

EQUALITY ANALYSIS (EA)

POLICY/PROPOSAL:	RSF and New Model of Support
DEPARTMENT:	Resident Services
TEAM:	Transformation
LEAD OFFICER:	Marta Portalska
DATE:	24.01.2024

SECTION A – INITIAL SCREENING

1. Please provide a description of the policy, proposal, change or initiative, and a summary its objectives and the intended results.

Overview

Brent Council is proposing a new model of support for residents from April 2024, consisting of a Community Wellbeing Programme which includes a refreshed Resident Support Fund (RSF), Crisis Response Fund (CRF) and Community Wellbeing Service.

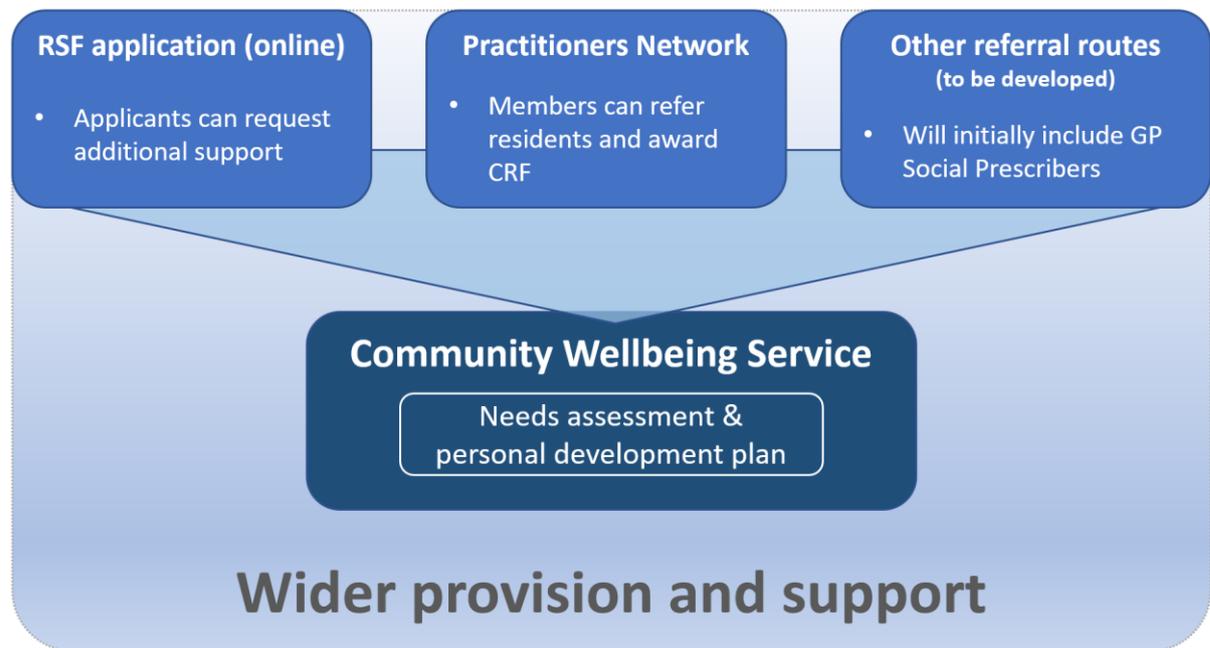
The funding available for the new model, including the RSF element, is less than in previous years. In this context, a key proposed change is a refreshed RSF criteria that includes a smaller maximum award of up to £500 per resident, compared to the current maximum award of £1,000 per resident. The impact of this change will be mitigated by aligning and connecting the refreshed RSF scheme with a wider range of support available in the new Community Wellbeing Programme, which is being developed around six design principles:

1. The model should support residents to become more resilient and independent.
2. The programmes and support available should be targeted and easily accessible to those who need them most.
3. The model should incentivise skills and employment and address physical and mental health challenges.
4. The model should align with and support connectivity between related support offers (including those detailed in the Cost of Living statement).
5. Development of the model should be intelligence-led
6. The model should be sustainable.

Proposal

The Community Wellbeing Programme is designed to support residents in the longer-term through a single, joined-up model including a refreshed Resident Support Fund (RSF), and Community Wellbeing Service.

Image 1: Community Wellbeing Programme - pathways of support



The Programme includes support with short-term financial pressures through a Crisis Response Fund (CRF) with a maximum award amount of £200. There will also be a refreshed Resident Support Fund (RSF) with a maximum annual amount of up to £500. Where a resident's need is greater than £500 or includes credit or store card debt, referrals to a Credit Union for interest free loans will be available. The CRF and RSF will also act as a gateway to connect the applicant to the Community Wellbeing Service and a wider package of support, relevant to their longer-term sustainability.

The Community Wellbeing Service will be an expanded version of the Community Wellbeing Project which has been piloted at Bridge Park Leisure Centre two days per week and supports up to 400 families per year. Capacity for the Community Wellbeing Service will be increased to operating five days per week to support up to 1,000 families and residents per year, at a location where it can be co-located with wider support provision. Eligibility for the expanded offer will include health needs, with health professionals, including GP social prescribers, able to refer.

Locating the Community Wellbeing Service at the New Millennium Day Centre provides the space and facilities required to effectively deliver the expanded Kitchen, Café and Shop offer as well as making use of other on-site facilities, and enabling the continuation of sessional day support services. Additional spaces within the New Millennium Day Centre site provide opportunities to co-locate the service with complementary offers such as Brent Hubs, and to trial hosting other services in the space.

To ensure the support package available through the new model meets local needs, it is proposed that specialist Immigration and Debt Advice offers (piloted in partnership with Northwest London Law Centre and Advice 4 Renters respectively) are incorporated into the wider programme, and also located at the New Millenium Day Centre. These building blocks will align with existing provision including Brent Hubs, FWCs, Brent Start, and the Turning Point, and will ensure core support such as ESOL classes, digital training and other life skills are embedded in the offer.

The ambition is to provide a multifaceted programme including the space, tools, and knowledge to support residents to improve their situation and increase opportunities in the longer-term, reducing long-term dependency on services.

2. Who may be affected by this policy or proposal?

Proposals may affect any Brent resident who is impacted by the cost-of-living crisis, needs related support or has wider support needs, including physical or mental health challenges.

Currently, residents are able to apply for the Resident Support Fund for financial support, and in the nine months from 1 April 2023 to 31 December 2023, the RSF has supported 2,773 residents with a total of £2m awarded.

As part of the Community Wellbeing Programme, the Resident Support Fund will continue to be available, with an amended maximum award amount of £500. Residents who applied for the RSF in 23/24, would likely receive a smaller average award for the same application reason in 24/25. Therefore, these residents will be affected as less short-term financial assistance will be available than previously.

Cohorts of residents who will be able to access the enhanced Community Wellbeing Programme will also be affected by this proposal, which includes new pathways and access routes to support designed to improve their situations in the longer-term. Evaluation of pilot projects which are feeding into the design of the programme has shown they are effective in supporting residents, including positive outcomes aligned to the following indicators:

- Improved financial resilience
- Residents are better equipped to deal with Cost-of-Living pressures
- Frontline staff have the skills, tools and information needed to support residents.

Also, residents who currently access sessional day support services at the New Millennium Day Centre will be affected, as locating the Community Wellbeing Service at this site will enable the continuation of sessional services and access to other support within the programme.

3. Is there relevance to equality and the council's public sector equality duty? Please explain why. If your answer is no, you must still provide an explanation.

Yes. Proposals for the support model will have an impact on Brent residents who require support, are affected by the cost-of-living crisis or have wider needs, including physical or mental wellbeing challenges.

In considering the proposals, the impact on these groups has been fully considered. It is acknowledged that the proposals may have a negative impact on residents that need short-term financial assistance via the RSF due to expected lower average award amounts.

The aim of the proposed new model, which includes access to a wider support package designed to support residents with things like access to food, debt support, immigration advice and connecting to other existing provision, is to facilitate positive, more sustainable outcomes for residents in the longer-term.

4. Please indicate with an “X” the potential impact of the policy or proposal on groups with each protected characteristic. Carefully consider if the proposal will impact on people in different ways as a result of their characteristics.

Characteristic	IMPACT		
	Positive	Neutral/None	Negative
Age	x		x
Sex		X	
Race	x		x
Disability	x		
Sexual orientation		x	
Gender reassignment		x	
Religion or belief		x	
Pregnancy or maternity		x	
Marriage		x	

5. Please complete **each row** of the checklist with an “X”.

SCREENING CHECKLIST		
	YES	NO
Have you established that the policy or proposal <i>is</i> relevant to the council’s public sector equality duty?	x	
Does the policy or proposal relate to an area with known inequalities?	x	
Would the policy or proposal change or remove services used by vulnerable groups of people?	x	
Has the potential for negative or positive equality impacts been identified with this policy or proposal?	x	
If you have answered YES to ANY of the above, then proceed to section B. If you have answered NO to ALL of the above, then proceed straight to section D.		

SECTION B – IMPACTS ANALYSIS

1. Outline what information and evidence have you gathered and considered for this analysis. If there is little, then explain your judgements in detail and your plans to validate them with evidence. If you have monitoring information available, include it here.

Residents that currently access the RSF or are likely to seek support from the RSF in the future will be affected. In the nine months from 1 April 2023 to 31 December 2023, the RSF supported 2,773 applicants.

Historic analysis of RSF awards shows that the five most common reasons for awards granted are for the increased cost of living, rent arrears, council tax arrears, white goods and debt.

Brent Council holds the following information on residents who have been awarded the Resident Support Fund. Some fields in the RSF application form are not mandatory, meaning data shown is representative of those who *have* provided information:

Table 1: Age Profile of RSF awards, 1 April 2023 – 16 Jan 2024

Age Bracket	Count	Percentage
18 – 24	161	5.9
25 – 34	595	21.9
35 – 44	725	26.7
45 – 54	589	21.7
55 – 64	394	14.5
65+	247	9.1

Table 2: Ethnicity profile: RSF awards 1 April 2023 – 16 Jan 2024

Ethnicity Category	Total	Percentage
Arab	329	12.9
Bangladeshi	10	0.4
Black African	663	26.1
Black Caribbean	376	14.8
Chinese	9	0.4
Indian	94	3.7
Not Answered	116	4.6
Other Asian	170	6.7
Other Black	75	2.9
Other Ethnic Group	85	3.3
Other Mixed	54	2.1
Other White	236	9.3
Pakistani	59	2.3
White & Asian	16	0.6
White & Black African	32	1.3
White & Black Caribbean	32	1.3
White British	156	6.1
White Irish	32	1.3

Residents who access the Community Wellbeing Service, which is modelled on the Community Wellbeing Project pilot, will be affected. The Community Wellbeing Project has supported approximately 340 members and their households between February and December 2023.

Data below shows demographic information of members enrolled on the scheme between August 2023 and December 2023. As this is a pilot scheme, eligibility criteria for membership, whilst flexible, was targeted at Stonebridge residents and included: being local to Stonebridge/Harlesden, in receipt of any means tested benefit/s and families. The enhanced Community Wellbeing Service within the new model will be accessed by a greater number of residents from all areas of Brent.

Table 3: Age Profile: Community Wellbeing Project members, August 2023 – December 2023

Age bracket	Total	Percentage
Under 18	9	7.5
18 – 24	0	0
25 – 34	12	10
35 – 44	53	44.2
45 – 54	39	32.5
55 – 64	6	5
65+	1	0.8

Table 4: Ethnicity Profile: Community Wellbeing Project members, August 2023 – December 2023

Ethnicity category	Total	Percentage
Asian or Asian British	12	10.2
Black, Black British, Caribbean or African	64	54.2
Mixed or Multiple Ethnic Groups	17	14.4
White and any other white background	2	1.7
Prefer not to say	2	1.7
Any other ethnic category	21	17.8

*Due to a small sample size, responses have been categorised into fewer categories for the purpose of this report.

Table 5: Long term health conditions: Community Wellbeing Project members, August 2023 – December 2023

Do you have a long term health condition?	Total	Percentage
Yes	37	30.8
No	83	69.2

There are 68 people who currently attend the New Millennium Day Centre as part of or all of their support. Locating the Community Wellbeing Service and elements of the wider Programme at the New Millennium Day Centre will enable the continuation of some of the sessional day support services for those currently accessing the day service.

Brent Council holds the following information on those 68 people:

Age profile

18-64 - 49
 65-74 - 9
 75-84 - 6
 85+ - 4

Service user group

Learning Disability - 53
 Physical Support and Disability – 7
 Older people/disability - 8

Ethnicity

Asian or Asian British - 19
 Black or Black British - 20
 White - 27

Gender

Male - 37
 Female – 31

- For each “protected characteristic” provide details of all the potential or known impacts identified, both positive and negative, and explain how you have reached these conclusions based on the information and evidence listed above. Where appropriate state “not applicable”.

AGE	
Details of impacts identified	<p>People accessing the Resident Support Fund are mostly of working age. The most common age bracket of those accessing the fund is residents aged between 35 and 44 (26.7%), followed by those aged between 25 and 34 (21.9%) and those aged between 45 and 54 (21.7%). Therefore the negative impact of lower value short-term financial assistance received via the refreshed RSF will be predominantly felt by these age groups.</p> <p>It is also anticipated that these groups will experience positive impacts from the new model, as they will be connected with a wider</p>

	<p>support package designed to support them with things like access to food, debt support, immigration advice and other existing provision (e.g. employment and skills support), which will result in more sustainable outcomes in the longer-term.</p> <p>This anticipated positive impact is supported by age data for residents accessing the Community Wellbeing Project, with 44.2% of project members aged between 35 and 44, 32.5% aged between 45 and 54 and 10% aged between 25 and 34.</p>
DISABILITY	
Details of impacts identified	<p>30.8% of people that access the Community Wellbeing Project have a long term health condition, which indicates that this group and other residents with long term health conditions will receive positive impacts through engaging with the enhanced Community Wellbeing Service in the new model.</p> <p>60 of the 68 people who currently use the New Millennium Day Centre have a disability. This group will receive positive impacts through the new model through the continuation of sessional activities at this location and opportunity to connect with elements of the wider programme.</p>
RACE	
Details of impacts identified	<p>Residents awarded the RSF are predominantly from ethnic minority backgrounds, with Black African (26.1%), Black Caribbean (14.8%) and Arab (12.9) the largest groups. Therefore the negative impact of lower value short-term financial assistance received via the refreshed RSF will be disproportionately felt by these age groups.</p> <p>It is also anticipated that these groups will experience positive impacts from the new model, as through their RSF application they will be able to be connected with a wider support package designed to support them with things like access to food, debt support, immigration advice and other existing provision (e.g. employment and skills support), which will result in more sustainable outcomes in the longer-term.</p> <p>This anticipated positive impact for BAME groups is partially supported by age data for residents accessing the Community Wellbeing Project. Of the members enrolled on the scheme between August and December 2023, 54.2% were Black, Black British, Caribbean or African, 14.4% Mixed or Multiple Ethnic Groups and 10.2% Asian or Asian British. However, it should be noted, this is a pilot scheme targeted towards the local area of Stonebridge and members reflect the diversity of the local community.</p>
SEX	

Details of impacts identified	N/A
SEXUAL ORIENTATION	
Details of impacts identified	N/A
PREGANCY AND MATERNITY	
Details of impacts identified	N/A
RELIGION OR BELIEF	
Details of impacts identified	N/A
GENDER REASSIGNMENT	
Details of impacts identified	N/A
MARRIAGE & CIVIL PARTNERSHIP	
Details of impacts identified	N/A

3. Could any of the impacts you have identified be unlawful under the Equality Act 2010?

No. The Council is aiming to ensure that any effects on residents are minimised and impacts are mitigated. The proposals in this report aim to provide a range of mitigations to support residents in the longer-term.

4. Were the participants in any engagement initiatives representative of the people who will be affected by your proposal and is further engagement required?

The design of the proposed new model is directly informed by pilot projects developed through a Cost of Living themed Outcome Based Review (OBR). OBR engagement included a wide range of community research activity with stakeholders and residents through interviews, workshops, pop-ups and focus groups. Findings from this discovery work were synthesised and used at a large-scale collaboration event (Visioning Day) where stakeholders jointly developed ideas and priorities to inform the pilots.

Monitoring indicators and feedback from those accessing support provided by the Cost-of-Living pilot projects including the Community Wellbeing Project, debt and immigration advice and CRF are also regularly collected and evaluated, and have been positive.

5. Please detail any areas identified as requiring further data or detailed analysis.

As part of the new model, a tracking system will support with monitoring of impacts and outcomes, against an agreed outcomes framework. This framework will be developed with Public Health leads and will include health and wellbeing measures aligned to those used by primary care social prescribers, and will build on the monitoring and evaluation framework which has underpinned all related Cost-of-Living work to date.

Impacts and responses from the New Millennium Day Centre consultation process will also be analysed to inform service design.

6. If, following your action plan, negative impacts will or may remain, please explain how these can be justified?

Negative impacts on residents that need short-term financial assistance via the RSF due to expected lower average award amounts will remain. The funding available for the new model, including the RSF element, is less than in previous years and the new model is designed to ensure available funding is fairly distributed to residents in short-term financial need. The new model is further supplemented with a wider support package designed to support residents with things like access to food, debt support, immigration advice and connecting to other existing provision, is to facilitate positive, more sustainable outcomes for residents in the longer-term.

7. Outline how you will monitor the actual, ongoing impact of the policy or proposal?

As part of the new model, a tracking system will support with monitoring of impacts and outcomes, against an agreed outcomes framework. This framework will be developed with Public Health leads and will include health and wellbeing measures aligned to those used by primary care social prescribers.

SECTION C - CONCLUSIONS

Based on the analysis above, please detail your overall conclusions. State if any mitigating actions are required to alleviate negative impacts, what these are and what the desired outcomes will be. If positive equality impacts have been identified, consider what actions you can take to enhance them. If you have decided to justify and continue with the policy despite negative equality impacts, provide your justification. If you are to stop the policy, explain why.

The potential negative impacts relate to a reduction in the value of short-term financial assistance available to residents accessing the refreshed RSF scheme. Despite the potential negative impacts, it is recommended to continue with the proposal to introduce the Community Wellbeing Programme. This is because:

- The Council is required to maintain sustainable services. The proposals enable the Council to continue providing an element of immediate financial assistance, whilst focusing on improving outcomes for residents in the longer-term, within available budgets.
- Proposals aim to have positive impacts for those accessing the RSF by giving the opportunity to access the wider support package
- Negative impacts can be mitigated as follows:

- Residents with a wider support need will be connected with the appropriate element of the package. E.g:
 - A resident who applies for RSF to support with outstanding utility bills and is identified to have other debt-related issues will be connected with the Brent debt advice service, as well as receiving a cash award.
 - A resident who applies for RSF for support with purchasing food and is identified to be struggling with food insecurity will be referred to the Community Wellbeing Service, as well as receiving a cash award.
 - A resident who applies for RSF to support with financial pressures including credit card debt and is identified to have digital skills needs, will be referred to a Credit Union to receive an interest free loan, and referred to the skills element of the model for support with digital inclusion, as well as receiving a cash award.
- Residents accessing the Community Wellbeing Service will be supported with creation of a personal development plan to establish their current support needs and an action plan to improve this.

The intention is to ensure that all changes are clearly communicated to residents, and once in place, availability of the wider support package is clear to residents applying for the RSF.

SECTION D – RESULT

<i>Please select one of the following options. Mark with an "X".</i>		
A	CONTINUE WITH THE POLICY/PROPOSAL UNCHANGED	X
B	JUSTIFY AND CONTINUE THE POLICY/PROPOSAL	
C	CHANGE / ADJUST THE POLICY/PROPOSAL	
D	STOP OR ABANDON THE POLICY/PROPOSAL	

SECTION E - ACTION PLAN

This will help you monitor the steps you have identified to reduce the negative impacts (or increase the positive); monitor actual or ongoing impacts; plan reviews and any further engagement or analysis required.

Action	Expected outcome	Officer	Completion Date

Update RSF and CRF communications, materials and forms	Ensure changes are appropriately communicated to all residents	Marta Portalska/Jon Cartwright	April 2024
Develop future offer and arrangements for ASC client groups at New Millenium Day Centre	Appropriate arrangements agreed to enable the continuation of some of the sessional day support services for those currently accessing the day service.	Marta Portalska/Jon Cartwright/ Leon Gooding	April - September 2024
Identify other services to move to New Millennium Day Centre	Enable join-up of services and better access to services for residents	Marta Portalska/Jon Cartwright	April – October 2024
Create a tracking system to monitor outcomes following needs assessment	Ability to track journey from the needs assessment through the Community Wellbeing Programme, and their outcomes	Marta Portalska/Jon Cartwright	April – October 2024

SECTION F – SIGN OFF

Please ensure this section is signed and dated.

OFFICER:	Marta Portalska
REVIEWING OFFICER:	
HEAD OF SERVICE:	Jon Cartwright