



Durham County Council

**Draft Welfare Assistance Fund Policy
V7**

2013/2014

Welfare Assistance Policy

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1. Introduction and aims of the Welfare Assistance scheme

Background

The Welfare Reform Act 2012 abolished the discretionary elements of the DWP Social Fund.

The Government have allocated each upper tier and unitary authority a grant to deliver a local scheme to meet local priorities. There is no requirement for local authorities to set up the scheme in a particular way, and local authorities are encouraged to:

- Work in partnership with the local Third Sector to develop schemes.
- Explore a range of in-kind support, and to link to advice, information and advocacy.
- Explore a full range of models for delivery.

The main features of the scheme are that

- The scheme will be operated at the Council's discretion
- There is no statutory right to a Welfare Assistance Fund award
- The amount of Welfare Assistance Fund awards in any given year will be limited by the budget set for each individual scheme

The Local Authority will have the discretion to award a Welfare Assistance Fund payment to any claimant who meets the criteria set out in this policy.

The scheme is designed to assist the most vulnerable in meeting their immediate short term needs or maintaining their independence in the community in accordance with Durham County Council's equality and child poverty duties.

There are two elements to the Welfare Assistance Scheme:

- **Daily Living Expenses** which aims to help meet an applicants immediate short term needs for goods or services that arise because of a disaster or unforeseen circumstances. In particular if the inability to afford the goods/services will result in a deterioration of the health or well being of the applicant or a member of their household. This includes direct payments to utilities and prepayment card/voucher for food and travel.
- **Settlement Grant** which aims to help applicants remain in the community or move back into the community after a period in supported or unsettled accommodation. This will be achieved by providing access to a range of standard items such as beds, bedding, furniture and white goods.

The above awards are discretionary and will be awarded to applicants whose circumstances meet the criteria outlined in this policy. **All applications will be assessed in line with the qualifying conditions in this policy and be subject to the amount of grant available at the time of application.**

2. Links to Durham County Council priorities

The Policy links to the following Council outcomes:

Priority theme: Altogether Better Council

Outcome: The effects of the Welfare Reform agenda are effectively managed

Outcome: People are treated fairly and differences respected

Priority theme: Altogether Safer

Outcome: Improved safety of victims and reduce repeat incidents of domestic abuse

Outcome: Safeguarding adults whose circumstances make them vulnerable and protect them from avoidable harm

Priority theme: Altogether Wealthier

Outcome: An improved housing offer across County Durham

Outcome: Improved access to employment and welfare services

Priority Theme: Altogether Better for Children and Young People

Outcome: Children are safeguarded and protected from harm

Priority theme: Altogether Healthier

Outcome: Improved independence and rehabilitation

Outcome: Maximised independence

Outcome: Increased social inclusion

3. Daily Living Expenses (DLE)

An applicant must be resident in County Durham, must be able to show evidence of hardship and meet the qualifying conditions set out below:

There will be two stages to the assessment of a DLE application:

- 1) An assessment of need - to establish if the applicant meets all of the qualifying conditions set out in 3.1 below.
- 2) A financial assessment - to establish if the applicant has immediate access to any other form of financial assistance or funding.

3.1 Qualifying conditions

To qualify for a DLE Grant, the applicant must meet all of the following conditions:

1) As a direct result of the inability to afford the goods or services requested, either the health or well being of the applicant or a member of their household will immediately deteriorate. In addition the applicant or a member of their household who lives with them should also meet at least one of the following:

- a) Have a serious physical health problem for which treatment is being received
- b) Have a dependent child who normally lives with them and that child is at immediate risk
- c) Have a substance or alcohol misuse problem, for which treatment or support is being received
- d) Are on probation or receiving support relating to previous offences
- e) Are affected by, or at risk of domestic abuse or hate crime
- f) Have a learning disability
- g) Have a physical or sensory impairment
- h) Have a mental health problem, for which treatment or support is being received
- i) Are an older person (over 60) with support needs
- j) Are pregnant
- k) There is a serious risk to the health and safety of the applicant

2) Exceptional circumstances - An immediate need for items and services has arisen following the occurrence of an exceptional event or unforeseen circumstances, for example sudden misfortune involving the destruction or loss of property or possessions or the death of a family member.

3) The applicant has no other form of immediate financial assistance, for example family, friends, employer, own resources or other available funding streams.

3.2 DLE Budget

Please note that even if the applicant meets the above conditions an award will not always be given. Consideration will also be given to the balance available in the DLE Grant budget. In doing this, the priority of each case will be compared to other applications. There is a duty not to overspend the annual budget and consideration will be given to each application on its individual merits.

3.3 What is covered by Daily Living Expenses?

The following is covered by DLE:

- Living expenses such as food including baby milk and nappies
- Emergency pre-payment for heating, lighting solid fuel or reconnection charges
- Travel expenses to hospital, residential care, emergency accommodation, and funerals

The methods of support will include:

- Supermarket vouchers
- Pre-payment cards
- Direct payment to utilities
- Payment to travel operators (eg bus companies, train companies, taxis)

Support will **not** include:

- Cash payments

3.4 Amount of award

A DLE award is intended to cover immediate short-term needs that arise because of a disaster or unforeseen circumstances for those meeting the qualifying criteria. An award may be for a specific item or service or to meet immediate living expenses for a short period, usually up to seven days.

If the applicant has received a DLE grant for the same item or service within the previous 12 months, then a further award will not normally be allocated.

The above list is provided to give a set of examples and a DLE will not be appropriate in every case. Similarly, if a situation is not mentioned, it does not mean the applicant would not be entitled to help. The individual circumstances of an application will be considered on its merits. The application will be considered only if a DLE award is the only means by which serious harm or serious risk to the applicant or applicant's family may be prevented.

A DLE award is intended to help the applicant for short term requirements. It may not necessarily solve the crisis altogether. There is no minimum amount that can be paid, however the maximum an individual applicant or couple can receive is a

voucher or prepayment card to the value of a lump sum of £60.00 plus an additional premium for each child of £25.00.

The amount of money the applicant is applying for may be queried if it seems too much for his/her needs.

3.5 Application and assessment process (direct presentation by the applicant, their appointee, their carer, or their advocate)

- 1) Applications can be made by telephone, on-line or in writing. Reasonable adjustments will be made where the applicant is unable to complete the on-line form without assistance.
- 2) Applications can be made by the applicant, appointee, carer, or advocate acting on their behalf. Proof will be sought that they acting on behalf of, and with the consent of the applicant.
- 3) Evidence will be sought from the applicant, appointee, carer, or advocate to ensure that at all of the qualifying conditions set out in 3.1 have been met.
- 4) A financial assessment will be made, which will involve a series of questions to establish if the applicant has immediate access to any other form of financial assistance or funding.
- 5) Once the application has been processed, the applicant will be informed of the outcome of the application within 2 hours of the initial telephone call. (providing this is prior to 3pm, otherwise this will be the following working day). This will then be followed up in writing within 24 hours. If successful, the decision may be pending the provision of evidence by the applicant, appointee, carer, or advocate.
- 6) If successful:
 - a) The award will be issued to the applicant on the same day if a decision is made before 3.00pm that day.
 - or
 - b) If a decision is made after 3.00pm then the award will be issued to the applicant on the following working day.
- 7) If unsuccessful, the applicant will be notified of the right to appeal by the telephone. Applicants will have the right to appeal in writing or verbally. (See Decision Making and Appeals: Section 6).
- 8) A letter (which will be made available in different formats/language), text or e-mail will be sent within 24 hours explaining the award decision and the appeals process.
- 9) The applicant will be provided with any welfare advice and signposted to other advice agencies where possible.

10) For successful applicants, relevant evidence (of need and/or identity) will need to be provided. Acceptable evidence will be agreed with the applicant during the application process.

3.6 Application and assessment process (referral from a specialist referral organisation as outlined in Appendix A)

- 1) Applications will be made by telephone, on-line or in writing from the specialist referral organisation. Confirmation will be accepted verbally that the organisation is acting on behalf of, and with the consent of the applicant.
- 2) A decision will be made as to whether one of the qualifying conditions set out in 3.1 have been met. Evidence will be required from a specialist referral organisation that the applicant meets all of the qualifying conditions set out in 3.1. No details of the treatment, support or care being provided, or whether the applicant is currently engaging with services are required.
- 3) A financial assessment will be undertaken, which will involve a series of questions to establish if the applicant has immediate access to any other form of financial assistance or funding.
- 4) The application will be processed and the specialist referral organisation will be informed of the outcome of the application by telephone.
- 5) The applicant will be provided with any welfare advice and signposted to other advice agencies where possible.
- 6) If successful:
 - a) The award will be issued to the applicant on the same day if a decision is made before 3.00pm that day.
 - or
 - b) If a decision is made after 3.00pm then the award will be issued to the applicant on the following working day.
- 7) For the majority of successful applicants, relevant evidence (of identity) will need to be provided. Acceptable evidence will be agreed with the specialist referral organisation during the application process.
- 8) If unsuccessful, the applicant will be notified of their appeal rights by telephone. Applicants will have the right to appeal in writing or verbally.
- 9) A letter (which will be made available in different formats), e-mail or text will be sent within 24 hours explaining the award decision and the appeals process.

4. Settlement Grant

There will be two stages to the assessment of a Settlement Grant application:

- 1) An assessment of need - to establish if the applicant meets all of the qualifying conditions set out in below.
- 2) A financial assessment - to establish if the applicant has any excess income or capital that could be used to meet some or all of the required support or funding.

4.1 Qualifying conditions

To qualify for a **Settlement Grant**, the applicant must meet **all** of the following conditions:

- 1) The applicant requires support for at least one of the following:
 - a) Support to move back into the community after a stay in supported or temporary accommodation or prison
 - b) Support to move out of inappropriate accommodation
 - c) Support to stay in the home and prevent a move into residential care or hospital
 - d) Disasters - including events of great or sudden misfortune, the result of which will normally be significant damage to, destruction or loss of possessions or property. Eg Floods, Fire

- 2) As a direct result of the inability to afford the goods or services requested, either the health of the applicant or a member of their household will immediately deteriorate. In addition the applicant or a member of their household who lives with them should also meet at least one of the following:
 - a) Have a serious physical health problem for which treatment is being received
 - b) Have a dependent child who normally lives with them and that child's health is at immediate risk
 - c) Are homeless, or at risk of homelessness
 - d) Have a substance or alcohol misuse problem, for which treatment or support is being received
 - e) Are on probation or receiving support relating to previous offences
 - f) Are affected by, or at risk of domestic abuse or hate crime
 - g) Have a learning disability
 - h) Have a physical or sensory impairment
 - i) Have a mental health problem, for which treatment or support is being received
 - j) Are an older person (over 60) with support needs
 - k) Are pregnant

- 3) The applicant should be in receipt or about to be in receipt of a qualifying benefit including:
- Income Support
 - Income-based Job Seekers Allowance
 - Income-related Employment and Support Allowance
 - Pension Credit
 - Universal Credit
 - Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support*

* Please note that both benefits will change from 1 April 2013

4) The applicant must have applied for a budgeting loan, if they are eligible to do so and have been declined.

5) The applicant has no other form of immediate financial assistance, for example family, friends, employer, own resources or other available funding streams

4.2 Settlement Grant Budget

Please note that even if the applicant meets the above criteria an award will not always be given. Consideration will also be given to the balance available in the Settlement Grant budget. In doing this, the priority of each case will be compared to other applications. There is a duty not to overspend the annual budget and consideration will be given to each application on its individual merits.

4.3 Settlement

Settlement includes leaving long term hospital stay, residential or nursing care; prison or foster care; help to remain in the community or to help set up home at part of a planned resettlement programme.

Consultation must be undertaken with a social worker or other specialist referral agency (see Appendix A) about the application.

Whether a grant can be awarded depends on all of the conditions being met and on the needs being of sufficient priority to warrant a payment from limited funds. As part of the decision as to whether a Settlement Grant is awarded consideration will be given to all the circumstances of the application.

Settlement categories include:

4.3.1 Support to move back into the community after a stay in supported or temporary accommodation

Applicants may receive a Settlement Grant if they are leaving accommodation in which they have received significant and substantial care and supervision. Examples of such accommodation are:

- Hospital or other medical establishment
- Care or nursing home
- Hostel
- Staff intensive sheltered or supported housing
- Local authority care
- Prison or detention centre
- Short term supported housing
- Bed and breakfast accommodation with a high level of floating support

Not only must applicants be leaving one of these places, they must be establishing themselves in the community. Account is taken of both the length of time the applicants were receiving care or support within the accommodation, and the level of individual care and supervision that they received while they were living there in order to assess the level of support required.

If applicants are looking after someone they may be entitled to expenses to assist them to establish themselves in the community if necessary. For example, if they have to move home to look after someone in these circumstances, then they may get help with, for example removal expenses. Applicants would need to be receiving a qualifying benefit or due to receive it even if the person they are caring for does not.

4.3.2 Support to stay in their home and prevent a move into residential care or hospital

Applicants may receive a Settlement Grant if this will help them stay in the community, rather than enter residential care or hospital. Some of the factors considered when making a decision will include:

- How immediate is the likelihood of going into such accommodation
- How long they are anticipated to remain in such accommodation
- Whether the type of item or service required would prevent or delay entering such accommodation
- If the support will reduce the frequency of stays in such accommodation

Some examples are:

- Help with expenses for improving their home to maintain living conditions
- Help to move to a more suitable place to live or to be nearer someone who will give them care and support.

Applicants may also get a Settlement Grant if they are caring for someone and it is agreed that a payment to them will help the person they care for to remain in the community rather than enter accommodation to receive care. Applicants would need to be receiving a qualifying benefit or due to receive it irrespective of whether the person they were caring for does.

4.3.3 To help people set up home in the community, as part of a planned resettlement programme, following an unsettled way of life

People who have been without a settled way of life may have been:

- Using a night shelter
- Staying in a hostel
- Sleeping on the streets or in a make-shift shelter on the streets
- Using an emergency winter shelter
- Using a temporary supported lodging scheme
- Staying in temporary accommodation provided by the Home Office pending a decision on their application for asylum in this country
- Using a combination of these

If applicants are about to move into their own accommodation as part of a resettlement programme, they may be able to get a Settlement Grant.

The grant may be given to help applicants set up home in their own accommodation, if they are on a planned resettlement programme following an unsettled way of life. For example, they may have stayed in a night shelter before they were on a resettlement programme.

4.4 What a Settlement Grant covers

Awards will be made for the provision of:

- Beds
- Bedding
- Chairs/Sofas
- Tables
- Wardrobes
- White goods
- Pans, utensils, crockery and cutlery
- Floor coverings
- Curtains
- Storage or removal costs

4.5 Amount of award

The value of the Settlement Grant will be discretionary up to a maximum of £500, in relation to the needs being presented and the financial situation of applicants. A full income and expenditure calculation of applicants and their household will be undertaken to determine if they have any excess income that could be used to meet

all or part of the cost of the support and this will be reduced, on a pound for pound basis, by any savings the applicants or their partners have over £500 (£1000 if applicants and/or their partners are aged 61 or over).

Awards will be made via a prepayment card or voucher up to a maximum value of £500 or goods will be provided up to this amount for the purposes of removal, storage and essential non fixed household items, such as those listed above.

4.6 Application and assessment (direct presentation by the applicant, their appointee, their carer or their advocate)

- 1) Applications will be made by online, by telephone or in writing. Applications can be made by the applicant, or an appointee, carer, or advocate acting on behalf of the applicant. Reasonable adjustments will be made where the applicant is unable to complete the on-line form without assistance. Assistance will be available to help the applicant complete the application form, if required.
- 2) A decision will be taken to assess if all of the qualifying conditions set out in above have been met.
- 3) Evidence will be required to show all of those qualifying conditions have been met by either:
 - a) Confirmation by telephone with a specialist referral organisation (as defined in appendix A), or
 - b) Other evidence provided by the applicant, appointee, carer, or advocate based on the individual circumstances of each case.
- 4) A financial assessment will also be made which will involve an assessment of the income and expenditure of the applicant to establish if he/she has any excess income or capital that could be used to meet some or all of the required support.
- 5) The application will be processed and the applicant informed of the outcome of his/her application. If successful, the decision may be pending the provision of evidence by the applicant, or confirmation with a specialist referral organisation.
- 6) The applicant will be provided with any relevant welfare advice, or signposted to other advice agencies where possible
- 7) The application will be processed as follows:
 - a) If the application is fully complete, the applicant will be contacted within five working days with a decision
 - b) If the application is incomplete, the applicant (or third party, where permission has been given) will be contacted for further information. Once all relevant information and evidence has been received, the applicant will be contacted within five working days with a decision.

- c) If successful, awards will be provided in line with the applicants' needs but usually not within 48 hours of the award decision
- 8) A letter (which will be made available in different formats and languages) will be sent within five working days explaining the award decision and the appeals process. (See Decision Making and Appeals: Section 6)

4.7 Application and assessment process (referral from a specialist referral organisation)

- 1) Applications will be made online, by telephone or in writing from the specialist referral organisation. (see Appendix A). Confirmation will be accepted on the application form that the organisation is acting on behalf of, and with the consent of the applicant.
- 2) A decision will be made as to whether all of the qualifying conditions set out have been met. Written evidence from a specialist referral organisation that the applicant meets all qualifying conditions set out in 4.1 only will be required. Details of the treatment support or care being provided, or whether the applicant is currently engaging with services will not be required.
- 3) A financial assessment will be undertaken which will involve an assessment of the income and expenditure of the applicant to establish if he/she has any excess income or capital that could be used to meet some or all of the required support.
- 4) The application will be processed and the applicant and the specialist referral organisation informed of the outcome of his/her application.
- 5) The applicant will be provided with any relevant welfare advice, or signposted to an advice agency, where necessary.
- 6) The application will be processed as follows:
 - a) If the application is fully complete, the applicant and the specialist referral organisation will be contacted within five working days with a decision.
 - b) If the application is incomplete, the specialist referral organisation will be contacted for further information. Once all relevant information and evidence has been received, the applicant and the specialist referral organisation will be contacted within five working days with a decision.
 - c) If successful, awards will be provided in line with the applicants' needs but usually not within 48 hours of the award decision.
- 7) A letter (which will be made available in different formats and languages) will be sent within five working days explaining the award decision and the appeals process. (See Decision Making and Appeals: Section 6)

5. Evidence required as part of the application process

Information or evidence may be requested in support of an application for a Welfare Assistance award.

For Daily Living Expenses, the information and evidence to be provided will be identified during the telephone application and evidence will be provided as part of the application process.

For the Settlement Grant, the information and evidence required will be outlined on the application form and should be provided when the application form is submitted. If evidence is not provided, the applicant or the specialist referral organisation will be contacted, requesting the information and evidence required. Applicants or specialist referral organisations will be expected to provide the requested information and evidence within five working days and a final decision will be made within five working days, once all requested information and evidence is received.

Any information or evidence provided by the applicant will be verified if required. Any such request will be essential to the decision making process and will only be used in connection with the Welfare Assistance Fund. If the applicant is unable to or does not provide the required evidence, the application will be considered on the available information and evidence.

The online application form for both applications will include a set of security questions, including one requiring them to provide evidence that the applicant lives in county durham.

Examples of evidence that may be required include:

- Passport, driving licence or other evidence of identity eg birth certificate
- Wage slips or self-employed accounts
- Benefit or Tax Credit letters
- Bank statements or other evidence of savings
- Receipts, utility bills or other evidence of expenditure
- Doctors letters confirming health conditions or prescriptions for relevant medication
- Contact details for support worker in relevant support agencies (eg Social workers)
- Police crime reference number, where the application relates to an alleged crime.

6. Decision making and appeals

6.1 Notification of decisions

Once a decision on the Welfare Assistance application has been made, the applicant (and specialist referral organisation, if relevant) will be notified of the outcome in writing. For Daily Living Expenses, the decision will also be notified verbally by telephone.

The notification letter will be available in alternative formats and languages and will include the following:

- Where Welfare Assistance is awarded, the item(s) and value to be provided
- Where the Welfare Assistance awarded does not provide all support requested, the reasons for this decision
- Where Welfare Assistance is not awarded, the reasons for this decision
- The applicant's appeal rights
- Information on who to contact if they need further information or advice
- The duty to notify of any changes in circumstances, which may affect either a DLE or Settlement Grant award.

6.2 Daily Living Expenses appeals

An appeal can be lodged about a Daily Living Expenses decision as follows:

- An appeal about a Daily Living Expenses application should be made within five working days of the notification of the decision being made, or a longer period if considered reasonable
- The appeal can be made in writing, verbally or by e-mail.
- The appeal can be made by the applicant, appointee, carer, advocate or a third party, with the applicant's consent where appropriate.
- Where an appeal is made, a dedicated officer will conduct a review of the decision and contact the applicant within one working day of the appeal being received. This will be done by an officer different to the one who made the initial decision and the outcome will be notified verbally by telephone and confirmed in writing.

6.3 Settlement Grant appeals

Appeals about Settlement Grants will be dealt with as follows:

- An appeal about a Settlement Grant decision should be made within one calendar month of the notification of the decision being made.
- The appeal can be made in writing, verbally or by e-mail
- The appeal can be made by the applicant, appointee, carer, their advocate or a third party, with the applicant's consent where appropriate
- Where an appeal is made, a Senior Officer will conduct a review of the decision and contact the applicant within five working days of the appeal being received. This will be done by an officer different to the one who made the initial decision and the outcome will be notified in writing. This will be a vigorous process involving liaison with partner agencies.

7. Factors used to decide the financial need for support

When deciding the potential support to be provided, the following may be taken into account: (this list is not exhaustive):

	You	Your Partner	Children
Cash Savings			
Bank Savings			
Building Society Savings			
Premium Bonds			
National Savings Certificates			
Stocks and Shares List Name and Number held			
Value of any other property that you own, other than your home			
One off Payments received in the last 12 months: Please give details			
Other savings not specified above (Please give details)			
If you have no Capital or Savings Please state 'none'.			

Please can you state the amount that you receive for:	You		Your Partner		How often do you receive this amount?	OFFICE USE ONLY
	£	p	£	p		
Wages						
Salary (Take Home Pay)						
Self Employed Earnings						
Pensions						
Occupational / Private / Personal Pension						
State Retirement Pension						
Guarantee / Savings Pension Credit						
War Disablement Pension						
Benefits						
Universal Credit						
Child Benefit						
Child Tax Credit						
Working Tax Credit						
Income Support						
Maternity/Paternity Pay / Maternity						
Adoption / Custodian Allowance						
Payments for Foster Children						
Employment and Support Allowance						
Incapacity Benefit						
Severe Disablement Allowance						
Statutory Sick Pay						
Disability Living Allowance						
Attendance Allowance						
Industrial Injuries Disablement Benefit						
Carer's Allowance						
Job Seekers Allowance						
Widowed Allowance / Payments						
Bereavement Benefit						
Other Income						
Personal Injury Payments						
Rental Income from other properties						
Student Grant						
Student Loan						
Cash In lieu of coal						
Educational Maintenance Allowance						
Income from Boarders / Lodgers						
Maintenance Payments Received						
Any other Income (please specify)						
TOTAL INCOME						

Please state the amount that you pay out each <u>month</u> on the following: <u>If paid by direct debit please state exact amount as on bank statement</u>	You		Your Partner		Office Use Only
	£	p	£	p	
Housing Costs:					
Mortgage repayments					
Mortgage Endowment					
Council Tax					
Ground Rent					
House insurance - buildings					
House insurance - contents					
Life insurance and health cover					
Utility Costs:					
Gas					
Electricity					
Water rates					
Coal/Oil/Paraffin					
Calor Gas					
Telephone (including internet)					
Mobile telephone					
Other Important Costs:					
TV Licence					
Court Fine Payments/CCJ					
Maintenance/Child Support (documentary proof required)					
Pension Contributions (do not include if deducted from wage & shown on payslip)					
Other Life Assurances					
HP Conditional Sale					
Loan Repayments:					
Bank or building society loan -secured against your home					
Other loans -secured against your home					
Other loans -not secured against your home (catalogue payments etc)					
Hire Purchase payments					
Credit Card Repayments					
Travel Costs:					
Travelling to Work					
Travelling to School					
Travelling to the Shops					
Other Fares					
Road Tax					
Vehicle Insurance					
Vehicle Fuel					
MOT/Maintenance					
Breakdown Cover					
Parking Charges/Road Tolls					

Expenditure

Please state the amount that you pay out each <u>month</u> on the following: <u>If paid by direct debit please state exact amount as on bank statement</u>	You		Your Partner		Office use
	£	p	£	p	
Housekeeping:					
Food					
Cleaning/Toiletries					
Newspapers/magazines					
Cigarettes/Tobacco/Sweets					
Alcohol					
Laundry/Dry Cleaning					
Clothing/ Footwear					
Other Expenditure:					
TV, Cable, Sky etc					
Postage					
Hairdressing/Haircuts					
TV/Satellite/Cable Packages					
Other appliance rentals					
Pub/Outings					
Lottery					
Hobbies					
Religious / Charities					
Gifts (eg Christmas/Birthdays)					
Student Course fees					
Student Tuition Fees					
Home Repairs and Maintenance:					
Repairs					
Household maintenance					
Window Cleaning					
Boiler, pipes, electrical etc insurances					
Children:					
Childcare fees					
Nappies/Baby care Items					
School Fees					
School Meals					
Pocket Money					
Health:					
Dentist/Medical Prescriptions/Glasses					
Medical/Care services other than Childcare					
Pets:					
Pet Food					
Vets Bills/Pet Insurance					
TOTALS:					

In addition the following is also taken into account:

- Whether other funds such as Discretionary Housing Payments or Section 17 payments would be more appropriate to meet the items or services being requested
- Other funding sources have been explored/finished
- The amount of Welfare Assistance Fund budget available for the remainder of the financial year
- Other Welfare Assistance Fund requests and awards being made and the overall impact on the remaining Welfare Assistance Fund budget available.

A Welfare Assistance Fund award does not necessarily make the applicant eligible to receive a further award if, for example the initial Daily Living Expenses award runs out, as each application is decided on the individual merits at that time. This applies even if the applicant's circumstances remain the same.

8. Exclusions

Support will **not** be awarded for the following items or services as in most cases signposting to other agencies who can provide support will be given.

- A need which occurs outside County Durham, unless the need is for a person who is in the process of moving into County Durham, having previously resided in Durham for 3 months prior to the application or have been in hospital for a long stay and that item or service will assist him/her in the move
- An educational or training need including clothing and tools
- school uniform or sports clothes for use at school or equipment to be used at school
- Travelling expenses to or from school
- Meals taken during school holidays by children who are entitled to free school meals
- Expenses in connection with court (legal) proceedings such as legal fees, court fees, fines, costs, damages, subsistence or travelling expenses (other than emergency travelling expenses when stranded away from home)
- Removal or storage charges if the applicant is being re-housed following a compulsory purchase order, a redevelopment or closing order, a compulsory exchange of tenancies, or under a housing authority's statutory duty to the homeless
- Domestic assistance and respite care⁰
- A medical, surgical, optical, aural or dental item or service (these needs can be provided free of charge by the National Health Service, if the applicant is getting Income Support, income-based Jobseeker's Allowance, income related Employment and Support Allowance, Pension Credit or Universal Credit)
- Work related expenses
- Debts to Government departments or Local Authorities
- Investments
- Purchase, installation, rental and call charges for a telephone
- Mobility needs
- Holidays
- A television or a radio, or a licence, aerial or rental charges for a television or a radio
- Garaging, parking, purchase, and running costs of any motor vehicle, except where the payment is being considered for emergency travel expenses
- Housing costs (other than minor repairs and improvements)
- Council Tax or Council Tax arrears

The following people **cannot** be supported by the Welfare Assistance Fund

- People who normally reside outside of County Durham
- People who are deemed by a specialist referral organisation to have no local connection to the County of Durham
- Care home residents and hospital in-patients, unless the need is for a person who will be discharged as part of a planned resettlement programme
- Persons who are members of and fully maintained by a religious order

- People in full-time education unless they are entitled to:
 - Income Support
 - Income based Jobseeker's Allowance
 - Income related Employment and Support Allowance
 - Pension Credit
 - Universal Credit

- Prisoners who are in prison or released on temporary licence
- A person who is, or would be, treated as a person from abroad for the purpose of Income Support, income based Jobseeker's Allowance, income related Employment and Support Allowance, Universal Credit and Pension Credit, and has no entitlement to those benefits, including:
 - Foreign nationals with limited immigration status,
 - Foreign nationals with no recourse to public funds
 - Non-economically active European Union individuals
 - United Kingdom nationals who are not habitually resident in the United Kingdom

9. Monitoring arrangements for the Welfare Assistance Fund

The on-line application service offered will be integrated with Durham County Council's current revenues and benefits system, thus ensuring that identity checks can be undertaken as part of the Council's monitoring arrangements to ensure the validity of applications.

Durham County Council will monitor the number, amount and period of Welfare Assistance Fund awards in relation to the available Welfare Assistance Fund budget. The sum paid each month from the annual Welfare Assistance budget will be a set amount that should be apportioned between Daily Living Expenses and Settlement Grant. In addition, monitoring will be undertaken to assess performance against a set of key management information and performance indicators included in Appendix B. The purpose is to ensure that there are sufficient funds to meet current and future demands on the Welfare Assistance Fund budget throughout the financial year and the Council's aims and objectives are being met.

In addition a sample of cases will be audited at random to ensure consistency in assessment and decision making.

The Council will also monitor the type of referrals, which organisations are making referrals and the type of awards to ensure, where possible, they are meeting positive outcomes for the applicant, in accordance with the aims the Welfare Assistance Fund scheme.

All findings from monitoring checks will be included within the Durham County Council quarterly performance report to Cabinet.

Compliance with Equality Duties

It is Durham County Council's overall policy to meet equality law requirements and to treat people fairly. Every employee and council representative has a responsibility to treat other people in a fair and lawful way. Durham County Council also takes steps to meet the public sector equality duty which aims to stop unlawful discrimination, advance equality and foster good relations. The Council will monitor where a Welfare Assistance Fund Application has been refused, to ensure decisions are being made fairly and consistently, in accordance with our Equality duties. This policy will be implemented to provide fair treatment and take account of the needs of people protected under the Equality Act on the grounds of age, disability, gender (including pregnancy and maternity), race, religion or belief, sexual orientation and transgender.

10. Access to the service

Applications will be received and dealt with at the following times (with the exception of bank and public holidays):

Monday - Friday

8:30am to 5:00pm

11. Counter Fraud

Durham County Council is committed to the fight against fraud in all its forms. An applicant who fraudulently claims or attempts to fraudulently claim a Welfare Assistance Fund award by falsely declaring their circumstances, providing false statements or evidence in support of their application, may have committed an offence under the Fraud Act 2006. Where it is alleged, or suspected that such a fraud may have been committed, the matter will be investigated. If an offence is found to have occurred, action will be taken including, if appropriate criminal proceedings.

Any payments of Welfare Assistance Fund that have been fraudulently claimed will be recoverable from the person who made the claim.

12. Review of the policy

This policy will be reviewed as and when required and at least on an annual basis by a steering group and will take into account the views of applicants, council staff, Councillors, specialist referral organisations, other referral agencies and other voluntary sector organisations with an interest in the Welfare Assistance Fund scheme.

Appendix A: Specialist Referral Organisations

For the purpose of this policy, specialist referral organisations are those organisations who either assess the needs of clients or who provide treatment, care or support to those groups listed in 3.1 and 4.1 of this policy.

The following is a list of council services, voluntary organisations and other third parties, which will be classed as specialist referral organisations, for the purpose of this policy:

- Durham County Council Housing Solutions
 - Family Intervention project (FIP)
- Durham County Council Housing Regeneration
- Durham County Council Children and Adult Service Grouping Teams including:
 - Commissioning/ Supporting People Team
 - Adult Social Care Team
 - Children's Services Teams
 - Welfare Rights
- Durham and Darlington Probation Service
- Durham County Council Youth Offending Service
- Durham Drug and Alcohol Action Team
- GPs and other medically qualified professionals who are providing treatment to the applicant or a family member
- Durham County Council Civil Contingencies Unit
- Durham Citizens Advice Bureau

Appendix B: Monitoring Management Information and Performance Indicators

Performance Indicators	
1	Number of applicants applying for Settlement Grant by equality strands and client group (where provided)
2	Number of applicants awarded Settlement Grant by equality strands and client group
3	Number of applicants applying for Daily Living Expenses by equality strands and client group
4	Number of applicants awarded Daily Living Expenses by equality strands and client group
5	Number of unsuccessful applications by equality strands and client group
6	Number of repeat applications
7	Number of referrals received
Management Information	
A	Number of applications received by postcode
B	Referral source – number received in relation to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Debt advice • Welfare rights advice • Applications for account with Credit Union • Specialist referral organisations
C	Numbers signposted to other statutory or non-statutory services
D	Numbers helped to leave hospital or residential care
E	Numbers helped to stay in the community
F	Numbers applying as part of a planned move via care co-ordination
G	As part of future complaints/review procedures measure turnaround times in dealing with challenges and appeals (could consider DCC corporate time limits)

Please ask us if you would like this document summarised in another language or format.

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polski (Polish) ਪੰਜਾਬੀ (Punjabi) Español (Spanish)
বাংলা (Bengali) हिन्दी (Hindi) Deutsch (German)
Français (French) Türkçe (Turkish) Melayu (Malay)



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