

I am seeking answers to questions regarding the council's Single Discretionary Award scheme and the support conditionality requirements outlined on this page:

<http://www.derby.gov.uk/advice-and-benefits/benefits/the-single-discretionary-award-scheme/>

On that page, the council says it has introduced support conditions to the scheme:

"We have introduced a new support element to this service. When you make an application, we may assess your need for other support services. Where we identify a need for support we will make referrals to our partners to provide that support. Applicants must be willing to take up and remain engaged with the most appropriate support recommended by the Council, which may include: money advice, budgeting support, access to banking products, access to digital skills support, better off calculations, access to job clubs and training and housing advice. Certain groups, including pensioners, will be excluded from any 'towards work' requirements."

1) When did the council introduce the Single Discretionary Award scheme and this level of engagement conditionality?	<b>22 November 2016.</b>
2) Does this conditionality apply to applicants for Discretionary Housing Payments?	<b>Yes -The requirement to engage in support does apply to Discretionary Housing Payments.</b>
3) If conditionality does apply to DHP applicants, does it apply to people who request DHPs because they are affected by the government's welfare reform changes (the bedroom tax and the benefit cap, etc)?	<p><b>We are currently focusing the support on those people closest to the labour market from this DHP customer group.</b></p> <p><b>The requirement to engage in support services applies to job seekers claiming Jobseekers Allowance &amp; Universal Credit claimants only and is optional for other benefit groups.</b></p>
4) Why did the council introduce this degree of engagement conditionality?	<b>The requirement to engage in support is designed to promote financial Independence to allow the Council to focus funds on the most vulnerable groups moving forwards.</b>

	<p>The intention behind the combination of financial award and support services in a personalised support plan, is to begin to remove barriers to work.</p> <p>By bringing together three separate financial awards (Discretionary Housing Payments, Council Tax Hardship Payments &amp; Local Assistance Awards) and introducing the support offer, the Council is better able to coordinate the financial awards, whilst tackling the issues with customer led case work.</p>
<p>5) Could you send details of the "towards work" requirements discussed in the excerpt above? What are the "towards work" requirements that people are asked to participate in (ie, must they attend classes, job clubs, training, work programmes, etc).</p> <p>If so, who provides these clubs and training? How many hours a week must people commit to?</p>	<p>We take a person centered and holistic approach to what 'towards work' activity might be.</p> <p>We look at the customer's overall situation and recommend support based on their priorities and circumstances.</p> <p>This is to remove potential barriers to someone preparing for work. The support could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Money advice</li> <li>- Housing advice</li> <li>- Welfare rights advice</li> <li>- Access to digital skills courses</li> <li>- Access to job clubs</li> <li>- Access to employment support programmes, ranging from projects that work with people very far away from the labour market and projects for those close to the labour market</li> <li>- Access to affordable and ethical banking products via a local Credit Union</li> <li>- Access to charitable trust funds</li> <li>- Access to mental health</li> </ul>



	<p><b>services and counselling support</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Access to domestic violence support</b></li> <li>- <b>Access to drug and alcohol dependency support</b></li> </ul> <p><b>Case workers will also work with customers to identify other barriers and work to sign post or get them in touch with the right agencies.</b></p> <p><b>We work in partnership with a number of local agencies, we also signpost to a number of agencies without the need for formal partnership arrangements in place.</b></p> <p><b>We currently refer to local advice agencies, employment support providers, credit union and libraries.</b></p> <p><b>There is no minimum or maximum hours per week for someone to engage.</b></p> <p><b>We talk with the customer and arrange the most appropriate support for that point in time without overburdening or overwhelming them with appointments.</b></p> <p><b>If someone accesses the service and is particularly chaotic, caseworkers will prioritise issues such as resolving rent arrears or possession proceedings over focusing on employment support.</b></p>
<p>6) Are "towards work" requirements co-ordinated with the DWP if people are already engaged in JSA/Universal Credit/ESA WRAG worksearch and work-related activities conditionality?</p>	<p><b>Yes.</b></p>
<p>7) Are single parents offered childcare support if they must engage in compulsory support activities?</p>	<p><b>Support for single parents would only be required if they are in receipt of Jobseekers Allowance.</b></p>



	<p><b>This is to allow more flexibility to work around times convenient for the customer, so that child care is not required.</b></p>
<p>8) What is meant in the excerpt by "access to banking products"?</p>	<p><b>An element of the Single Discretionary Award Scheme's support is to work with customers to improve how they use banking products or to introduce banking products such as budgeting accounts, savings accounts and access to more ethical lending to try to reduce door step lending.</b></p> <p><b>This is done with our local Credit Union &amp; can include a number of different products.</b></p>
<p>9) Does the council have figures yet for the number of applicants turned down for not engaging in this support?</p>	<p><b>15 – However, customers can re-engage and awards will be re-considered at that point.</b></p>

