while contributing to our vision of being a fair and inclusive city.

4. How much do we currently spend on this service / function / policy?

Gross expenditure: £457,380

Gross income: £0

Net budget: £457,380

Comments: None.

5. How many people do we employ to deliver this service / function / policy?

The SIS is administered by our Active Inclusion Unit. Administration is shared amongst the team as part of a wider remit for promoting financial inclusion and preventing homelessness.

Section B: Proposal for future service

1. How do we propose to change the service / function / policy?

We propose to reduce funding for the SIS from £457,380 to £100,000 from April 2024; a reduction of £357,380.

The reduced funding of £100,000 will continue to be available to provide targeted support to households in need. To ensure the remaining funding has maximum impact, we propose that the scheme will be more targeted, being referred into by the multi-agency case management arrangements below:

- Temporary Accommodation Demand and Supply Case Management Meeting.
- Sustaining Tenancies at Risk Panel which provides bespoke multidisciplinary support to households at risk of evictions because they cannot afford to pay their rent.
- Complex Case Panel which brings professionals together to identify suitable and sustainable tenancies for households at risk of homelessness.

By connecting the SIS funding directly to these arrangements, we believe we can continue to support people to settle into and sustain tenancies where they have no alternative access to the essential household items which are required to live independently.

The network of organisations which currently refer people into the SIS will be asked to use the [InformationNow](#) website to help identify alternative sources of funding or low cost items that can be used to help people to obtain essential household items. While there are alternatives available, it should be noted that this may increase waiting times and there may not be suitable alternative support available for everyone.

2. What evidence have we used to inform this proposal?

Newcastle Gateway

Newcastle Gateway is the case management and resource allocation system coordinated by the Active Inclusion Unit to prevent and respond to homelessness. Gateway is also the online portal that partner agencies use to make referrals into the SIS. We use data from gateway to tell us how many referrals have been made to the SIS, who has made the referrals, and what type of support is being requested.

Homelessness statistics

This collection includes the latest statistics and management information on homelessness and rough sleeping in England. We submit data as part of the collection and use the reports to benchmark our data compared to other areas of the country.

Local authority revenue expenditure and financing

This collection brings together all documents relating to local authority revenue and expenditure financing. We use it to compare our levels of spending on temporary accommodation with comparator local authority areas.

Council Plan 2022-2025

The Council Plan sets out how as a Council we will work towards our political priorities for the city; support the city's commitment to renewal; and continue to deliver essential services while dealing with the financial challenges facing local government.

3. What will be the financial impact of this proposal?

This proposal will reduce the SIS budget from £457,380 per year to £100,000. This will be a financial saving of £357,380.

4. What will be the impact upon our employees of this proposal?

Number of FTE: 0 FTE

% of workforce: 0%

Comments: This proposal does not result in any impact on employees

Section C: Consultation

1. Who did we engage with to develop this proposal?

Who we have engaged with to develop this proposal: colleagues within Active Inclusion.

When / how: October 2023.

Main issues raised: fewer people will be eligible for support via the SIS and relying on alternative support options may increase move-on times. Alternative funding will need to be identified to ensure temporary accommodation is ready to live.

2. Who do we want / need to engage with during consultation?

Who want to engage with during consultation: Referral partners and commissioned providers.

When / how: between December 2023 to January 2024 as part of the council-wide Let's Talk budget consultation process.

3. Who provided feedback during the consultation process? (to be completed post-consultation)

Who provided feedback in the consultation process: to be completed post-consultation.

When / how: to be completed post-consultation.

Main issues raised: to be completed post-consultation.

Section D: Impact assessment

The section below sets out actual or potential disadvantages or benefits that may arise from implementing this proposal. This assessment is set out for people with characteristics protected by the Equality Act 2010 and other broader areas of potential impact.

People with protected characteristics

Age

Type of impact: None.

Detail of impact: Not applicable.

How will this be addressed or mitigated?: Not applicable.

Disability

Type of impact: Potential disadvantage.

Detail of impact: The SIS supports people to settle into the community following a spell in commissioned homelessness accommodation. Our commissioned provision is used by disabled people. In 2022-23 this included:

- 654 admits where a mental health need was identified on the assessment.
- Six admits were for people who identified as requiring a wheelchair or disabled access.
- 342 admits where a physical health need was identified.
- 11 admits where the household had a hearing or sight impairment.
- 145 admits where a learning disability was identified on the assessment.

We generally only hold the information people disclose, therefore this is likely to be an under representation. Being homeless is a cause of vulnerability in itself that will exacerbate the needs of disabled people

How will this be addressed or mitigated?: The SIS will continue to be connected to case based planning arrangements to help households most in need settle into accommodation. This includes disabled people.

Gender reassignment

Type of impact: None.

Detail of impact: Not applicable.

How will this be addressed or mitigated?: Not applicable.

Sex

Type of impact: None.

Detail of impact: Not applicable.

How will this be addressed or mitigated?: Not applicable.

Marriage and civil partnership

Type of impact: None.

Detail of impact: Not applicable.

How will this be addressed or mitigated?: Not applicable.

Pregnancy and maternity

Type of impact: None.

Detail of impact: Not applicable.

How will this be addressed or mitigated?: Not applicable.

Race and ethnicity

Type of impact: Actual disadvantage.

Detail of impact: The SIS is used to help households who have recently received their refugee status to settle into a tenancy including through purchasing household essentials like white goods or for covering the cost of storage and removals.

How will this be addressed or mitigated?: The SIS will be connected to case based planning arrangements to help households most in need settle into accommodation. This includes peoples who have recently received their refugee status.

Religion and belief

Type of impact: None.

Detail of impact: Not applicable.

How will this be addressed or mitigated?: Not applicable.

Sexual orientation

Type of impact: None.

Detail of impact: Not applicable.

How will this be addressed or mitigated?: Not applicable.

Other potential impacts

Unpaid carers

Type of impact: None.

Detail of impact: Not applicable.

How will this be addressed or mitigated?: Not applicable.

People vulnerable to socio-economic impacts

Type of impact: Actual disadvantage.

Detail of impact: The SIS is of particular benefit to people living in households with a low income.

How will this be addressed or mitigated?: The SIS will be connected to case based planning arrangements to provide targeted support to households at risk. Where we are not able to use the SIS then InformationNow provides a range of alternatives for charitable grants or low-cost essential items that people can be signposted to.

Type of impact: Actual disadvantage.

Detail of impact: The SIS is of a particular benefit to people who are in low paid employment.

How will this be addressed or mitigated?: The SIS will be connected to case based planning arrangements to provide targeted support to households at risk. Where we are not able to use the SIS then InformationNow provides a range of alternatives for charitable grants or low-cost essential items that people can be signposted to.

Businesses

Type of impact: None.

Detail of impact: Not applicable.

How will this be addressed or mitigated?: Not applicable.

Geography

Type of impact: None.

Detail of impact: Not applicable.

How will this be addressed or mitigated?: Not applicable.

Community cohesion

Type of impact: potential disadvantage.

Detail of impact: there is potential for an impact on communities where people are being resettled when new tenants are unable to maintain their property or are socially excluded or marginalised due to financial impact of purchasing with household items and necessities of living.

How will this be addressed or mitigated?: The SIS will be connected to case based planning arrangements to provide targeted support to households at risk. Where we are not able to use the SIS then InformationNow provides a range of alternatives for charitable grants or low cost essential items that people can be signposted to.

Community safety

Type of impact: potential disadvantage.

Detail of impact: there is potential for people in poverty or struggling to pay for necessary household items to resort to theft or other criminal activity to make ends meet.

How will this be addressed or mitigated?: The SIS will be connected to case based planning arrangements to provide targeted support to households at risk. Where we are not able to use the SIS then InformationNow provides a range of alternatives for charitable grants or low cost essential items that people can be signposted to.

Public Health

Type of impact: None.

Detail of impact: Not applicable.

How will this be addressed or mitigated?: Not applicable.

Climate

Type of impact: None.

Detail of impact: Not applicable.

How will this be addressed or mitigated?: Not applicable.