



Subject:	Integrated Advice Partnership Fund (IAPF) and CSP Funding 2026/27
Date:	14 April 2026
Reporting Officer:	Jim Girvan – Director of Neighbourhood Services
Contact Officer:	Nicola Lane, Neighbourhood Services Manager Margaret Higgins, Lead Officer, Community Provision

Restricted Reports	
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Please indicate the description, as listed in Schedule 6, of the exempt information by virtue of which the council has deemed this report restricted.	
Insert number <input type="checkbox"/>	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Information relating to any individual 2. Information likely to reveal the identity of an individual 3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the council holding that information) 4. Information in connection with any labour relations matter 5. Information in relation to which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained 6. Information showing that the council proposes to (a) to give a notice imposing restrictions on a person; or (b) to make an order or direction 7. Information on any action in relation to the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime 	
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?	
After Committee Decision After Council Decision Sometime in the future Never	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>

Call-in

Is the decision eligible for Call-in?

Yes

No

1.0	Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues																		
1.1	<p>The purpose of this report is to;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> advise members that Council has received confirmation from The Department for Communities of an allocation for the Integrated Advice Partnership Fund 2026/27 and seek agreement from members on allocation of this award. update members on the CSP Funding which is received on an annual basis from DfC advise members of the correspondence received from the Department in respect of the Welfare Reform Mitigations (face to face) funding and seek their views on how to proceed. Request that members approve release of a further 25% Social Supermarket funding based on the recent DfC correspondence. 																		
2.0	Recommendation																		
2.1	<p>Members are asked to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> note the contents of the report, consider the allocation options presented for the Integrated Advice Partnership Fund, agree their preferred option and approve payment of 25% following submission of eligible proposals, consider DfC's response in relation to Welfare Reform Mitigations (face to face) funding and provide a recommendation on how to proceed. approve release of a further 25% Social Supermarket funding based on the recent DfC correspondence. 																		
3.0	Main Report																		
3.1	<p>Background information</p> <p><u>Integrated Advice Partnership Fund</u></p> <p>Members will recall that in November 2024 Council received funding from DfC of £248,253.48 through the Integrated Advice Partnership Fund for activity in 24/26. The objective of the fund is to 'Improve the uptake of free, independent regulated debt advice through a collaborative partnership approach'.</p>																		
3.2	<p>Members agreed that council would invite applications from all BCC funded advice organisations. Based on all proposals received covering the duration of the fund the following funding allocations were agreed which are outlined in Table 1.</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Area</th> <th>Organisation</th> <th>Allocation</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>City Centre and East Belfast</td> <td>Advice Space</td> <td>£94,022.80</td> </tr> <tr> <td>South Belfast</td> <td>Southcity Resource and Development Centre (SRDC)</td> <td>£36,389.43</td> </tr> <tr> <td>North Belfast</td> <td>The Vine Centre</td> <td>£60,392.32</td> </tr> <tr> <td>West Belfast</td> <td>Upper Springfield Development Trust (USDT)</td> <td>£57,448.94</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Total</td> <td></td> <td>£248,253.49</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>Table 1</p>	Area	Organisation	Allocation	City Centre and East Belfast	Advice Space	£94,022.80	South Belfast	Southcity Resource and Development Centre (SRDC)	£36,389.43	North Belfast	The Vine Centre	£60,392.32	West Belfast	Upper Springfield Development Trust (USDT)	£57,448.94	Total		£248,253.49
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3.3 In September 2025, Council received an additional in-year allocation of £79,784.78 for the Integrated Advice Partnership Fund. Members agreed the option to allocate the funding equally between the four providers. Thus, in addition to the figures presented in Table 1 above each provider received an additional £19,946.20.

3.4 We have recently received notification from DfC that the Integrated Advice Partnership Fund 2026/27 is £84,363.13. In addition to this allocation providers can carry underspends for 2025/26 into the 2026/27 financial year.

3.5 Members are asked to consider the following options for the 2026/27 and agree their preferred option. Table 2 provides a breakdown of the allocation per option.

- Option 1 Allocation based on % of the previous funding to each group.
- Option 2 Allocation based on an equal split between the four organisations

3.6

Organisations	Previous Allocation	Allocation % Of Total	Option 1 Uplift based on %	Option 2 Uplift Equal Split
Advice Space	£113,969.00	34.7%	£29,309.95	£21,090.79
Southcity RDC	£56,335.63	17.2%	£14,488.10	£21,090.79
Vine Centre	£80,338.52	24.5%	£20,661.04	£21,090.79
Upper Springfield Development Trust	£77,395.14	23.6%	£19,904.07	£21,090.79
Total	£328,038.29		£84,363.16	£84,363.16

Table 2

CSP Letter of Offer

3.7 Currently Council has yet to receive the Community Support Programme (CSP), Letter of Offer 26/27 from DfC. However, on 26th March, the Department issued the correspondence attached in Appendix 1. There was an accompanying email which clarified that council would receive a 25% allocation to cover all CSP activity until 30 June 2026 and that an additional Letter of Offer for the IAPF would follow. On this basis members are asked to approve that officers will seek proposals from funded groups for 26/27 and following review approve allocations and issue 25% funding.

3.8 Welfare Reform Mitigations (face to face)

Members may recall that another element of activity that is 100% funded through the CSP LoO is Welfare Reform Mitigations (face to face). Officers had previously sought approval to combine this element of funding with generalist advice funding as both support similar activity and it provides continuity of funding for delivery organisations. Members had deferred a decision and instructed officers to contact DfC to ask that they administer this support. DfC have responded as outlined below;

The Department provides funding for local advice services to all Councils through the Community Support Programme (CSP), which is match funded by Councils. Councils play an important role as co funders and commissioners of community based generalist advice, including the additional provision funded under Welfare Mitigations, to meet local need in their respective areas. At present, the Department has no plans to move away from this approach.

As with all funding to the Voluntary and Community Sector, we recognise the challenges posed by the absence of a multi year budget settlement. Whilst we cannot confirm exact annual budget levels at this stage, the Executive approved the extension of the additional Welfare Mitigations allocations in December 2024 through to March 2028. This decision reflects the continued demand for advice services and the need to preserve existing sector capacity to support vulnerable individuals navigating the social security system.

For clarity and budgetary purposes, we are unable to combine these funding streams into a single line within the CSP Letter of Offer at this time. However, we would encourage Councils to commission these services together, as the majority of other Councils already do. While multi year budgets have not been possible in recent years, other Councils continue to commission advice services on a multi year basis, including a clause stating that continuation beyond year one is subject to DfC funding being confirmed.

3.9 Members are asked to consider this response and advise how they wish to proceed in relation to Welfare Reform Mitigations (face to face) funding.

3.10 Members may recall that this funding is allocated to specific advice organisations in each area. These were the organisations that were receiving funding from DfC when the fund was initially introduced and administered by the Department of Communities. When council agreed to administer this funding in 2020/21 we also agreed to continue this allocation method. In 25/26, members agreed that if the named organisation did not submit a proposal in a timely way, proposals would be sought from the consortia through the consortia lead. Table 3 below provides more detail;

Consortia – Funded Organisation	% Of Total Allocation	25/26 Allocation
Central - Advice Space	46.74%	£125,585.24
East - EBIAC	13.32%	£35,779.89
West – Neighbourhood Development Association	13.32%	£35,779.89
South - Ballynaveigh Community Development Association	13.32%	£35,779.89
North – Ligoniel Improvement Association	13.32%	£35,779.89

Table 3

3.11 Social Supermarket funding
Members are also asked to note that this communication relates to Social Supermarket funding and provides 25% funding for 26/27. SP&R agreed at March committee that they would issue 25% funding in the absence of a DfC LoO. Members are asked to approve release of a further 25% based on the recent DfC correspondence. This would provide continuity of service in the absence of a DfC LoO which is unlikely to be received before June committee.

4.0 **Financial and Resource Implications**

4.1 The administration of this fund will be carried out by existing staff, there is no financial impact for council as 100% funding is being provided by DfC.

5.0	<u>Equality or Good Relations Implications /Rural Needs Assessment</u>
5.1	This funding seeks to provide new opportunities for people to access debt and generalist advice and will have a positive impact on addressing inequalities.
6.0	Appendices - Documents Attached or None
6.1	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Correspondence from Department for Communities re CSP Funding March 26 2. Accounts Direction 2025/26 – INTEGRATED ADVICE PARTNERSHIP FUND