Consultation

Did you take part in any consultation exercise preceding the Bill and, if so did you comment on the financial assumptions made?
1. Aberdeenshire Council took part in the consultation on the draft Welfare Funds (Scotland) Bill in November 2013. However the consultation paper did not include any financial assumptions.

If applicable, do you believe your comments on the financial assumptions have been accurately reflected in the FM?
2. Not applicable

Did you have sufficient time to contribute to the consultation exercise?
3. Yes, based on the consultation document which was issued.

Costs

If the Bill has any financial implications for your organisation, do you believe that they have been accurately reflected in the FM? If not, please provide details.
4. The FM reflects that the administration funding for local authorities for 2015/16 has not been determined although provision has been made for it.

Since the FM assumes that the Bill will result in no additional costs for local authorities, it would perhaps have been useful to include local authority data on the costs of administering the existing scheme.

Do you consider that the estimated costs and savings set out in the FM are reasonable and accurate?
5. The savings referred to in the FM may not be capable of being realised if the number of applications to the Fund increase as this would result in additional administration costs for local authorities.

Based on the number of crisis grant and community care grant applications received in the first quarter of 2014/15, Aberdeenshire’s crisis grant applications are forecast to increase by 10% on the previous year and the community care grant applications by 22%.

It also does not seem appropriate to expect savings in administration costs from the removal of the second tier review function as this has been such a small part of the Scottish Welfare Fund workload to date.
If applicable, are you content that your organisation can meet any financial costs that it might incur as a result of the Bill? If not, how do you think these costs should be met?

6. If the assumption within the FM that the Bill will not impose any additional costs is correct, there will be no additional costs arising from the Bill.

In Aberdeenshire the cost of administering the Scottish Welfare Fund already exceeds the administration funding provided and that cost is not always met by increasing the budget. Sometimes it comes from the re-targeting of resources from other work areas, which has a corresponding impact on performance in those areas.

Does the FM accurately reflect the margins of uncertainty associated with the Bill’s estimated costs and with the timescales over which they would be expected to arise?

7. The FM reflects the uncertainty associated with the Bill’s estimated costs and in particular the administration funding for 2015/16.

The FM does not reflect the uncertainty thereafter nor does it indicate how any additional costs associated with an increase in applications to the Fund would be dealt with.

Wider Issues
Do you believe that the FM reasonably captures any costs associated with the Bill? If not, which other costs might be incurred and by whom?

8. Yes, the FM captures the estimated costs associated with moving the second tier review function from local authorities to the Scottish Public Service Ombudsman.

Do you believe that there might be future costs associated with the Bill, for example through subordinate legislation? If so, is it possible to quantify these costs?

9. None that are foreseeable at this time.