

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.

This document comprises the following sections (click hyperlink to skip to that section)

- [Initial Idea](#)
- [Early Development of the Project](#)
- [Accessing the Service and Engaging with Service Users](#)
- [Working with People with Lived Experience of Poverty](#)
- [Leadership, Governance and Partnership Working](#)
- [Links to Wider Policies, Strategies and Statutory Requirements](#)
- [Funding](#)
- [Staffing and Resources](#)
- [Monitoring and Evaluation](#)
- [Reach and Impact](#)
- [Learning from Experience](#)

Title	Financial Insecurity Fund
Organisation	Perth and Kinross Council
Category	Promising Practice
Poverty Impact	Mitigation
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>	

Financial Insecurity Fund How-to Guide



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.
Did you draw on any published reports / papers / research evidence or practice you had seen elsewhere to inform your plans?
<i>If so, please add details to the box below.</i>
No, however the Fund mirrors the Scottish Welfare Fund.
Who was involved in developing the initial idea of the project?
The Welfare Rights Team
Were those with lived experience of poverty involved in developing the initial idea of the project?
No.
What funding was used, if any, to support the development of the initial idea of the project?
Initially money from the Scottish Government given to localities to assist with debts.

Financial Insecurity Fund How-to Guide



What in-kind resources were needed when developing the initial idea of the project?	
Facilities	N/A
Equipment	N/A
Local Knowledge	N/A
Food and Drink	N/A
What, if any, barriers did you have to overcome when developing the initial idea of the project?	
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	
What, if anything, was helpful when developing the initial idea of the project?	
N/A	
What was the timeline between the initial idea and the start of 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	

[Return to Introduction](#)

Financial Insecurity Fund How-to Guide



Early Development of the Project

Did you run a pilot project or carry out a feasibility study?

No (see details for a series of 'trial payments' from the initial idea).

[Return to Introduction](#)

Financial Insecurity Fund How-to Guide



Accessing the Service and Engaging with Service Users

Is there a referral process? If yes, how does the referral process work (self-referral, referred by other agencies, identified from an existing database)

No. Those applying for the fund can do so online or by phoning the Welfare Rights Team.

How are potential clients made aware of the project?

Council websites, council's social media, shared with partners of the council and word of mouth.

How do you keep in touch with service users? Do your service users have a preferred method of contact?

Those who apply for the fund can state their preferred method of contact when submitting their application (email, phone, mail).

[Return to Introduction](#)

Working with People with Lived Experience of Poverty

Are those with lived experience of poverty involved in delivering the project? *If so, please describe below.*

No (apart from paid members of the Welfare Rights Team who have lived experience of poverty).

Are people with lived experience of poverty involved in managing the project or project governance? *If so, please describe below.*

No (apart from paid members of the Welfare Rights Team who have lived experience of poverty).

Are people with lived experience of poverty involved in any other aspect of the project? *If so, please describe below.*

No (apart from paid members of the Welfare Rights Team who have lived experience of poverty).

[Return to Introduction](#)

Financial Insecurity Fund How-to Guide



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? <i>If not please describe the manager's wider roles and responsibilities.</i>
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 Group? <i>If yes, who is involved in this and how does it work.</i>
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.
If there is no Steering Group, what governance arrangements are in place to review strategy and performance?
No.

[Return to Introduction](#)

Financial Insecurity Fund How-to Guide



Links to Wider Policies, Strategies and Statutory Requirements

Is the project part of a wider anti-poverty strategy? <i>If so, please give details.</i>
The fund was not incorporated as a part of wider anti-poverty strategy due to it having been established and initiated from the bottom up.
Is the project part of any other strategy? <i>If so, please give details.</i>
No
Is the project delivering a service that is a statutory commitment. <i>If so, please give details.</i>
No

[Return to Introduction](#)

Financial Insecurity Fund How-to Guide



Funding

Who funds the project? *Please give details.*

Perth and Kinross Council. From the council's budget after the initial funding from the Scottish Government ran out.

How much does the project cost?

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.

Is future funding based on pre-agreed outcomes or outputs being delivered?

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.

[Return to Introduction](#)

Financial Insecurity Fund How-to Guide



Staffing and Resources

Which partners are involved in delivering the project (local authorities, organisations, community groups, etc.)?	
Perth and Kinross Council.	
Which paid staff are involved in delivering the project?	
The paid staff in the Welfare Rights Team works on the Financial Insecurity Fund..	
Are volunteers involved in delivering the project? <i>Please describe their role and their contribution.</i>	
No	
What in-kind resources do you need to deliver your project?	
Facilities	N/A
Equipment	N/A
Local Knowledge	N/A
Food and Drink	N/A
For each of the in-kind resources listed above, who provides it?	
Facilities	N/A
Equipment	N/A
Local Knowledge	N/A
Food and Drink	N/A
Did you have to buy or develop new IT systems, software (databases, apps) or technology to deliver your project? <i>Please describe below.</i>	
The assistance from IT was necessary to build the application and the systems necessary to administer the funds.	



Financial Insecurity Fund How-to Guide



Was additional staff training required to deliver your project? *If so, please describe.*

Yes, IT delivered training on the application process and the application which was carried on to the staff by the Welfare Rights Team lead and supervisors.

[Return to Introduction](#)

Financial Insecurity Fund How-to Guide



Monitoring and Evaluation

What information, if any, do you collect about your project?	
Number of users	Yes.
Profile of users	Yes, this is an intrinsic part of the application.
Experience of users	Those who have any interactions with the Welfare Rights Team administering the fund are offered a chance to give customer feedback, however no specific feedback systems for the fund itself.
Anything else	N/A
How often is data collected? Who collects the data?	
The Welfare Rights Team collects user data as a part of the application process to determine whether the applicant is eligible for the fund, and if yes, to how much.	
Do you have baseline data on what things were like before the start of the project or before users started the project? <i>Please describe the type of baseline data that you have.</i>	
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.	
Do you produce an annual report? <i>Please provide details of what this includes.</i>	
Yes. The Welfare Rights Team annual report includes details on the Financial Insecurity Fund, such as the sums paid out and what conditions they were addressing.	
In what ways, if at all, do you use the data that you collect to adapt the service that you provide?	

Financial Insecurity Fund How-to Guide



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.

Have you employed an external organisation to formally evaluate your project? *If yes, please provide details.*

No

Do you intend to employ an external organisation to evaluate the service that you provide in the future? *If yes, please provide details.*

Not at present

[Return to Introduction](#)

Financial Insecurity Fund How-to Guide



Reach and Impact

What difference has the project made?

- More people in contact with the Welfare Rights Team.
- 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.
- The number of comprehensive benefit checks has increased as a part of the Financial Insecurity Fund that delivers them.
- More people are aware of what their entitlements are and are in receipt of them.
- 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.
- 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.

How do you know this? What evidence demonstrates impact (metrics, interviews, feedback)?

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.

To what extent have the aims of the project been achieved?

To some extent.

How, if at all, have conditions changed since the project was introduced?

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.

If yes, has the project had the capacity to meet these changing conditions and demand? Please describe and explain below.

Financial Insecurity Fund How-to Guide



Yes. The criteria for accessing financial assistance through the Fund has been changed to reflect the changes in demand.

Has the project had any unexpected or unintended outcomes? *If so, whether positive or negative, please describe.*

No

In your opinion, is the project having an impact on tackling child poverty? If so, please describe in what ways.

Yes. It provides a holistic approach to accessing financial assistance and maximises their income.

[Return to Introduction](#)

Financial Insecurity Fund How-to Guide



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? For example, is there anything that you would do differently?
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- 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.- 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.
What plans do you have to develop or expand the project in the future?
Not currently, the Financial Insecurity Fund's existence is dependent on the council funding.
How easily do you think your 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.

[Return to Introduction](#)