

Derbyshire Discretionary Fund (DDF)

- Consultation Report

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Derbyshire Discretionary Fund (DDF) was established in 2013 to provide financial support to Derbyshire residents, replacing elements of the Social Fund previously managed by the Department of Work and Pensions. The fund offers Emergency Cash Payments (ECPs) and Exceptional Pressure Grants (EPGs) to help individuals in crisis or with specific needs.

The consultation aimed to gather feedback on proposed changes to ensure the fund's sustainability and effectiveness.

Consultation Methods

- Survey conducted from 22 January to 18 March 2024, targeting past DDF applicants, partners, and members of the public. Promoted through various channels including social media, newsletters, and direct outreach.
- Engagement events: Included online sessions, focus groups, and face-to-face meetings with professionals and residents.

Respondents

- Total responses to the survey: 309 (240 online, 38 phone, 11 in-person).
- Participants in engagement events: 180

Results

Proposal 1: Develop criteria for a “budget brake” to enable prioritisation of applications.

- 79.1% of respondents said that they strongly agree or agree with the proposal to prioritise DDF applications based on the applicant’s situation and 14% strongly disagreed or disagreed. This response was consistent across respondent type.
- When invited to rank the factors that are most important when deciding which applications to prioritise, most respondents ordered the top three factors as follows:
 - The circumstances of the applicant and/or their family, that might make them vulnerable.
 - The reason for the application.
 - The items that are being applied for.

Proposal 2: Reduce the maximum number of Emergency Cash Payments to two in any twelve-month period.

- 52.3% of respondents said that they strongly agree or agree with the proposal to reduce the number of Emergency Cash Payments that can be made to two in a twelve-month period, and 34.8% strongly disagreed or disagreed. There was some variation amongst respondent type on the strength of this response.

Proposal 3: Increase the amount payable in an Emergency Cash Payment in line with either inflation or increases in benefit rates.

- 75.6% of respondents said that they strongly agree or agree with the proposal to increase the payment from £54 for a single person, 12.3% strongly disagreed or disagreed. This response was consistent across most respondent type groups.
Respondents were evenly split on whether the payment should be increased in line with benefit rates or inflation.
- 66.8% of respondents said they strongly agree or agree with the proposal to increase the payment for each extra household member, and 15.8% strongly disagreed or disagreed.
The consultation proposed an increase from £10 to £20. A suggestion was made during the consultation responses that a ‘middle ground’ of £15 be considered as more in line with the proportion of increase proposed

for the single person award value.

Proposal 4: Reduce the scope of items that can be awarded.

- 64.7% of respondents said that they strongly agree or agree with the proposal to remove travel from the criteria, 22.4% strongly disagreed or disagreed.
Respondents accepted that this was rarely applied for as funding for travel could be obtained from other avenues, though applicants may need signposting to these. It was also felt to be a much lower priority for an emergency payment than food and heating.
- 32.2% of respondents said that they strongly agree or agree with the proposal to remove rent in advance from the criteria whilst 51.6% said that they strongly disagree or disagree.
Comments included a recognition of the importance of residents being able to access support in this area. However, Housing Officers and professionals responded strongly that alternative provision already exists for this support through district and borough council housing teams who are better placed to address this need rapidly and efficiently.
- 62.7% of respondents said that they strongly agree or agree with the proposal to change the support offered around furniture and household items when moving into a socially let property, 18.3% strongly disagreed or disagreed.

Demographics of Respondents

For those respondents who completed the monitoring questions the majority (68.9%) were female, and the majority (86.4%) were aged between 25 and 64.

The ethnicity identified by respondents was consistent with the latest census (2021) data for Derbyshire.

Other comments

Respondents were invited to make other comments at the end of the survey. There was positive recognition of the value of the support offered to residents by the Derbyshire Discretionary Fund, and the importance of signposting, referrals, and connections to wider support. A method of enabling people to make online applications was encouraged, and both applicants and partners felt that it was important to have clear criteria that would avoid inappropriate applications from being made.

“Saved them after house flood”.

“It’s a fabulous service that is designed to help the people who really need it”.

“Thank you very much for helping me in my darkest hours. It’s really good that it’s there”.

“I would like to thank you all for making a difference, as I am sure you don't hear this everyday but the impact you have on customers is life changing”.

“It is a lifeline in crisis for people”.

