

**Local Welfare Provision
Discretionary Local Crisis Payments
Updated 2021**

Local Welfare Provision

Discretionary Local Crisis Payments

Policy and Procedure

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POLICY

1. Background

- 1.1 The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) Social Fund Scheme was abolished from 1 April 2013 and replaced with new localised schemes of welfare provision to be delivered by all Local authorities.
- 1.2 Following the abolition of the Social Fund Scheme, other elements will be retained by the DWP. These are maternity grants, funeral grants, and cold weather payments.



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- 1.3 The Council have established a Local Welfare Provision (LWP) scheme, called Discretionary Local Crisis Payments (DLCP's), which is able to adequately support those deemed to be most at risk and/or in need.
- 1.4 The scheme has a cash limited budget each financial year and will only make awards up to and including the level of funding provided. No awards will be granted over and above the funding level for the relevant financial year.
- 1.5 The Council has received additional funding to cover the period 6 October to 31 March 2022. We will use this funding to enhance our DLCP policy and we will help residents with utility arrears and also provide them with the additional funds for food where there are special dietary medical needs.

2. Purpose of Discretionary Local Crisis Payments (DLCP)

- 2.1 DLCP's are intended to help vulnerable people live as independent a life as possible in the community. There are certain application criteria that need to be met, however, the scheme is discretionary and an award of DLCP's will not only depend on customer's circumstances and their needs, but also on budget remaining for DLCP's.
- 2.2 The objectives of DLCP's are to:
 - Help households to establish themselves in the community following a stay in institutional or residential care
 - Help households remain in the community instead of entering institutional or residential care
 - To ease exceptional pressures and stress on households due to the recent pandemic
 - To avoid serious risk to health and safety where it may be prevented

3. Criteria for Discretionary Local Crisis Payments

- 3.1 DLCP's are available to people aged 18 and over.
- 3.2 DLCP's will be considered for those aged 16 to 17 where Social Services have identified an exceptional need, for which there are no other provisions available.
- 3.3 DLCP's are available to those households who are in receipt of Universal Credit, Housing Benefit, Council Tax Support, Pension Credit, or those facing a crisis due to the Pandemic.
- 3.4 Person applying has to be a Hounslow resident. A Hounslow resident is living in the Borough and can provide documentary evidence or has secured a private tenancy and can provide evidence of that.

- 3.5 DLCP will also be considered where a customer has been detained elsewhere for a period, but prior to their detention, would have met the criteria of the residency test.
- 3.6 In the case of a prisoner or household suffering domestic violence, where it cannot be shown that an applicant met the residency requirement at any local authority, s/he may receive assistance in Hounslow where s/he chooses to approach the Council and become resident in the area and makes no other application to another local authority for a local welfare provision or residency. We will assist households with No Recourse to Public Funds.

Examples where we can consider helping households:

- 3.7 Resident needs help because he/she and his/her family face exceptional stress, such as family/marital breakdown or because one of them has a long-term illness.
- 3.8 Resident needs help because he/she and his/her family face exceptional pressure, such as high washing costs due to the needs of a child with a disability.
- 3.9 Those households who have been placed in other boroughs by the Council, assistance with any resettlement or personal expenses rests with the Council until our duty is discharged and the household are recognised residents of the placement area.
- 3.10 Household needs help due to high utility bills and are in arrears with their payments.
- 3.11 Resident/Household have special dietary needs and are struggling to pay for suitable food.

People excluded from applying

- 3.12 Care home residents and hospital in-patients may not apply, unless it is planned that they will be discharged within the following two weeks.
- 3.13 Persons who are members of a fully maintained religious order may not apply.
- 3.14 We will assist Persons from abroad or subject to immigration controls i.e., those with no recourse to public funds for a limited period.
- 3.15 Those households who have been placed in the borough by another local authority or organisation may not apply. It is expected the placing authority or organisation



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would assist with any resettlement or personal expenses until their duty is discharged and the household are recognised residents of that Council.

4 Goods and Services which may be covered

4.1 DLCP may be able to cover full or partial costs of the following items:

- Essential replacement furniture - bed and mattress.
- Essential replacement white goods/household equipment - cooker or microwave, fridge, or fridge freezer
- Living expenses where there are no other means available i.e., following a disaster such as fire, flood, or gas leak.
- Help with Utility Bills if there are arrears.
- Help with food where the resident/household has special dietary needs.

5 Goods and Services which will not be covered

5.1 DLCP will not cover the full or partial costs of the following items in most circumstances:

- Emergencies which are a result of an act or omission for which the customer or partner is responsible, for example gambling or miss-spending
- Rent and deposit payments – other support is available locally where criteria are met
- A need which occurs outside the United Kingdom
- Expenses in connection with court (legal proceedings) such as legal fees, court fees, fines, costs, damages, subsistence or travelling expenses
- Fees associated with Bankruptcy or Debt Relief Orders
- Domestic assistance and respite care
- Holidays or outings
- Any medical, surgical, optical, speech/hearing, or dental item or service (note that needs under all of these headings can be provided free of charge by the National Health Service)
- Work related expenses
- Debts to government departments
- Debts to financial institutions or private individuals
- Investments
- Charges for accommodation associated with certain visits i.e., when an additional room is obtained for a visiting guest
- Adaptations to properties due to disability

5.2 Additional goods and services which will be covered

- Council water charges, arrears, or community water charges

- Meals taken during school holidays by children who are entitled to free school meals
- Non-essential items such as laptops, mobile phones, etc .depending on the circumstances the resident/household are presenting with.
- Educational or training need including clothing and tools
- Distinctive school uniform or sports clothes for use at school or equipment to be used at school
- Travelling expenses to or from school or to attend a funeral
- pay their energy and water utility bills
- repair boilers
- pay other bills such as Broadband, telephone
- meet housing costs – where the resident/household do not meet the criteria for Discretionary Housing Payments, Housing Benefit/Universal credit.
- Meet costs arising from genuine emergencies

6 Goods provided

- 6.1 Furniture, white goods and beds/mattresses will be provided from our preferred suppliers.

7 Length and Conditions of Award - how we determine the value of the award

- 7.1 Awards of DLCP will only be made against an immediate or short term need and will be of a single instance nature. There will be no continuous awards made. Although you can re-apply if your circumstances warrant further help. Each application will be decided on its merits.
- 7.2 Applications may be considered if an emergency or a disaster is not a consequence of an act or omission for which the customer or his/her partner is responsible, and the customer or his/her partner could not have taken reasonable steps to avoid the emergency.
- 7.3 All customers will agree to be referred for further help and advice, especially where there appears to be a recurring emergency, i.e., budgeting issues, debt management. For help with food, we will do a referral to the food banks that the Council has connections with.
- 7.6 The Council will not make a grant where there is a reasonable expectation that funding is available from other statutory funds.
- 7.7 Before making the award we will take into consideration the residents/households income. We will look at the nature of the help being requested, the amount of outstanding arrears, the date of the arrears accruing,



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and the steps taken to reduce the arrears before reaching a decision on the amount we will award. Each application will be decided on its merits.

8 Publicity

- 8.1 The scheme will be publicised to third sector voluntary organisations and training will also be provided.
- 8.2 All internal and external agencies who deal with vulnerable people will be notified of the scheme and its purpose. These agencies will then refer relevant households to make an application or act on their behalf.
- 8.3 Hounslow web site: www.hounslow.gov.uk will have a link and provide all the details of the scheme and its purpose. Along with a link to make an on-line application.

PROCEDURE

9 How does a customer apply for Discretionary Local Crisis Payment?

- 9.1 The information provided when applying for a DLCP, will be held by the London Borough of Hounslow in compliance with the Guide to the General Data Protection (GDPR) Act 2018. It will be used for processing the request for a provision and verifying an application has not been made for assistance from another Local Authority.
- 9.2 The London Borough of Hounslow is under a duty to protect the public funds it administers, and to this end may use the information provided on forms for the prevention and detection of fraud. It may also share this information with other bodies responsible for auditing or administering public funds for these purposes. Personal data will otherwise not be disclosed to third parties.
- 9.3 Applications have to be made using the Council's approved online application form.
- 9.4 Where an application is made on behalf of a person, by someone other than an appointee or a recognised referral agent, that person must give their consent to the application being made on their behalf.
- 9.5 If it is found that the reason for application meets the criteria of other local assistance schemes, the application will be referred for the attention of the relevant department and the customer will be notified of the action taken.
- 9.6 Treatment of prisoners in local scheme – the Council will work closely with the probation and housing services. The Council will expect probation services to inform us of release dates where necessary. Probation services will instigate applications to the Job centre and the job centre will

only refer those cases to us who are moving into accommodation which does not have any of the essential items.

- 9.7 Treatment of those fleeing domestic violence – the Council will work closely with domestic violence support organisations and refuge. Acceptance of the residency of a customer will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.
- 9.8 Treatment of rough sleepers – the Councils Housing Outreach Services will verify if a person may be eligible for assistance. The Council will expect the Job Centre to assess these individual's claims for benefits swiftly and any referrals will only be accepted when the need has to be covered by the local welfare provision and no other resources.
- 9.9 Treatment of those with no fixed abode – the Council will in the main exclude these applications, although any customers who approach the Council or the Job Centre Plus with exceptional circumstances will have to be considered and their vulnerability established e.g., medical vulnerability, victim of crime etc.
- 9.10 Treatment of those who have attempted suicide – the Council will be mindful of its duty under Section 17 of the Children's Act and consider each case on its own merit against the policy criteria; it will not be considered a qualifying circumstance on its own.
- 9.11 Where the funds available for a specific financial year have been depleted, no further awards will be possible under any circumstances. Notification will be given to stakeholders and the public by the forms of media available i.e., on the application portal, by email and where necessary by post, where this situation occurs.

10 Discretionary Local Crisis Payment applications – processing time

- 10.1 The date of application for a DLCP is the date the completed form is received by the Council.
- 10.2 It is the customer's responsibility to provide all the necessary evidence to allow an Assessment Officer (AO) to make a decision on the application.
- 10.3 It may be necessary to seek further information or clarify on certain aspects of the application, the Council will seek to resolve this by contacting the customer, a third party, checking records available to the Council, or requesting further supporting evidence.
- 10.4 Evidence may be provided by residents, and their representatives, social care officers, probation officers, medical doctors, housing officers, landlords, Council visiting officers and AO's. We will need to see utility bills if you are seeking help with the payment of these bills. We will need to see copies of the bill/s. If satisfactory, we will arrange to pay the utility companies direct.



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- 10.5 If the customer does not provide requested evidence within 10 working days of application, an AO will make a decision based on the completed application and any other evidence which may already held by the Council.
- 10.6 If the evidence provided seems inconsistent, improbable, or contradictory, and no further evidence is provided, an AO may deem such application as defective and the DLCP will not be paid.

11 Customer granted Discretionary Local Crisis Payment

- 11.1 Where DLCP funds are available, and the r has been deemed as meeting the criteria for an award.
- 11.2 In all cases the AO will also consider the existence of other available resources to the customer from which the need may be met in part or in full.
- 11.3 Notification of the award will be in writing, either by post or electronically by email where available, directly to the customer and/or his representative within 2 days of the application provided all required supporting evidence has been submitted. The AO will explain the reasons for their decision.
- 11.4 In case of emergency DLCP applications the award will be notified by telephone and usually within 24 to 48 hours following application. A written explanation, either by post or electronically by email where available, of the decision will then be issued.

12 Customer not granted Discretionary Local Crisis Payment

- 12.1 Notification of the decision will be in writing directly to the customer and/or his representative within 2 weeks from the date of the application provided all required supporting evidence has been submitted. The AO will explain the reasons for their decision.
- 12.2 In case of emergency DLCP applications the decision will be notified by telephone and usually within 24 to 48 hours following application. A written explanation of the decision will then be issued.

13 The right of Review

- 13.1 If the customer is unhappy with the decision, they may ask for a review. The request for review must be made in writing stating reasons why the customer does not agree with the decision and wants the case to be reconsidered. The request must be made by email to helpinghand@hounslow.gov.uk, or in the case of no internet access, addressed to Revenues & Benefits, Hounslow House 7 Bath Road Hounslow TW3 3EB
- 13.2 The application together with supporting documents will be looked at again by a senior officer'. The review decision will be notified in writing by email or where



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necessary by post and where appropriate also by telephone within 10 working days.

13.3 There will be no further review rights on these decisions. There is no legal obligation against the Council to consider appeals against decisions as this is a discretionary scheme.

14 Further help available

14.1 If the application for a DLCP is unsuccessful or we cannot pay the full amount requested the Council can refer the customer to a voluntary or charitable organisation for further help.

14.2 A full list of organisations who are working providing grants to the public is available at <http://www.turn2us.org.uk/>.

