



A joint letter from 20 charities and organisations  
 c/o Helen Dent CBE  
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## WITHOUT RINGFENCING SOCIAL FUND REFORM COULD HAVE CATASTROPHIC CONSEQUENCES

Crisis Loans and Community Care Grants are the ultimate safety net for the most vulnerable in society. For example, they enable women and children fleeing domestic violence to clothe themselves and furnish their homes; or parents in rural areas who cannot afford a car to visit their child if they are taken into hospital unexpectedly.

We are deeply concerned at the Government's proposals to abolish these elements of the Social Fund and pass some of the funding to local authorities, without any statutory obligation to ensure they provide emergency support to vulnerable people.

With hard-pressed councils already experiencing large cuts to their central Government grants, we fear that some areas will choose to provide no, or extremely limited, support - especially given that funding for Crisis Loans will be almost halved from £67m in 2010/11, to £36m in 2013. The government's own research shows some local authorities expect the extra funding will be diverted to plug gaps elsewhere.

As charities, working hard to respond to the needs of vulnerable children and adults in already desperate circumstances, we fear these changes could be catastrophic for some, such as those who resort to illegal moneylenders or high-cost credit, or women who return to live with a violent partner because they have no money to furnish another home for their children.

As the Lords prepares to debate social fund reform this week, we urge Lord Freud and the government to rethink these proposals and ensure the money paid to councils to deliver a replacement scheme is at least ring-fenced for this purpose.

Yours sincerely

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