

LCC Flowchart, Financial process for SGO payments wef 1st April 2018 - Final version
January 2019

Step 1

A request for a financial assessment should be made following an approved viability assessment. The Social Worker (SW) should send a Finance Information Sharing (FIS) form to the Assessment Officer on the carer's LCS record via the 'SGO/Adoption Allowance Assessments' LCS worktray to inform the Assessment Officer that a means test is required and provide all relevant details (Carer's name, address, telephone number, e mail address, NI Number and if there is any special requirements needed, e.g. translators. Also the name and LCS numbers of child/ren that the SGO application is for and **the date that the means test is due to be filed with court**) for the Assessment Officer to be able to make contact with the prospective carer and complete the assessment. **A case note should be added to each SU's record that the application relates to showing that the means test has been requested.**

At the point when the above means test is requested social worker should fill in an IC1 and send the completed IC1 and guidance attached below to the carer for their use with their possible benefit claim should the SGO be granted.



ic1 - informal carer form.pdf



IC1 guidance.pdf

A minimum of 15 working days should be allowed for the financial assessment to be completed.
The draft support plan and Reg 15 notice to be with the applicant a minimum of 4 weeks prior to the final hearing

If all the required information has **not** been inputted on the FIS form by the originating SW requesting the assessment then it will be reassigned back to originating SW containing the message/request in Response 1, attached.



Template 1 (LCS).msg

The case will still to be added to SGO tracker sheet by the Assessment Officer and will be chased up with originating SW, their PM & TM, after 7 days using template 2 if no new form has been resent.



Template 2.msg

The request will be added to a list of means test requests that we are unable to progress and distributed to relevant HoS on a weekly basis.

If all information submitted then the request will move to Step 2.

Step 2

The Assessment Officer will telephone the carer to advise a letter and information relating to the SGO means test process will be sent to them via the secure e mail and that they will be required to complete the simple registration process in order to access the information (Information will only be sent as a hard copy in exceptional circumstances). The Assessment Officer, at this stage, will also arrange a telephone appointment with the carer to complete the means test assessment form. Evidence from the carers to support the information given must be returned to the Assessment Officer within 7 days of the means test being completed – this will be made highlighted to the carer during the initial call.

Telephone appointment:

If there is no answer by the applicant when the Assessment Officer phones to book an appointment, a follow up e-mail, (**template 3**) (with text alert of the email) is to be sent to the applicant advising that a financial assessment needs to be undertaken and for them to contact the assessment officer within 2 working days.



Template 3.msg



Email alert.msg

Should there be no response from the applicant to the follow up e-mail, the Assessment Officer is to make a further attempt at a phone call. If there is no answer to this then an e-mail using template 4 is to be sent to the originating SW, their PM & TM advising of the situation and request that they get in contact with the applicant.



Template 4.msg

The request will be added to a list of means test requests that we are unable to progress and distributed to relevant HoS on a weekly basis.

Evidence:

If, following the telephone appointment being completed with the applicant, only part of the required evidence has been returned then a follow up e-mail is to be sent to the applicant (**template 5**) (with text alert of the email) advising what is missing and when the deadline is to return it by (i.e. the date 7 days from the telephone assessment).



Template 5.msg

Should no evidence (including any missing elements) not be returned by the applicant by the end of the 7 days an e-mail is to be made by the Assessment Officer to the applicant advising that the evidence needs to be returned by the end of the following working day (**template 6**) (with text alert of the email). A phone call to the carer will also be made advising them of the e mail sent.



Template 6.msg

Should there be no response by the applicants by the given deadline then an e-mail is to be sent to the following working day to originating SW, their PM & TM advising of the situation and request for them to assist by contacting the applicant (**template 7**) to offer help in collecting the information and sending it to us if the carer is experiencing difficulties.



Template 7.msg

If there is no response from Social Worker by the end of the following working day, as mentioned in the e-mail, the LCS form is to be re-assigned back to worker as no further action can be taken by Assessment Officer until evidence has been returned.

The request will be added to a list of means test requests that we are unable to progress and distributed to relevant HoS on a weekly basis.

If the telephone appointment goes ahead and evidence is submitted in full within 7 days of telephone



Step 3

The SGO Means Test is formally assessed by the Assessment Officer who will review the information in the completed means test in line with the evidence provided from the carers and any benefits that they are entitled to, making any necessary enquiries prior to finalising the SGO Means Test. The Assessment Officer will send the completed means test to the Welfare Rights Service for the possible deductions to the carers to be verified and also to ascertain whether a full Welfare Rights check is required to ensure that carers are aware of the correct and full entitlements they can claim should the SGO proceed.

The Assessment Officer will use the secure e mail system to send the part of the completed form containing the evidenced figures back to the carer to confirm agreement with the carer that all the information contained is correct.



The Assessment Officer will send a secure e-mail using **template 8** to the applicant requesting for confirmation of their agreement that the evidenced figures used within the means test are correct, allowing the applicant 2 working days to respond (with text alert of the email).



Template 8.msg

If there is no response after the 2 working days then an e mail will be sent to the originating social worker, their PM & TM advising that there has been no response to the agreement and requesting them to assist with getting in contact with the applicant (**template 9**).



Template 9.msg

Should there be no response to the e mail to the originating social worker by the end of the following working day, LCS request form is to be returned to originating social worker as no further action can be taken by Assessment Officer until evidence has been returned.

The request will be added to a list of means test requests that we are unable to progress and distributed to relevant HoS on a weekly basis.

If the confirmation is received from the applicant within 2 working days then the request will move to Step 4.



Step 4

The Assessment Officer returns by reassigning the original LCS work tray request as a formal notification to the originating SW together with the final version of the Assessed SGO Means Test highlighting the final monthly payment to the carers from the outcome of the means test, outlining the breakdown of the payment, making particular reference to any deductions for CB/CTC that have been applied, which must be reiterated by the SW to the Carer that these should be claimed should the SGO be granted. Please see template 10 below.

This then needs to be signed off by the originating SW's Senior Manager by the originating SW consulting with them directly.



Template 10 (LCS).msg

Where Welfare Rights identify and advise on benefit claims, a three month review will take place where the advice is followed up to ensure the claims have been processed as expected, and to ensure any further expected entitlements have been realised. This may lead to an amendment to the means test to accurately reflect the financial position at that point and any changes that the carer may have had to their circumstances as a result of the new caring responsibilities. A second means test will also be prepared showing the anticipated outcome if advice is confirmed at the 3 month review stage. A breakdown of this will also be provided to the ASW so that they have all the information prior to court on how the balance of payments from LCC/DWP may change. If the three month review confirms that the anticipated benefits are now in place then WRS service will advise the SGO Assessment Officer and revised payment amounts will be applied



Step 5

In the case of a dual assessment with PWFF Team the financial assessment is returned to the ASW to include in the support plan. The ASW will complete the sections of the support plan relating to support for the adult, including financial support. They will then send the part completed support plan to the CSW who will complete the remainder of the plan relating to child and seek approval from Senior Manager/HofS regarding the financial element. The CSW will then send the completed and approved support plan to legal



Step 6

The finalised SGO Means Test is filed to and presented in court by the CSW quoting the **Final monthly payment to guardians**, which may include any appropriate deductions (e.g. for Child Benefit/Child Tax Credit/Disposable Income) outlined in Step 4.



Step 7

After the SGO is granted CSW contacts Business Support Team to set up the SGO carer as a supplier (up to 2 working days to arrange) and to also arrange the input of the CPLI(s) and approval of payments for the standard SGO allowance and for any enhancements that were agreed at court. Along with this request the SW **must** also provide the finalised court agreement details/amounts, including the assessed Means Test (inc any deductions to be applied) and details of any agreed enhancements/one off payments in respect of the order. End dates of 2 years should be added to any Enhancement CPLIs.

Court papers reflecting the agreed financial award must be uploaded to LCS.



Step 8

Following the Court Hearing and any orders being made the CSW **must** update LCS of action and payments / case notes against child/ren.

N.B. SW must check to see if there has been a prior Reg 38.6 funded placement and end that placement/CPLI as appropriate. SW MUST attach the assessed, agreed version of the means test that the monthly payments are based on as agreed in court.



Step 9

Once approval is received, the Business Support Team contact Children's Services & Schools Payments Team in Exchequer Services via LCS in the form of a Finance Information Sharing Form (FIS) requesting payments to be made, confirming amounts, supplier number, start dates, deductions and any amounts previously overpaid as Reg 38.6. etc



Step 10

Children's Services & Schools Payments Team pick up the FIS Forms in LCS and process payment from the next scheduled payment run based on the Means Test Assessment and any deductions are entered into the system i.e. Child benefit, child Tax Credit, Disposable Income.



Step 11

Backdated payments are made (If applicable) after taking in account any pre-paid PayPoint/overpaid Reg 38.6 payments.

Assessment Officer is informed that the SGO is now in place if CTC deductions apply so that it can be checked if deductions are accurate when in place.



Step 12

Electronic Records are updated by Children's Services & Schools Payments Team and Declaration letters are issued to the carers confirming the amount awarded and start date.



Step 13

Approx. 3 months after the SGO has been granted the Assessment Officer should check that the predicted CTC/CB allowances that have been deducted from the carer's monthly payments are being paid at that rate to ensure the carer is receiving the appropriate funding.



Step 14

SGO Payments will automatically cease at the age of 18 for standard SGO allowances and at the end date of any Enhancement CPLIs. Social workers must include the end date to ensure there is no continuation of the enhanced element of the allowance. Any extension to these payments should be directed via the agreed route for a decision and further agreed CPLIs should be added and approved as guided above, with end dates for the agreed period in line with LCC's SGO Policy.

TEAM CONTACT DETAILS

Assessment Officer:

Email: SGOandAdoptionAllowance@lancashire.gov.uk

Tel: 01772 531119

Children's Services & Schools Team, Exchequer Services:

Email: paymentscare@lancashire.gov.uk

Tel: 01772 536972

Case Support Finance Team, Social Care:

Email: cypsupportfinance@lancashire.gov.uk

Tel: 01254 220333

POINTS TO NOTE/ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- The 'Registration of Interest' pack sent to potential carers will include a copy of the letter and means test sent by the Assessment Officer to the carer at a later stage and also a summarised list of documents that the carer may need to provide evidence of during/after the assessment in order for them to be able to prepare for this stage.
 - All information contained within the means test must be evidenced.
 - All carers will be means tested regardless of benefits received.
 - Only Loans relevant taken to meet the needs of the child/ren are to be included. Loans won't be considered unless SW can evidence why the loans should be taken into consideration. Any referred to SW for justification will be notified to HoS on their weekly report from the SGO Assessment Officer.
 - One new means test should be completed when there are any additional SGO child/ren to a family currently with children subject to SGO payments and any current payments for existing SGO children would be included within the means test as Income and the means test will be just for the additional SGO child/ren.
 - Any of the Income/Expenditure figures included in the means test should not take into account the child/ren subject to the current SGO application.
 - If there are any cases which require back dated SGO funding the calculations must be checked and confirmed by the Assessment Officer prior to the figures being discussed with the carers and CPLIs being added to LCS.
 - The means test that is agreed at court following assessment (plus any agreed enhancements, either regular/one-offs) must be attached to the child's record on LCS.