

**Please note: this funding is no longer open to applications**

## Influencing change in the welfare system

### Introduction to Lloyds Bank Foundation for England & Wales

Lloyds Bank Foundation for England & Wales partners with small and local charities to help people overcome complex social issues. Through long-term funding, development support and influencing policy and practice, the Foundation helps those charities make life-changing impact. The Foundation is an independent charitable trust funded by the profits of Lloyds Banking Group.

### Background: influencing change in the welfare system

Lloyds Bank Foundation partners with more than 650 charities across England and Wales, supporting people affected by issues ranging from domestic and sexual abuse, homelessness, mental health to leaving care. Across all the issues and the communities in which these charities work, problems and concerns with welfare support are a consistent issue. Many of the people who charities work with are falling into poverty, are unable to access the kind of welfare support they need in a way that works best for them or find themselves falling through gaps in the welfare safety net.

### We fund, we develop, we influence

As well as providing funding for charities directly supporting people, and development support to help build the capacity of charities, the Foundation also aims to influence policy and practice, addressing the causes and consequences of the challenges faced by charities and the people they work with. Building on what we hear from the charities we fund about how the welfare system is causing problems for the people they work with, or exacerbating challenges that people are already facing, we are interested in supporting work which aims to influence change in the welfare system, to ensure people can get the support they need.

So far, under this welfare programme, we've funded work with [Bright Blue](#) looking at issues with Universal Credit, and an upcoming commission on the future of welfare. We're also a partner in the [Coordinated Community Support](#) programme, led by the Children's Society and other national and local partners, which aims to better coordinate the provision of emergency financial assistance at a local level. And we are funding forthcoming work by the New Local Government Network looking at the case for a more devolved and community-based approach to back to work support. As well as funding projects in this area, as a Foundation we also work directly to influence change – recently we have fed into relevant government consultations and engaged directly with government to share what we've been hearing from small charities about welfare issues, as well as working with other stakeholders on joint initiatives to influence change.

## Background: why this programme matters now

We've been hearing for a long time from charities about challenges with the welfare system. During the coronavirus pandemic, these issues have intensified. We know that many people have experienced a drop in their income in recent months and have needed to access welfare support. Record numbers of people are claiming Universal Credit and food banks have seen a big rise in the number of people needing emergency support. New challenges have arisen and existing problems have intensified.

The government introduced a range of temporary measures to ease the impact of some of these challenges – including a temporary suspension of conditionality, uprating Universal Credit by £20, increasing the prison discharge grant and increasing Local Housing Allowance. Central government has provided additional funds to local councils in England for emergency financial support, and in Wales improvements have been made to the Discretionary Assistance Fund. These measures were very welcome though unfortunately, most were time-limited – some have ended already, and others are set to be reversed in the coming months.

Yet the consequences of the pandemic are going to be with us much longer. The five week wait for Universal Credit has long been a major challenge for many people, but during recent months, as more people have been claiming Universal Credit for the first time, too many have been left with nothing to live on, having to turn to food banks and risking falling into debt or rent arrears. Some people have found themselves unable to access support from Universal Credit (such as those with a partner working or with some savings), while others on legacy benefits or affected by the benefit cap have not benefited from the temporary uplift in Universal Credit, despite being subject to the same increases in costs of living. Others have struggled to access support due to digital exclusion. Perhaps most starkly, a whole group of people have been left without access to key sources of support, as they have no recourse to public funds due to their immigration status.

As we recover from the initial months of the pandemic, there may be opportunities to influence positive change. Many are now looking at how we can rebuild from the crisis and what can be learned from the last few months. With millions more people and households having to use the benefit system, it will assume greater significance in policy and funding decisions as public engagement with and support for it may increase. This may generate opportunities – such as whether, for example, a case can be made for making the temporary measures introduced during the crisis more permanent – or through forthcoming policy windows. The government is due to publish a Green Paper on disability benefits, which may bring opportunities to influence change in support for those with disabilities or long-term health conditions. And the government's overall commitment towards “levelling up” areas and opportunities provides a hook and rationale to make the case for improvements to the social security system.

There are also, however, very real challenges to be worked through, such as how the welfare system can adapt to a very different context, with record numbers of people accessing support, an uncertain economic context, and a much tougher jobs market.

Amid record numbers of claimants and the inevitable political focus there will be on them and their circumstances, there is a danger that those who have always needed to use the social security system and face a range of and greater challenges, will find themselves, their needs and concerns less of a priority.

It is in this context that we want to support charities to use their voice and expertise to highlight issues, make the case for change and ultimately successfully influence policy and practice in the social security system.

## The programme

### Aim of the work

Amid the challenges and opportunities highlighted by the pandemic, and the growing need for a social security system that works better for all, we are looking to fund policy, campaigning, evidence gathering or research aiming to influence policy and practice under the following key objective:

*Improving access to, and the help available from, welfare support and challenging practices that disproportionately impact those facing the greatest challenges.*

We are seeking to take forward work which responds to the circumstances highlighted by the pandemic and makes the most of current and upcoming opportunities - such as the upcoming Green Paper on disability benefits and this Government's wider agenda around levelling up.

Our focus is work which seeks to influence issues raised by the charities and causes we focus on i.e. affecting working age adults who face the greatest or additional challenges - those people who face complex social disadvantages, who have always had challenges with the benefits system, but who without a spotlight being shone on may receive less attention than those large numbers of newer claimants.

We are therefore interested in funding work which seeks to influence policy and practice around the following specific issues:

- Sanctions and conditionality
- The level and rate of deductions
- The level of Local Housing Allowance / Housing Benefit for working age adults without children
- The process of claiming benefits, including greater options for those who struggle to get online
- The support offered to claimants, including by Work Coaches or by others
- Improving support for those with no recourse to public funds
- The prison discharge grant
- Improving the operation of the social security system for those experience domestic abuse.

## Who this work should benefit

While we recognise that many people would benefit from changes to the social security system, we are particularly interested in work which will benefit working age adults who face the greatest challenges, such as those who are affected by the complex social issues that the Foundation focuses on ([more information here](#)) – for example, people who are affected by domestic abuse, have experienced homelessness, are dealing with mental ill health or are moving on from time in prison. More generally, it may mean people who are unable to access online support or processes, who are disproportionately affected by structural inequalities, those with no recourse to public funds or those who need support from others to navigate the benefit system and advocate for what they are entitled to.

We recognise that some work will benefit large groups of people, or everyone who has contact with the welfare system. This kind of work which has wider benefit or which is more general, rather than focussing on a specific group of people, will only be eligible for funding if it can be demonstrated that it will have specific benefit for people who fall into the groups outlined above. Please note that through this programme we won't support work focused on children or families specifically e.g. looking at child benefit levels or the two-child limit.

## What kind of work will be funded?

Rather than delivering services, this funding is a chance to think differently and focus on influencing policy and practice in the social security system, through policy, research, evidence gathering and campaigning. This might involve, for example, a campaign led by people with direct experience of a specific challenge in the welfare system using their experiences to influence decision makers. It might be undertaking frontline research as part of an influencing strategy – gathering evidence of how an issue is experienced by people to make the case for change, with a plan for how this will be shared to make an impact. It might be using evidence, life stories and data of a problem gathered from a charity's frontline services with another charity's evidence, to engage policy makers with and develop solutions. It might involve presenting information in new or different ways to get engagement and traction with policy makers who have previously been resistant.

This funding is not to support the delivery of frontline services directly – for the latest information on our programmes that might fund this work, [check our website](#).

You can apply for all costs related to the proposed influencing project to be covered. This includes but is not limited to: staff costs; activity costs; materials costs; evaluation costs. Core costs will be covered but only where they are overheads clearly related to the proposed project. While this grant programme is not for service delivery work, a proportion of bids may be allocated to core costs that are incurred in carrying out the main activity included in the application.

All applicants should have an idea of what change they want to achieve, who they need to influence and how they are involving or being led by people with direct experience to

bring about this change. Where the lead organisation is not a small and local charity themselves, they should demonstrate how they will engage smaller charities and those with experience of the welfare system in their work. (We consider small charities to be those with an income under £1m.)

We want to focus our funding on work that targets different stakeholders – whether that’s changing how a local system works, or aimed at influencing central government – as long as there is a specific objective for how the funding will be used to seek to influence change. We are interested in work that will be distinctive and with a clear plan to achieve the influence being sought. Applicants should be clear why they consider themselves best placed to undertake the work, the existing track record and understanding that they have to do so and the relationships with those they are seeking to influence. Recognising achieving change is not simple or linear, it is also important to understand where any work fits alongside or in partnership with pre-existing work by the applicant and/or that of others to maximise impact and minimise duplication.

## Who should apply?

This fund supports registered charities. The Foundation’s priority is supporting small and local charities, and as such, larger charities applying will be expected to demonstrate how they will work with and include the insights of smaller charities. We are also very interested in proposals led by or actively developed with user groups and/or those with direct lived experience of the social security system.

Partnerships with other organisations (or between charities) will be considered where the lead partner is a registered charity.

The work may be locally, regionally or nationally focused (England, Wales or UK-wide). We are keen to fund work focused on Wales as part of the programme portfolio.

At the Foundation, we anticipate working closely with the successful projects as a supportive and engaged partner in their work. Organisations applying should be willing to work closely with us a funder. They will also be part of a small cohort of projects under this programme which the Foundation will bring together – for example, through our previous [Transform](#) programme focusing on domestic and sexual abuse, and through our current [criminal justice programme](#), projects in the cohort have come together to share learning on a regular basis, and make connections between the projects to strengthen their work. In turn, grant holders will have access to the range of [development support](#) offered by the Foundation to support learning and development in the organisation and the project.

## What we’re looking for

If the work fits with the aims above and benefits the people outlined above, there are a number of things we’d be looking to understand in applications. What is the change you want to achieve? We’d like to see a specific overall aim of the change you wish to see in the welfare system, but you might also have smaller objectives within that. It will also be important to have a good sense of how the work you are doing will lead to that change - who you aim to influence, why, and in what ways your activities will be

effective. We'd also like to know a bit about why your organisation is well-placed to lead this work, your track record and pre-existing relationships with those who you are seeking to influence. Given the context of this programme, it would be useful to understand why now is the right time for this work – perhaps responding to challenges and opportunities, such as those suggested above, resulting from the coronavirus pandemic or other policy windows, or because you are seeking to present information in a new or different way to get engagement and traction with policy makers.

It's important that change is led by people's experience of the welfare system. As such, it would be useful to demonstrate how you are being led by or involving those with direct experience of the issue you are seeking to address.

The Foundation is particularly interested in supporting small and local charities, because we know they have a wealth of expertise from their community connections and frontline services which they can use to influence change. If your organisation is not a small and local charity, we'd like to understand how you will work with and include the insights of small and local charity/ies in this project.

## The funding available

We are interested in receiving expressions of interest of between £20,000 and £50,000, with the expectation of supporting work over the next 12 – 18 months (in certain circumstances up to two years). There is a maximum of £300,000 available. We also welcome applications where our resources would add to existing projects and/or resources secured from other funders.

Final funding decisions will be taken in December 2020 so it is anticipated that most grants will start in early 2021.

## Application process

If you are developing work which meets the parameters above, we would encourage you to get in touch with us for an initial phone call to check if your idea fits with what we're looking for. If so, you can then submit an expression of interest, which should include:

- **Objective of the work:** what you're trying to achieve – the overall change that you're aiming to influence
- **Why this work is needed:** outlining the basis for this work, why it is needed and why it is distinctive
- **How you aim to get there:** outlining the specific activities of this work, and the timeframe over which you will do this but also, if appropriate, how it adds to pre-existing work by yourselves and/or others dealing with the same issues so as to maximise impact
- **Why now is the right time:** reflecting the context, opportunities you hope to make the most of or challenges ahead
- **Why your organisation is well-placed to lead this work,** your track record, the existing approaches you have previously used to undertake such work and the relationships you have with those you are seeking to influence

- **How you will involve or be led by those with direct experience of the issue**
- Where the lead applicant is not a small charity, you should also demonstrate how you will work with and include the insights of small and local charities
- An indication of **budget and timeframe** and if appropriate how this work and funding would sit alongside other existing work or funds secured.

**Your expression of interest should use the titles above to outline your proposal.** It should be no longer than 4 sides of A4 and should be submitted by email to [policy@lloydsbankfoundation.org.uk](mailto:policy@lloydsbankfoundation.org.uk) by 5pm on 30<sup>th</sup> September.

Expressions of interest will be assessed and a small number of applicants will be invited to the second stage of the application process. The second stage of the application process will involve an online/telephone conversation to further explore your expression of interest and to discuss any questions that arose in the initial assessment. On the back of this conversation you will have a chance to update your expression of interest (if you wish), with final versions to be submitted by 20<sup>th</sup> November.

## Decision making

The final Stage 2 applications will be assessed, with final grant decisions made at a panel meeting in December.

## Application process: key dates

- 24<sup>th</sup> August: applications open
- 30<sup>th</sup> September: applications close
- Week commencing 19<sup>th</sup> October: applicants notified whether they are invited to Stage 2
- Week commencing 19<sup>th</sup> October – 20<sup>th</sup> November: phone calls with Stage 2 applicants and chance to submit further information
- December: applicants notified of final decisions

## Further information

**This funding closed on 30 September 2020 and we are no longer accepting applications. We will be in touch with those who submitted an application in due course.**