

Evidence review: What does effective local crisis support look like?

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Contents

Executive summary	3
Key findings for the UK government.....	3
Key findings for local authorities.....	4
1. Introduction	6
2. Key findings for the UK Government	7
2.1. A multi-year and ring-fenced funding commitment for local crisis support in England is needed.....	7
2.2. A more consistent approach to local crisis support provision in England is needed..	9
2.3. Improved guidance for local authorities in administering their local crisis support provision is required.....	10
2.4. The UK government should establish regular monitoring and evaluation of local crisis support provision in England.....	11
3. Key findings for local authorities	12
3.1. Local authorities in England should adopt a cash-first approach to delivering local crisis support.....	12
3.2. Local authorities should ensure that local crisis support schemes are integrated within a wider, holistic local support system.....	14
3.3. Local authorities must improve the accessibility of their local crisis support schemes.....	16
4. Conclusion	20
5. Appendix	22
5.1. Process and methods.....	22
5.2. Full list of evidence reviewed.....	25

Abbreviations and acronyms

LWA – Local Welfare Assistance

LA – Local authority

HSF – Household Support Fund

SWF – Scottish Welfare Fund

DAF – Discretionary Assistance Fund

DS – Discretionary Support

FSM – Free school meals

Executive summary

The provision of local crisis support in England has declined significantly since the devolution of the discretionary Social Fund in 2013. Local authority budgets to deliver discretionary support to people facing a financial crisis have not been ring-fenced and have faced significant real-terms cuts over the last decade. Currently, **36** local authorities in England do not provide a local crisis support scheme, and whether an individual can access crisis support in their area has become a '**postcode lottery**'. Considering this, Trussell has carried out an evidence review seeking to address the question "**What does effective local crisis support look like?**", with a particular focus on understanding how local crisis support in England could be improved.

Key findings for the UK government

A multi-year, ring-fenced and increased funding commitment for local crisis support in England is needed

Provision of local crisis support in England over the last decade has been restricted by severe pressure on local authority budgets, despite increasing need. The evidence reviewed encourages the UK government to commit to ring-fenced, long-term and increased funding for local authorities to deliver effective local crisis support. Some evidence calls for funding to be increased to at least the real-terms equivalent of what was spent on the discretionary Social Fund. The evidence also emphasises that short-term, last-minute extensions to funding, as has been the case with the Household Support Fund (HSF), hinders the ability of local authorities to effectively plan and deliver support.

A more consistent approach to local crisis support provision in England is needed

Along with a sufficient, secure and long-term funding commitment, the evidence highlights the need for more direction from the UK government to ensure all local authorities in England provide local crisis support and there is less of a 'postcode lottery' in the support on offer. Some evidence calls for a new statutory duty on local authorities in England to deliver local crisis support. The evidence also highlights that a singular naming convention for schemes in England would help to improve awareness by creating a national identity for the support available.

Improved guidance for local authorities in administering their local crisis support provision is required

Since the devolution of the discretionary Social Fund, the UK government has not provided clear guidance for local authorities on the delivery of local crisis support schemes. While guidance on the Household Support Fund exists, this has a broader purpose (people struggling with the cost of essentials more generally, rather than a more specific focus on financial crisis), and still has gaps around standards. The evidence highlights that the UK government should provide guidance on the provision and administration of local crisis support which all English local authorities must adhere to, and which sets out minimum standards for delivery.

The UK government should establish regular monitoring and evaluation of local crisis support provision in England

There are currently no requirements on English local authorities to monitor the delivery of local crisis support, and the evidence recommends that the UK government establish regular monitoring and evaluation of schemes across England to facilitate learning and opportunities for improvement for local authorities and UK government.

Key findings for local authorities

Local authorities in England should adopt a cash-first approach to delivering local crisis support

Most local authorities in England do not currently offer cash via their local crisis support schemes. However, the use of cash grants as a form of local crisis support has demonstrable benefits for administrative efficiency, flexibility and dignity; it is repeatedly highlighted as the most dignified form of support and less stigmatising than needing to use a food bank. The evidence therefore recommends that local authorities adopt a cash-first approach to delivering their local crisis support schemes and ensure that the most effective and dignified form of support appropriate to the individual is always offered.

Local authorities should ensure that local crisis support schemes are integrated within a wider, holistic local support system

Applications to local crisis support schemes provide local authorities with a key touchpoint at which to offer additional support or advice to households. The need to make debt, benefits and other income maximisation advice available to local crisis support applicants is emphasised. Local authorities should proactively offer advice and referrals to wider support services for all applicants to local crisis support schemes. The benefits of 'no wrong door' and 'caseworker' approaches to coordinating and delivering wrap-around support are also highlighted by the evidence, as is the need for strong partnerships and collaboration between local authorities and other agencies to effectively integrate schemes within a wider, holistic local support system.

Local authorities must improve the accessibility of their local crisis support schemes

Accessibility of local crisis support schemes is currently restricted by several factors. Firstly, the evidence identifies eligibility requirements and restrictions which can exclude certain groups in need of support from accessing it, particularly people with no recourse to public funds (NRPF), and people not in receipt of means-tested benefits. Local authorities should explore how eligibility criteria or restrictions can be relaxed and use existing powers to allow people with NRPF to apply for local crisis support schemes. Secondly, complex application processes and limited communication channels around local crisis support schemes create barriers to access. The evidence makes the case for local authorities to provide multiple application routes and simple application process to overcome barriers to access. Thirdly, there is a low level of public awareness of what support is available locally, due to lack of communication and advertisement from local authorities. However, while the evidence advocates that local authorities should seek to

5 Evidence review: What does effective local crisis support look like?

raise awareness of the support available, this review finds that local authorities are currently restricted in their ability to advertise their local crisis support schemes due to lack of resources and funding to meet the need for support that increased awareness would generate.

1. Introduction

Since the devolution of the discretionary Social Fund in 2013, governments in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland have each provided discretionary crisis support schemes via centrally funded and statutory frameworks: the Scottish Welfare Fund (SWF) in Scotland, Discretionary Assistance Fund (DAF) in Wales, and Discretionary Support (DS) in Northern Ireland. However, in England, discretion over the design of corresponding Local Welfare Assistance (LWA) schemes has been devolved directly to local authorities (LAs), and the provision of local crisis support by LAs in England is currently neither a statutory duty, nor is it allocated ring-fenced funding by the UK government. This has resulted in significant variability in provision, and **36** LAs in England do not currently provide a LWA scheme at all.¹

Considering this, Trussell has carried out an evidence review, seeking to address the question: **“What does effective local crisis support look like?”**. We adopted a three-pronged approach to our evidence search, and in total, reviewed **38** pieces of evidence in-depth (more detail on the evidence review approach taken, as well as a full list of evidence reviewed, can be found in the **Appendix** of this report). Considering the context outlined above, we focused more specifically on understanding what ‘good’ looks like for local crisis support in England and drawing out evidence-based recommendations for English LAs, and central UK government, in delivering future local crisis support. Nevertheless, several of the findings presented in this paper can apply to local crisis support schemes across the UK.

The following two sections highlight key findings for UK government and LA approaches to delivering local crisis support schemes with the intention of informing future policy decisions on the provision of local crisis support in England.

¹Peake and Donovan (2024)

2. Key findings for the UK Government

2.1. A multi-year and ring-fenced funding commitment for local crisis support in England is needed

Key finding 1: The past decade has seen a decline in local crisis support in England

Since the devolution of the discretionary Social Fund in 2013, English LA budgets to deliver discretionary crisis support have not been ring-fenced, and the provision of Local Welfare Assistance (LWA) schemes across England has declined.² Many LAs have reduced their LWA schemes, and in 2023/24, **36** LAs in England did not provide a scheme at all³. Whether an individual can access crisis support in their local area has become, in effect, a **'postcode lottery'**.⁴ This sits in contrast to the situation in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, all of which have established their own discretionary crisis support schemes with specific budgets and spend a considerably higher amount (per capita) on their respective schemes than England.⁵

For English LAs, current provision of local crisis support is not limited by a lack of need, but by a lack of funding,⁶ and the evidence reviewed emphasises the positive impact of LWA schemes in preventing the escalation of health or financial crises.⁷ A 2023 evaluation of LWA schemes in London highlights that people accessing LWA schemes typically have nowhere else to turn for support, and **"alternative paths, identified by LWA recipients, all risk causing harm. These include not eating, living without electricity, taking out unsuitable loans, and homelessness"**.⁸ The evidence therefore advocates that there is a clear moral, as well as economic, case for supporting individuals who are experiencing financial crisis.⁹

Key finding 2: Local authority budgets to deliver local crisis support must be ring-fenced

A 2019 analysis of local crisis support across English LAs found that in 2017/18, £107.7 million was made available to LAs for local crisis support via the 2017/18 local government finance settlement; however, this allocation was not ring-fenced, and **only 38%** of this was spent on LWA schemes.¹⁰ Similarly, of the £9.38 billion provided by the UK government in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, £4.61 billion could have been spent by English councils on LWA, and **£233 million was specifically allocated for this purpose**; however, the vast majority of this funding was used to provide other forms of support such as free school meal (FSM) vouchers, and only **1%** (£40.2 million) of the available £4.61 billion of funding was spent on LWA schemes.¹¹ The evidence therefore highlights the need for a dedicated funding settlement for local crisis support in England,

² Nichols and Donovan (2022); Bond and Donovan (2022); NAO (2015)

³ Peake and Donovan (2024); Turn2Us (2021)

⁴ Peake and Donovan (2024); Bond and Donovan (2022); Charlesworth et al. (2023); Handscomb (2022); Department for Communities (2022)

⁵ CPAG and Financial Fairness Trust (2022); Department for Communities (2022)

⁶ Norton (2024); Meer et al. (2023); Porter et al. (2019)

⁷ Charlesworth et al. (2023); Watts (2020)

⁸ Charlesworth et al. (2023: p.8)

⁹ Watts (2020)

¹⁰ Porter (2019, pp.12-13); calculation based on 122 councils with active LWA schemes over this period that provided financial information

¹¹ Nichols and Donovan (2022); Turn2Us (2021)

that is **specifically ring-fenced** and requires LAs to spend funds directly on rebuilding and delivering local crisis support schemes.¹²

Key finding 3: Local authority budgets to deliver local crisis support must be increased

As well as funding allocations for local crisis support in England not being ring-fenced over the last decade, they have also been cut dramatically.¹³ In real terms, English LA spending on LWA schemes in 2023/24 represents just **19%** of the equivalent spend via the discretionary Social Fund in 2010/11.¹⁴ End Furniture Poverty's most recent publication highlights that, when adjusted, the discretionary Social Fund budget of 2010/11 would have allocated **£409 million** for LWA spending in 2023/24, more than a **400%** increase on the **£79 million** that was spent on LWA last year.¹⁵ In short, LAs do not currently have sufficient funding to deliver LWA schemes effectively, and the UK government have devolved the responsibility for local crisis support to LAs without allocating adequate ring-fenced funding.¹⁶ The evidence therefore demonstrates the need for an increase in the UK government's funding allocation to English LAs for the delivery of LWA schemes, **with some calling for this to be at least equivalent to the real-terms allocation of the discretionary Social Fund.**¹⁷

Key finding 4: Increased and ring-fenced local authority budgets for local crisis support must be a long-term commitment

Replacing the short-term, 'sticking plaster' approach to funding with long-term, ring-fenced LA budget allocations for local crisis support should be a priority for the UK government.¹⁸ Since its launch in 2021, we have witnessed LAs across England become increasingly reliant on funds from the HSF to deliver their LWA schemes: in 2023/24, **15** LAs exclusively used the HSF to fund their LWA scheme, and **67%** LA respondents in a 2024 study report that if the HSF is withdrawn, their local welfare spending will decrease.¹⁹ End Furniture Poverty find that if funds at least equivalent to the HSF cease to be available to LAs, an additional **8** LWA schemes would close, leaving **17.8 million** people without access to local crisis support in England.²⁰ It is evident that there is a strong need not only for an increased funding allocation for local crisis support, but also **a multi-year funding settlement that provides LAs with the confidence and assurance that their LWA schemes will continue to be funded further ahead than just 6-12 months into the future.**²¹

Short-term, last-minute extensions to local crisis support funding (as we have witnessed with the delivery of the HSF) compromises the ability of LAs to effectively plan, design and deliver their LWA schemes.²² Short-term commitments and extensions of UK government funding to date are found to place significant administrative strain on LAs, and hinder long-term, strategic decision-making

¹² Peake and Donovan (2024); Nichols and Donovan (2022); Porter (2019); Whitham (2018)

¹³ Colliver et al. (2024); Norton (2024); Whitham (2018)

¹⁴ Peake and Donovan (2024)

¹⁵ Peake and Donovan (2024)

¹⁶ Colliver et al. (2024); Porter (2019); Whitham (2018)

¹⁷ Nichols and Donovan (2022); Whitham (2018)

¹⁸ Meers et al. (2023)

¹⁹ LGA Research (2024); Peake and Donovan (2024); Norton (2024)

²⁰ Peake and Donovan (2024)

²¹ LGA Research (2024); Nichols and Donovan (2022)

²² Peake and Donovan (2024); Colliver et al. (2024); Meers et al. (2023); Nichols and Donovan (2022); CPAG and Financial Fairness Trust (2022); Porter (2019)

around local crisis support provision by multiple sources of evidence.²³ A 2024 LGA research study reports that over **50%** comments gathered from LAs expressed the notion that “funding should be guaranteed over a longer period, as the **short-term, six-month settlements seen with the HSF have inhibited effective strategy and planning**”.²⁴ This is echoed by another 2024 research paper, which finds that short-term extensions to HSF funding are resulting in LAs “**“lurching” between short-term supports**”, undermining their ability to strategically plan schemes to address local need.²⁵ A 2023 research study also finds that “the inability to guarantee staff contracts beyond 6-12 months **hinders recruitment and retention of expertise**”.²⁶ To facilitate the delivery of effective, proactive and coordinated local crisis support, **LAs in England require a secure, longer-term funding settlement**; to enable them to effectively plan and resource local crisis support schemes and meet the specific needs of their residents.²⁷

2.2. A more consistent approach to local crisis support provision in England is needed

Key finding 5: The UK government should make local crisis support provision a statutory requirement for all local authorities in England

The evidence encourages the UK government to make the provision of local crisis support a statutory duty for all LAs in England.²⁸ End Furniture Poverty highlights that with several LAs having issued Section 114 notices since 2020, a statutory duty to provide local crisis support would ensure that “**even when a local authority faces budgetary difficulties, it is not the most vulnerable who suffer the consequences**”.²⁹ The evidence emphasises the need for funding to ensure local authorities can deliver a new legal duty. A legal requirement on LAs to operate local crisis support schemes, along with a secure funding commitment and improved LA guidance (see 2.3. below), would increase the consistency of provision across England and help remove the ‘**postcode lottery**’ of support that currently exists.³⁰

Key finding 6: The UK government should adopt a singular naming convention for local crisis support schemes in England

Unlike in the devolved nations and regions of the UK, LAs in England currently hold discretion over the naming of their local crisis support schemes.³¹ As a result, **there is a lack of consistency and national identity for schemes in England**.³² The evidence emphasises that inconsistencies in the design, provision and naming of existing LWA schemes can contribute to and exacerbate low levels of public awareness of what support is available.³³ End Furniture Poverty highlight that they have engaged with many support workers (including LA and social workers) that have been unaware

²³ Colliver et al. (2024); CPAG and Financial Fairness Trust (2022); Handscomb (2022); Bond and Donovan (2022)

²⁴ LGA Research (2024: p.18)

²⁵ Colliver et al. (2024: p.16)

²⁶ Meers et al. (2023: p.43)

²⁷ Peake and Donovan (2024); Meers et al. (2023); CPAG and Financial Fairness Trust (2022); Turn2Us (2021)

²⁸ Peake and Donovan (2024); CPAG and Financial Fairness Trust (2022); Handscomb (2022); Turn2Us (2021); Whitham (2018)

²⁹ Peake and Donovan (2024: p.17)

³⁰ Porter (2019); Whitham (2018)

³¹ Nichols and Donovan (2022)

³² Peake and Donovan (2024); Nichols and Donovan (2022); Handscomb (2022); CPAG and Financial Fairness Trust (2022)

³³ Nichols and Donovan (2024); Bond and Donovan (2022); Handscomb (2022)

that their LA provides a LWA scheme, putting many people in need of urgent crisis support **“at risk of falling through the cracks”**.³⁴

In contrast, the HSF has been able to overcome a number of these challenges: it has a consistent name, has received significant media coverage, and has therefore achieved high levels of public awareness across the UK.³⁵ A 2022 End Furniture Poverty report advocates for the HSF to become the **“national vehicle for crisis support”**, considering its strong national recognition and previous government promotion.³⁶ Whether this approach is taken forward or not, the evidence reviewed advocates that the UK and local governments should **adopt a singular naming convention for local crisis support schemes in England**, designed in collaboration with people with experience of financial hardship, to improve consistency, understanding and awareness of the local crisis support that English LAs provide.³⁷

2.3. Improved guidance for local authorities in administering their local crisis support provision is required

Key finding 7: Local authorities need new guidance on the provision and administration of their schemes

Since the devolution of the discretionary Social Fund, the UK government has not provided statutory guidance for LAs in England on local crisis support, or the operation of LWA schemes.³⁸ While the UK government has provided guidance for the delivery of the HSF, this has been revised with each funding round and has focused on the provision of support for people struggling with the cost of living more generally. It doesn't focus on getting support to people quickly in a financial crisis or include minimum standards for delivery. The evidence reviewed here advocates that the **UK government should provide English LAs with clear guidance on the provision and administration of their local crisis support schemes, which all LAs must adhere to, and which sets out minimum standards for delivery**.³⁹ In line with Key Finding 5, this should be statutory guidance to accompany a new statutory duty on LAs to provide LWA schemes, as well as ring-fenced, long-term funding allocations.⁴⁰ The evidence emphasises that together **these recommendations would help ensure an improved level of consistency of local crisis support provision across England**.⁴¹

³⁴ Nichols and Donovan (2022: p.44); Porter (2019)

³⁵ Bond and Donovan (2022)

³⁶ Bond and Donovan (2022: p.61)

³⁷ CPAG and Financial Fairness Trust (2022); Handscomb (2022)

³⁸ Norton (2024)

³⁹ Nichols and Donovan (2022); CPAG and Financial Fairness Trust (2022); Whitham (2018)

⁴⁰ Nichols and Donovan (2022); CPAG and Financial Fairness Trust (2022); Whitham (2018)

⁴¹ Porter (2019); Whitham (2018)

2.4. The UK government should establish regular monitoring and evaluation of local crisis support provision in England

Key finding 8: The UK government should place monitoring requirements on local authorities in England to evaluate the effectiveness of local crisis support provision

There are currently no requirements on English LAs to monitor the delivery of their LWA schemes, and no coordinated effort across England to evaluate the effectiveness of local crisis support provision.⁴² A 2022 report from CPAG and The Financial Fairness Trust finds that there is “consensus that LAs should collect data on the characteristics of applicants, why they were applying, and what applicants were accepted or refused to better understand local need” and that **“this data could be used to improve the service, making sure it is reaching the right people at the right time, that funding is well targeted, and as a result make a stronger business case for further funding”**.⁴³ The evidence reviewed recommends that the UK government takes action to establish regular monitoring and evaluation of LWA schemes across England,⁴⁴ placing requirements on LAs to collect and review data on “the characteristics of [LWA] applicants and their needs” to “help understand and improve the design, targeting and integration of local support”.⁴⁵

⁴² NAO (2016)

⁴³ CPAG and Financial Fairness Trust (2022: p.20)

⁴⁴ Whitham (2018)

⁴⁵ Evans and Earnshaw (2020: p.31)

3. Key findings for local authorities

3.1. Local authorities in England should adopt a cash-first⁴⁶ approach to delivering local crisis support

Key finding 1: Most English local authorities do not currently provide cash via their Local Welfare Assistance schemes

Since the devolution of the discretionary Social Fund, English LAs have moved away from offering cash support via their LWA schemes, with most LAs choosing to offer vouchers, pre-payment cards or specific furniture items instead.⁴⁷ A 2024 study highlights that only **10%** of LAs in England offer cash as an option, and just **4%** LAs take a cash-first approach (and offer cash as a default) to delivering local crisis support.⁴⁸ A 2019 report from The Children's Society highlights that the **"scarcity of cash awards has left a big gap in crisis provision for people who would previously have used the Discretionary Social Fund to help them manage a temporary cash flow problem"**.⁴⁹ However, in distributing funds received by the UK government in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and cost of living crisis, English LAs have supported residents with the provision of cash awards, and the HSF guidance recommends cash as an option for providing support to households.⁵⁰ This indicates a willingness amongst LAs to provide cash directly to residents.

Key finding 2: The provision of cash as a form of local crisis support has benefits for dignity, freedom of choice, flexibility, and administrative efficiency

The evidence emphasises the benefits of offering cash as a form of local crisis support, **both for residents and for councils**. Multiple sources of evidence find that the provision of cash enables individuals to meet the specific, and often multiple, needs of their households, supporting freedom of choice and flexibility.⁵¹ Cash is repeatedly highlighted as being the most dignified form of support⁵² and less stigmatising than needing to visit a food bank,⁵³ with Resolve Poverty emphasising that: **"responses to financial crises should give people maximum choice and control, which is best done by providing people with monetary payments rather than in-kind support"**.⁵⁴ The 2022 evaluation of Leeds City Council's cash-first pilot found that **94%** of all cash grant recipients would prefer to receive cash (rather than a food parcel) if they were to find themselves in financial crisis in the future.⁵⁵ Additionally, the evidence highlights that when processed electronically, the provision of cash payments rather than vouchers or in-kind support increases

⁴⁶ Prioritising cash grants over emergency food, vouchers, and other goods gives people the choice and flexibility to cover the cost of food, energy and other essential items. There are numerous mechanisms to deliver cash-first crisis support at the local level, ranging from direct grants into people's bank accounts, cheques through the post, access to cash via Post Office or PayPoint machines or via a code to use at an ATM.

⁴⁷ Norton (2024); Evans and Earnshaw (2020); Porter (2019); Whitham (2018)

⁴⁸ Norton (2024)

⁴⁹ Porter (2019, p.21)

⁵⁰ Peake and Donovan (2024); Resolve Poverty (2023); Evans and Earnshaw (2020)

⁵¹ CAS (2024); Charlesworth et al. (2023); Resolve Poverty (2023); Lipscomb and Walker (2022); CPAG and Financial Fairness Trust (2020); Watts (2020) Hilber and Macleod (2019); Whitham (2018)

⁵² Lipscomb and Walker (2022); Whitham (2018)

⁵³ Lipscomb and Walker (2022); CAS (2022)

⁵⁴ Resolve Poverty (2023, pp.2-3)

⁵⁵ Lipscomb and Walker (2022); evaluation was commissioned in partnership with Trussell and undertaken by vantage point research

efficiency for LAs, with lower implementation costs and simpler logistics.⁵⁶ With demonstrable benefits for both LAs and the residents they support, **the evidence strongly calls for English councils to take a cash-first approach to delivering their local crisis support schemes.**⁵⁷

Crucially, the evidence also emphasises the importance of the provision of holistic, wraparound support and advice, alongside immediate, cash-first financial assistance, with a 2020 Resolve Poverty report highlighting that **“financial hardship schemes providing immediate financial support and alleviation sit alongside the financial support provided through the mainstream benefits system and should be part of a broader package of advice and wrap-around support interventions offered by councils and local partners”**. This integration of cash-first and holistic support is explored in more detail in Section 3.2. below.

Key finding 3: Recent evidence does not support concerns about fraudulent claiming or misuse of cash awards

While Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland have all continued to offer cash grants through their discretionary crisis support schemes,⁵⁸ the evidence highlights that in designing LWA schemes, English LAs steered away from the provision of cash payments to **“reduce the risk of fraud or abuse”**.⁵⁹ However, such restrictions imply a lack of trust in residents;⁶⁰ indeed, in the context of FSM provision during the COVID-19 pandemic, a 2020 research study finds that there is a **“prejudice that poor parents are poor parents. There is an engrained idea that any increased income to families living in poverty would not be spent on feeding their children”**.⁶¹ In contrast, the 2022 Leeds cash-first pilot evaluation found that all cash grants distributed via the pilot scheme were reported to have been spent on the essentials: **93%** grant recipients purchased food, and there was **no evidence of any misuse of the cash grant scheme**.⁶² Considering the range of benefits of cash as a form of crisis support outlined above, along with the fact that English councils have provided cash payments directly to residents via the HSF,⁶³ the evidence reviewed emphasises that LAs should not be deterred from providing cash grants via their LWA schemes based on fears of misuse.

Key finding 4: In specific cases, consideration of individual circumstances is needed to determine whether cash is the most supportive option

While the evidence strongly advocates for English LAs to take a cash-first approach to the provision of local crisis support, it does highlight several specific cases where cash may not be the most appropriate or supportive form of support.⁶⁴ For example, in the 2020 evaluation of their pre-paid shopping card pilot scheme, Citizens Advice Scotland highlight that in rural areas, clients preferred the receipt of a food parcel as this could be delivered and involved social interaction.⁶⁵ End Furniture Poverty and others also highlight that where white goods or furniture items are

⁵⁶ Resolve Poverty (2023); Watts (2020)

⁵⁷ CPAG and Financial Fairness Trust (2020); Porter (2019)

⁵⁸ Department for Communities (2022); Statham et al. (2022); Welsh Government Social Research (2015)

⁵⁹ Evans And Earnshaw (2020); NAO (2015)

⁶⁰ Watts (2020)

⁶¹ Treanor (2020, p.488)

⁶² Lipscomb and Walker (2022)

⁶³ Peake and Donovan (2024); Resolve Poverty (2023); Evans and Earnshaw (2020)

⁶⁴ Evans and Earnshaw (2020)

⁶⁵ CAS (2020)

required, these are often best provided directly by LAs due to cost and logistical efficiencies.⁶⁶ Finally, where an individual is known to be specifically struggling with addiction or other circumstances which mean a cash payment could put them at risk of harm, cash payments may not be the most appropriate or supportive option and vouchers may be a more suitable alternative.⁶⁷ However, a cash-first approach would be appropriate for the vast majority of residents,⁶⁸ and **councils should endeavour to provide a tailored, person-centred approach to the delivery of local crisis support schemes to ensure the most dignified and appropriate form of support can be provided.**

3.2. Local authorities should ensure that local crisis support schemes are integrated within a wider, holistic local support system

Key finding 5: Local authorities should ensure that additional, wrap-around support is provided alongside immediate cash support

Applications to local crisis support schemes are highlighted as providing LAs with a key touchpoint at which to offer additional support or advice to households.⁶⁹ The need to make **debt, benefits, and income maximisation advice** available to local crisis support applicants is particularly emphasised by the evidence,⁷⁰ and a 2023 evaluation of LWA schemes in London finds that receiving additional support alongside immediate financial assistance is effective in “**maximising income, improving the ability of residents to cope, and may go some way to prevent or reduce repeat crisis applications**”.⁷¹ This report also highlights that “the complexity of circumstances leading to crisis means that holistic support for those presenting for LWA is often necessary to prevent deepening crisis and repeat LWA applications” and finds that for the majority of LWA applicants receiving additional support, this improved their situation.⁷² The evaluation therefore indicates that **the provision of wraparound, holistic support alongside immediate financial assistance may be effective in reducing repeat applications to local crisis support schemes.**⁷³

The receipt of additional support is emphasised as being especially crucial when a household has made multiple applications to a local crisis support scheme. For example, a 2022 report from Save The Children and Trussell, exploring next steps for the SWF found that: “One applicant we heard from through this research had made repeated applications for Crisis Grants over the past two years because of persistent problem debt. **Until they were pointed to debt advice services through a support worker at their local food bank, the financial challenges driving them into destitution were not addressed**”.⁷⁴ The provision of additional, holistic support is highlighted as playing a crucial part in supporting households to address the root causes of their financial

⁶⁶ Peake and Donovan (2024); Watts (2020)

⁶⁷ CAS (2024); Watts (2020)

⁶⁸ Watts (2020)

⁶⁹ Barclay et al. (2024); Charlesworth et al. (2023); Citizens Advice (2023); Evans and Earnshaw (2020); Porter (2019)

⁷⁰ Resolve Poverty (2023); Lipscomb and Walker (2022)

⁷¹ Charlesworth et al. (2023: p.13)

⁷² Charlesworth et al. (2023: p.41)

⁷³ Charlesworth et al. (2023)

⁷⁴ Statham et al. (2022: p.42)

hardship and move towards longer-term stability.⁷⁵ Alongside potential financial gains and stability, positive impacts of receiving additional support alongside immediate financial assistance are found to also include improved mental health and reduced feelings of isolation.⁷⁶ **LAs across the UK are therefore encouraged to proactively offer income maximisation advice alongside financial assistance and referrals to wider support services for all households that apply to local crisis support schemes.**⁷⁷

Key finding 6: Local authorities are encouraged to adopt a ‘caseworker’ or ‘no wrong door’ approach to providing local crisis support schemes and additional support

The benefits of adopting a **‘caseworker’ approach** to local crisis support schemes and additional support is highlighted by the evidence which advocates for local crisis support funding to be used to develop effective ways of connecting people to support beyond a crisis payment.⁷⁸ A 2020 Resolve Poverty report outlines how this approach has worked in Greater Manchester, where additional support **“has been implemented by using LWA scheme case workers who spend time with residents to understand their challenges and what would be most helpful to them”**.⁷⁹ This report found that a caseworker approach can reduce the need of residents to reapply for LWA schemes, saving council money and going some way to justifying any additional staff costs incurred.⁸⁰ Similarly, the benefits of establishing multi-agency groups and coordinating a **‘no-wrong door’ approach** to supporting households is emphasised.⁸¹ A 2021 Turn2Us briefing recommends that “anyone seeking help due to a financial crisis through another local authority service or financial provider, such as a credit union, should be informed of the LWA scheme”.⁸²

Key finding 7: Strong partnerships and collaboration between local authorities and other agencies are needed to deliver effective local support

Multiple sources of evidence highlight how strong partnerships between LAs, other local agencies and wider support services can help improve the coordination of local support systems.⁸³ Specifically, a 2019 report exploring best practice for the SWF finds that where LAs were “able to actually contact an advice service and request an appointment for an applicant (**an active referral**), as opposed to simply telling applicants where they could access further support (signposting), **there was a much higher chance that the applicant would engage with the additional support**”, and recommends that all LAs should make active referrals to additional support services.⁸⁴ A learning report from New Local and JRF published in 2023 emphasises that growing a **“strong local network”** of support and services is an important priority to tackling hardship in communities, making sure that “people get the right help at the right time”,⁸⁵ and recommends that LAs can **“play an important role by convening partners to coordinate and redesign pathways so that people can**

⁷⁵ CAS (2024); Lipscomb and Walker (2022)

⁷⁶ CAS (2024); Charlesworth et al. (2023)

⁷⁷ Porter et al. (2019); Evans and Earnshaw (2020); Charlesworth et al. (2023)

⁷⁸ Resolve Poverty (2023); Statham et al. (2022); Watts (2020)

⁷⁹ Watts (2020: p.19)

⁸⁰ Watts (2020)

⁸¹ Pollard and Hashmi (2023); Citizens Advice (2023)

⁸² Turn2Us (2021: p.5)

⁸³ Pollard and Hashmi (2023); Watts (2020)

⁸⁴ Hilber and MacLeod (2019: p.10)

⁸⁵ Pollard and Hashmi (2023: p.25)

access the support they need”.⁸⁶ Indeed, End Furniture Poverty’s most recent publication advocates that “the future of crisis support should embrace cross-sector collaboration so that crisis support can be more productive while allowing for the maximisation of access, avoiding duplication of support, and allowing for cross-referencing between support pathways”.⁸⁷ Therefore, LAs should consider **how they collaborate with other local support agencies and organisations to coordinate effective support**, integrating LWA schemes within a wider, holistic local support system.

3.3. Local authorities must improve the accessibility of their local crisis support schemes

Access to support is restricted by eligibility requirements and exclusions

Key finding 8: Local crisis support schemes do not currently reach all residents in need

A 2023 evaluation of LWA schemes in London finds that awards are “disproportionately distributed” to lone parents, social rented tenants, and residents in temporary housing.⁸⁸ This evaluation also highlights groups that miss out on support, including “**single residents without children**” who represent **47%** of Londoners in poverty, but only receive **28%** of LWA awards.⁸⁹ In relation to the distribution of the HSF, the evidence highlights that the use of targeted grants to specific groups (such as families with children eligible for FSMs) are “**being continually over-relied upon due the speed by which [they] can be administered**”.⁹⁰ A 2022 End Furniture Poverty report finds that **83%** HSF funding received by LAs was distributed as direct grants to specific groups, or provided directly to third party organisations, leaving just **17%** available for people to apply for.⁹¹ LAs are therefore encouraged to **take a more balanced approach to distributing local crisis support funds via applications and targeted grants**, to increase accessibility of support for households falling outside of priority groups.⁹²

Key finding 9: Most local authorities in England require applicants to Local Welfare Assistance schemes to be in receipt of means-tested benefits, or consider their scheme to be a ‘last resort’ option

A 2022 End Furniture Poverty report highlights that unsuccessful LWA applications are “**more likely to be a result of extensive eligibility criteria put in place to restrict demand on an underfunded service, as opposed to the individual not needing support**”,⁹³ and eligibility requirements are found to create barriers to accessing local schemes across multiple sources of evidence⁹⁴. Evidence captured by this review highlights that the majority of LAs in England only consider LWA

⁸⁶ Pollard and Hashmi (2023: p.26)

⁸⁷ Peake and Donovan (2024: p.34)

⁸⁸ Charlesworth et al. (2023: p.28)

⁸⁹ Charlesworth et al. (2023: p.28)

⁹⁰ Peake and Donovan (2024: p.33)

⁹¹ Bond and Donovan (2022)

⁹² Peake and Donovan (2024); Bond and Donovan (2022)

⁹³ Nichols and Donovan (2022: p.42)

⁹⁴ Peake and Donovan (2024); Norton (2024); Statham et al. (2022); Nichols and Donovan (2022); Evans and Earnshaw (2020); Porter (2019)

applications from people in receipt of **means-tested benefits**.⁹⁵ This restriction was not placed on previous crisis grants available in England via the discretionary Social Fund, and a 2024 research study finds this eligibility criteria controversial, overly prescriptive, and exclusionary of vulnerable in-work low-income households.⁹⁶

Furthermore, **more than a quarter of LAs consider their LWA scheme as a 'last resort' option**, requiring applicants to have attempted all possible alternative support options before applying, including Universal Credit advances, credit unions, local charities, Budgeting Loans, and in some cases, approaching friends and family for support.⁹⁷ A 2019 report from The Children's Society highlights particular concern that **7% of LAs "expect applicants to have explored borrowing from commercial credit providers"** before applying for their LWA scheme, increasing the risk of vulnerable households being **"caught in a 'debt trap'"**.⁹⁸ While eligibility criteria are highlighted as being an important part of LWA schemes by helping to ensure that funds are available to those most in need, the evidence encourages **LAs to explore how eligibility criteria or restrictions can be relaxed or flexed to consider the specific needs and circumstances of individual applicants**.⁹⁹

Key finding 10: The exclusion of people with no recourse to public funds from accessing local crisis support schemes is particularly harmful

Across the UK, **people with NRPF are routinely excluded from applying for local crisis support schemes**.¹⁰⁰ Specifically in England, a 2024 research paper finds that **31% (39)** open LWA schemes specifically exclude people "subject to immigration control", and only **6% (7)** LAs with open schemes state that individuals with NRPF can apply.¹⁰¹ At an increased risk of low household income (three quarters of NRPF households have an income below the UK median), people with NRPF are highlighted as a group who should have access to local crisis support when faced with a financial emergency.¹⁰² Furthermore, a 2023 evaluation highlights that LWA schemes are **"the final safety net"** for residents, and groups excluded from applying are "unlikely to have recourse to other support mechanisms".¹⁰³ Interestingly, this evidence review did capture examples of LAs that have relaxed their application criteria to make LWA available to people with NRPF (making use of the circumstances in which local authorities can lawfully provide local crisis support to individuals with NRPF), such as Leeds City Council.¹⁰⁴ Considering the evidence reviewed, **LAs across the UK are therefore encouraged to use existing powers allow people with NRPF to apply for local crisis support schemes**.¹⁰⁵ At the same time, the evidence calls on the UK Home Office to improve the support available for people with NRPF, including allowing them to apply for local crisis support schemes.¹⁰⁶

⁹⁵ Charlesworth et al. (2023); Evans and Earnshaw (2020); Watts (2020); Porter (2019); NAO (2016)

⁹⁶ Norton (2024); Porter (2019)

⁹⁷ Nichols and Donovan (2022); Evans and Earnshaw (2020); Watts (2020); Porter (2019)

⁹⁸ Porter (2019: pp.26-27)

⁹⁹ Watts (2020: p.32)

¹⁰⁰ Charlesworth et al. (2023); Statham et al. (2022); Porter (2019)

¹⁰¹ Norton (2024: p.423)

¹⁰² Citizens Advice (2023); Statham et al. (2022)

¹⁰³ Charlesworth et al. (2023: p.11)

¹⁰⁴ Evans and Earnshaw (2020)

¹⁰⁵ Charlesworth et al. (2023); Citizens Advice (2023); Turn2Us (2021)

¹⁰⁶ Scottish Government (2023); Turn2Us (2021)

Complex application processes and limited communication channels create barriers to access

Key finding 11: Limited application and communication channels for local crisis support schemes create barriers to access

A 2024 research paper highlights that **limited options in how to apply for LWA reduces the accessibility of schemes**, finding that almost **30%** LWA schemes are now only accessible via an online application process.¹⁰⁷ This paper highlights that “the most marginalised and vulnerable groups are often excluded from crisis support” as a result, and online-only application processes are found to be particularly detrimental for people experiencing **digital poverty or exclusion** by multiple reports.¹⁰⁸

However, there is a **lack of consensus amongst LWA applicants of the best channel through which to apply for schemes**: a 2023 evaluation of LWA schemes in London reports mixed experiences of online application processes, and a preference for telephone communication if “the applicant experienced a more complex crisis, they needed to communicate the urgency of their situation, or they did not have access to the internet”.¹⁰⁹ A 2019 report from The Children’s Society raises concerns that **less than a third of LAs offer face-to-face applications** for local crisis support, restricting accessibility for people without access to a telephone or internet connection.¹¹⁰ **The evidence calls on LAs in England to provide multiple application routes for LWA schemes, to include online, telephone, postal and in-person options as a minimum.**¹¹¹

Key finding 12: Accessibility of local crisis support schemes is limited by complex application processes and inconsistency of information provided by local authorities

Accessibility of local crisis support schemes is further limited by **complex or onerous application processes**.¹¹² A 2022 report from CPAG and The Financial Fairness Trust highlights that across England, Scotland and Wales, “**confusing application process[es] with high evidence requirements**” is an issue with the delivery of local crisis support schemes.¹¹³ This is echoed by a 2020 LGA report, which highlights that overly complicated and strict application processes “can act as a barrier for those trying to access support and entail in council staff spending significant time and resources assessing and verifying applications for relatively small amounts of money”.¹¹⁴ **LAs are therefore encouraged to reevaluate the complexity and length of application processes for their local crisis support schemes and reduce evidence requirements where possible.**¹¹⁵

Accessibility of local crisis support schemes can be limited by **language barriers**, where LAs do not offer translation of application forms and information.¹¹⁶ A 2022 End Furniture Poverty report finds

¹⁰⁷ Norton (2024)

¹⁰⁸ Norton (2024: p.425); Sorley and Kearton (2024); Nichols and Donovan (2022); Edmiston et al. (2022); Evans and Earnshaw (2020)

¹⁰⁹ Charlesworth et al. (2023: pp.44-45)

¹¹⁰ Porter (2019)

¹¹¹ Peake and Donovan (2024); Charlesworth et al. (2023); Edmiston et al. (2022); Evans and Earnshaw (2020); Porter (2019); Welsh Government Social Research (2015)

¹¹² CPAG and Financial Fairness Trust (2022); Turn2Us (2021); Evans and Earnshaw (2020); Porter (2019)

¹¹³ CPAG and Financial Fairness Trust (2022: p.25)

¹¹⁴ Evans and Earnshaw (2020: p.22)

¹¹⁵ Resolve Poverty (2023); Nichols and Donovan (2022); Watts (2020); Hilber and MacLeod (2019)

¹¹⁶ Ormiston et al. (2023)

that **58%** local schemes do not provide any translation options when applying for support, meaning that “many non-English speaking people are cut-off from support”.¹¹⁷ The evidence therefore calls on LAs to **ensure that information and application forms for local crisis support schemes can be easily translated into different languages.**¹¹⁸

There is a low level of awareness of what support is available locally

Key finding 13: There is low public awareness of what local crisis support schemes are available and who is eligible to receive support due to lack of communication and advertisement from local authorities

Multiple sources of evidence reviewed highlight that there is a low level of public awareness of what support is available via local crisis support schemes across England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.¹¹⁹ A 2023 evaluation of LWA schemes in London highlights that residents are missing out on support due to being unaware of schemes and finds that **“socially isolated residents and those without internet access are most at risk of lacking awareness of LWA”.**¹²⁰ This report highlights that LAs may wish to consider wider communication channels to raise awareness of LWA schemes and suggests the dissemination of information **“through groups that may come into contact with residents in crisis such as religious centres, community organisations, schools, and GP surgeries”.**¹²¹ A 2023 Scottish Government review of the SWF also finds that “more could be done to raise awareness of the fund, particularly among those who might be new to needing state support” in Scotland.¹²² The evidence advocates that all LAs must sufficiently advertise local crisis support schemes to raise awareness of support available, especially amongst at risk groups.¹²³

However, LAs in England are restricted in their ability to advertise their LWA schemes, due to concerns about creating demand for support that could not be met with the resources available.¹²⁴ A 2024 research paper highlights reflections from a member of the third sector on being unable to advertise support: “we cannot actively advertise [LWA] because resources are so limited. **The [LA] say that if we advertise it, we’re going to be creating demand that cannot be met.** So, in an ideal world, we would have resources that needed...because we can’t advertise, we just use our networks”.¹²⁵ However, a 2020 End Furniture Poverty report highlights that **“not advertising support also makes it challenging to understand levels of demand and the level of need for support in a locality, which can have consequences for future budget setting”.**¹²⁶

¹¹⁷ Nichols and Donovan (2022: p.46)

¹¹⁸ Nichols and Donovan (2022)

¹¹⁹ Ormiston et al. (2023); Handscomb (2022); Nichols and Donovan (2022); Department for Communities (2022); The Bevan Foundation (2022); CPAG and Financial Fairness Trust (2020)

¹²⁰ Charlesworth et al. (2023: p.34)

¹²¹ Charlesworth et al. (2023: p.11)

¹²² Ormiston et al. (2023: p.77)

¹²³ Peake and Donovan (2024); Charlesworth et al. (2023); Arnot (2022); Watts (2020); Whitham (2018)

¹²⁴ Norton (2024); Meers et al. (2023); CPAG and Financial Fairness Trust (2022); Porter (2019)

¹²⁵ Norton (2024: p.425)

¹²⁶ Watts (2020: p.30)

4. Conclusion

This evidence review sought to address the question “**What does effective local crisis support look like?**”, with a specific focus on understanding how local crisis support in England could be improved. Through the in-depth review of 38 pieces of evidence, this review has identified key findings for both the UK government and LAs, highlighting how local crisis support can be planned and delivered effectively.

Firstly, the evidence reviewed recommends that the UK government commits to a longer-term, increased and ring-fenced budget allocation for LAs to deliver local crisis support schemes. The UK government is also encouraged to take a more consistent and centralised approach to local crisis support in England, with some evidence advocating for a singular naming convention for all schemes to create a clear identity and help improve awareness of support. Furthermore, multiple pieces of evidence call on the UK government to make the provision of local crisis support schemes a statutory duty on all LAs in England. The evidence is clear this should be accompanied by long-term funding and new guidance setting out minimum standards for delivery. Together, the evidence argues that this approach will drive much needed improvements in the consistency of local crisis support provision across England. Finally, the current lack of monitoring and evaluation of the effectiveness of local crisis support schemes is highlighted as an issue, with the evidence advocating for increased monitoring of schemes to facilitate learning at both LA and national levels.

It is important to note that approaches taken by UK government in funding and guiding local crisis support schemes can serve to either support or undermine the ability of LAs to plan and deliver effective local crisis support. In particular, the evidence highlights how a lack of ring-fenced funding has reduced the availability of support and, more recently, a short-term, ‘sticking plaster’ approach to funding local crisis support via the HSF has undermined LAs ability to effectively plan and deliver their schemes.

Considering the design of local schemes, the evidence firstly recommends that LAs in England should adopt a cash-first approach to local crisis support. The evidence reviewed identifies a range of benefits of providing cash, both for residents and LAs, including administrative efficiency, dignity and flexibility. LAs are also encouraged to ensure that local crisis support schemes are integrated within a wider, holistic support system, ensuring that wrap-around advice and support that can help tackle the root causes of financial hardship is provided alongside immediate cash support. Strong partnerships and cross-sector collaboration between LAs and other local agencies are highlighted as crucial to facilitating this. Finally, the evidence highlights that the accessibility of local crisis support schemes across the UK could be improved in a number of ways, including: expanding eligibility criteria, particularly to include people not in receipt of means-tested benefits and people with NRPF; simplifying application processes and increasing the range of application and communication channels; and advertising schemes to increase awareness of what support is available.

Considering the range of evidence drawn upon by this review, we note that there is currently a lack of evaluations of local crisis support schemes in the UK. We would therefore recommend that future research seeks to evaluate the effectiveness of the delivery of local crisis support schemes in England, in particular seeking to understand the impact of key findings and recommendations

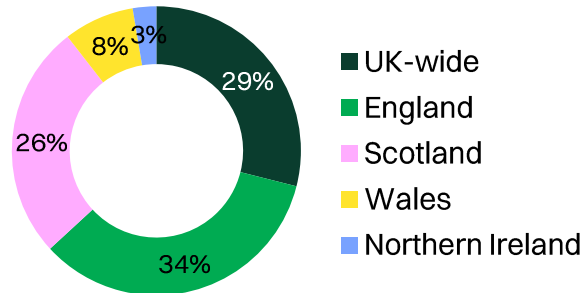
outlined within this review. This evidence gap also adds further weight to the recommendation that the UK government should place monitoring and evaluation requirements on LAs to understand the effectiveness of support on offer, facilitate learning, and support LAs to make a strong business case for continued funding.

5. Appendix

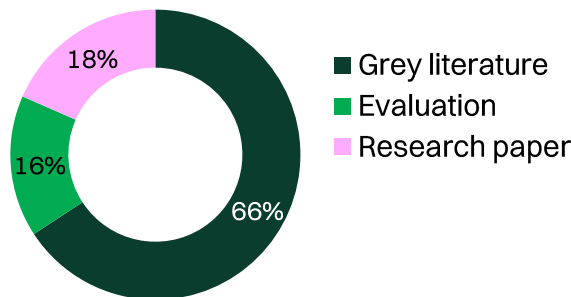
5.1. Process and methods

5.1.1. Evidence overview

We have undertaken in-depth review of **38** pieces of evidence as part of this review. Most of the evidence captured by this review presents findings for the whole of the UK (**11** papers), or for specifically England (**13** papers). Across the devolved nations and regions of the UK, we captured **10** papers presenting findings for Scotland, **3** papers for Wales, and just **1** for Northern Ireland.



In terms of evidence type, most of the evidence we captured was grey literature (**25** papers). We were able to capture **6** evaluations, and **7** peer-reviewed research papers.



5.1.2. Evidence review process

5.1.2.1. Evidence searching

In collaboration with our internal Trussell project Working Group, we landed on the research question: “**What does effective local crisis support look like?**”. To help us answer our research question, we adopted a combined approach to identifying relevant evidence:

- 1) Conversations and discussions with internal stakeholders (19 papers)
- 2) A Google Scholar literature search and screening process (10 papers)
- 3) ‘Snowballing’ of key pieces of evidence (9 papers)

Discussions with internal stakeholders

In August and September 2024, we held a series of 1-to-1 conversations with members of our project Working Group and stakeholders from across wider Trussell. These conversations drew on the expertise and knowledge of internal stakeholders and supported us in the development of our search string (below). Internal stakeholders were also able to identify key pieces of evidence that we should consider for inclusion within this review.

Google Scholar literature search and screening process

As part of this evidence review, we also undertook a Google Scholar literature search. With the guidance of the Working Group and internal stakeholders, as well as key background provided by Trussell's Local Policy Toolkit explaining the hallmarks of effective local crisis support schemes and the 'Cash or Food?' report from the APPG on Ending the Need for Food Banks, we developed the following search string:

Concept 1: Local crisis support	Concept 2: Effectiveness	Concept 3: Context	Concept 4: Source
'Local welfare assistance'	AND effective	AND UK	AND evaluation
OR 'local crisis support' OR 'local welfare' OR 'Scottish Welfare Fund' OR 'household support' OR 'discretionary assistance' OR statutory crisis support OR 'devolved support'	OR supportive OR accessible OR fair OR preventative OR simple OR proactive OR signposted OR advertised OR coordinated OR integrated OR flexible OR holistic OR 'joined-up'	OR 'United Kingdom' OR Scotland OR Wales OR 'Northern Ireland' OR England	OR research OR findings OR programme OR scheme
OR 'cash-first' OR 'cash grant'	OR eligibility OR requirement		
OR 'local crisis grant' OR 'community care grant'	OR 'referral pathway' OR 'referral agency' OR 'referral partner' OR 'no-wrong door'		

When conducting our Google Scholar literature search, we adopted the following parameters:

- **Date range:** 2016 – present
- **Number of results:** first 4 pages (40 results). We scanned the first 8 pages of search results for general relevance and applicability. We found that after page 4, relevance significantly reduced. We therefore downloaded the **first 40 search results** into an Excel document to be screened for inclusion/exclusion.

'Snowballing' of key pieces of evidence

As we carried out our in-depth review, where a piece of evidence was particularly relevant or useful, we considered whether any of the papers referenced would be useful to include separately, undertaking an ad-hoc process of 'snowballing' evidence. Where papers were included through this method, we did not consider any of its referenced papers for inclusion, restricting our snowballing to one 'level'.

5.1.2.2. Evidence screening

In terms of inclusion/exclusion criteria, we screened the key information and abstract/summary for each piece of evidence, considering:

- **Age:** We only included evidence < 10 years old (except for key pieces of evidence, for which a more recent version/edition was not available)
- **Location:** We only included evidence that focused on the local crisis support context within the UK

- **Relevance:** We only included evidence that appeared relevant for our specific research question
- **Context:** We considered whether the context of the research and findings presented were relevant to the context of our organisation and food bank community

Considering these criteria, we took:

- 19 pieces of evidence forward for review from the Google Scholar literature search. Upon in-depth review only 10 of these pieces of evidence were considered to be high priority in terms of relevance and interest and were included in our in-depth review.
- 19 pieces of evidence forward from our discussions with internal stakeholders.
- 9 pieces of evidence forward from our process of 'snowballing'.

5.1.2.3. Evidence reviewing and synthesising

We read and reviewed each piece of evidence in-depth, identifying and drawing out relevant excerpts and findings. To help us determine which key findings to draw out of the evidence we reviewed, we used the APPG on Ending the Need for Foodbanks' report, and Trussell's Local Policy Toolkit, as well as more general research sub-questions. This allowed us to ensure we captured evidence to bolster existing sector recommendations, but also allowed for the emergence of new, different, or contrasting findings. We therefore captured evidence under the following topics/research questions:

APPG/Local Policy Toolkit	Research questions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Cash-first approaches ▪ Awareness of support available ▪ Integration of support available/more holistic support ▪ Data-sharing and joined-up services ▪ Accessible and inclusive local crisis support ▪ Management of individual debt ▪ Long-term funding commitment ▪ Monitoring and evaluation requirements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ "How can local systems become really supportive, and where/how does local support work well?" ▪ "How/where have effective local support systems come about?" ▪ "What does good partnership working look like, and how has this improved support?" ▪ "How have statutory partners been convinced to make changes? What has influenced them?" ▪ Other findings/points of interest

We captured all relevant exerts for each piece of evidence within an Excel document, with the above topics/research questions as column headers. Once all evidence had been reviewed in depth, we proceeded to highlight key information and annotate our findings, supporting us to synthesise and collate the evidence and determine key themes and findings.

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