



North Yorkshire Local Assistance Fund
Update bulletin for agencies
February 2015



This bulletin provides a summary of key issues and information for authorised agencies and other partners in relation to the North Yorkshire Local Assistance Fund (NYLAF).

If you have any queries or feedback about this bulletin or the NYLAF then please contact nylaf@northyorks.gov.uk

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Future funding for the NYLAF - update

Partners will be aware that from 2015/16, the government has proposed that funding for local welfare provision be incorporated into the existing mainstream government grant that each local authority receives. Essentially, this move away from providing additional specified funding means local authorities are each left with the decision about whether to continue funding their local welfare schemes and, if so, to what degree. This is particularly difficult for local authorities given the current climate of significant budget reductions that need to be made across a range of services.

Partners will be aware of the external and internal review processes around local welfare provision over the last few months in bringing us towards reaching a decision on future funding. As communicated previously, these have included the consultation from central government around future funding options and also, more locally, things like our own engagement with stakeholders through our workshop and e-survey around how the NYLAF scheme could evolve if funding were to be cut significantly. We have also, within NYCC, taken reports to two of our Scrutiny Committees to obtain views on how the NYLAF should be funded. Our 'local' engagement underlined the importance of the scheme for our partners and customers and the high value stakeholders placed on the continuation of some provision for those in critical need.

However, during December 2014, the government confirmed that there would be no additional specified funding for local welfare assistance but instead there was a notional allocation for spend on this included within the existing local government settlement. For North Yorkshire this came to around £713,000, to include funding for both awards spend and grant administration. Previously, NYCC has been given around £793,000 per year from the government to use in awards spend, plus funding for grant administration.

In the last bulletin we highlighted that a final report on the NYLAF was being prepared for the NYCC Executive on 3rd February. Based on our stakeholder engagement and the decision reached within the local government settlement, the report therefore offered three options to the Executive:

- 1. To continue funding the NYLAF at its 2014/15 funding level.*
- 2. To reduce the NYLAF budget bringing it into line with the notional amount allocated by Central Government in the 2015/16 Local Government Finance Settlement.*
- 3. To reduce the NYLAF budget to zero, meaning the Fund would cease to exist.*

A copy of the report and the draft minutes of the meeting can be downloaded from the NYCC website at (<http://democracy.northyorks.gov.uk/committees.aspx?commid=18>).

The Executive decided on option 2; to continue with NYLAF provision but to reduce the NYLAF budget bringing it into line with the notional amount allocated by Central Government.

This decision was given careful deliberation by the Executive and balanced between the recognised need for and value of the NYLAF in the county but also recognising that NYCC has been given no funding to be able to continue the operation of the scheme at a time when very significant cuts are being made across NYCC to key services.

There will therefore be some impact on future provision from the NYLAF moving into 2015/16 although we hope to be able to limit impact on awards spend as far as possible. The NYLAF team and its Governance Group will now carefully consider any changes that may need to be made to the Fund taking into account all suggestions made in the stakeholder survey from October as well as spend in the final quarter of the financial year. We will of course communicate any changes to the scheme with all stakeholders at the earliest possible opportunity in the new financial year. Some changes may need to be reactive though as we will continue to monitor spend throughout the year and, as on previous occasions, make adjustments during the financial year as needed to keep within the available budget.

If you have any further queries about the Executive's decision or the future funding of the NYLAF please contact us at nylaf@northyorks.gov.uk

Online application reminder

Charis Grants our administrator for the fund has had difficulties processing some online application forms for the Fund. This is because of a lack of information provided on the online application form. Assessors at Charis Grants have to follow up applications with Authorised Agents to get the information needed. This ultimately slows down the processing time for applications and delays the items being sent to applicants. Given the emergency nature of the fund can we remind Authorised Agents to provide as much information as possible when completing an online application form to help Charis Grants when processing applications.

Specific issues highlighted by Charis Grants:

- Please highlight the need for requested items – e.g. if requesting a double bed for a single applicant, please demonstrate why the applicant requires a double bed and not a single bed.
- Please demonstrate in as much detail as possible that the applicant has sought help elsewhere before applying to the fund.

- Please ensure that an applicant has moved into a property, or, that an alternate address such as the Authorised Agency address is provided where someone is present to accept delivery of items, before an application to the fund is made. This prevents a charge being made to the Fund where items are delivered to an address, but because the applicant has not yet moved in the items have to be returned and delivered again.
- When selecting food and/or clothing items please remember to select the preferred outlet for the vouchers. There is a drop down field and comment box for this purpose. The vouchers cannot be sent until it is known which outlet the vouchers are needed for.

Changes to the NYLAF team

The NYLAF team has recently been joined by Christopher Day, Customer Service Centre Team Leader, who has taken over from Helen Gray since the New Year.

It is important that any policy issues or NYLAF queries continue to be emailed to the NYLAF email account nylaf@northyorks.gov.uk to ensure that a member of the team picks up the issue quickly.

Enquiries: nylaf@northyorks.gov.uk

Public information: www.northyorks.gov.uk/nylaf

Partner updates: www.nypartnerships.org.uk/nylaf