

## **New money advice service launched in North Devon**

A new advice service has been launched by North Devon Council to assist people facing financial difficulties.

The Local Welfare Support Scheme has been set up by the council, in partnership with Devon County Council, after receiving £175,500 in central government funding. The aim of the scheme is to offer quick and effective support for those struggling with money issues, whilst helping them to become more self reliant for the future.

Head of Environmental Health and Housing, Jeremy Mann, says: "At the start of this month, the government's welfare reform plans came into force, which means major changes to council tax benefits, as well as some other types of support and grants being scrapped. We realise this could have a big impact on some people in North Devon, so through this scheme, we hope to ensure those facing hardship are offered support and advice when they need it most."

As part of the Local Welfare Support Scheme, a money advisor will be based at the Civic Centre in Barnstaple every weekday to assess and support individuals. This is being carried out by partners Encompass Southwest.

Phil Davey, Manager at Encompass Southwest says: "This new initiative offers a co-ordinated approach to the provision of assistance for people facing crisis and requiring help and support. This might include how to access food parcels, clothing, as well as advice about money, debt and benefits. The scheme does not provide money, but will focus on giving essential, practical support and developing the skills and knowledge that will empower people to make better decisions about their money."

The Local Welfare Support Scheme will run for an initial three months in North Devon. If successful the council will look to commission the service after the trial period.

For more information about the scheme, as well as other housing advice, contact the council's Housing Options Service by phoning 01271 388870, or emailing [customerservices@northdevon.gov.uk](mailto:customerservices@northdevon.gov.uk).