

Darlington Borough Council

Draft Social Fund Policy

2013/2014

Social Fund Policy

Contents

1. Introduction and aims of the scheme.....	3
2. Crisis Support.....	4
2.1 Qualifying conditions.....	4
2.2 Forms of support.....	4
2.3 Award values and duration	5
2.4 Application and assessment process (direct presentation by the applicant, their appointee, their carer, their advocate or referral from a third party agency)	5
2.5 Application and assessment process (referral from a specialist provider)	7
3. Community Care Support.....	8
3.1 Qualifying conditions.....	8
3.2 Forms of support.....	10
3.3 Award values.....	10
3.4 Application and assessment process (direct application by the applicant, their appointee, their carer, their advocate or referral from a third party agency) ..	10
3.5 Application and assessment process (referral from a specialist provider)	11
4. Evidence required as part of the application process.....	13
5. Decision making and appeals.....	14
5.1 Notification of decisions.....	14
5.2 Crisis Support appeals.....	14
5.3 Community Care Support appeals.....	14
6. Factors used to decide the financial need for support.....	16
7. Exclusions	19
8. Monitoring arrangements and managing the Social Fund.....	20
9. Publicising the Social Fund	20
10. Access to the service	21
11. Counter Fraud	21
12. Review of the policy	21
Appendix 1 Specialist Providers.....	22

1. Introduction and aims of the scheme

The main features of the scheme are that:

- The operation of the scheme is at the Council's discretion
- People do not have a statutory right to a Social Fund award
- The total amount of Social Fund awards made in any financial year is cash limited

There are two forms of support provided by the Social Fund:

- **Crisis Support** which aims to prevent an immediate deterioration to an applicant's health by providing short-term access to food and limited supplies of clothing and baby consumables, such as nappies and milk.
- **Community Care Support** which aims to help applicants remain in the community or move back into the community after a period in supported or unsettled accommodation. It does this by providing access to a range of standard items such as beds, bedding, furniture and white goods.

The Council has the discretion to make Social Fund awards to applicants whose circumstances meet the criteria outlined in this policy. However, **all applications will be assessed on their own individual merits.**

The Council will operate this policy to:

- Alleviate poverty
- Encourage and sustain people in employment
- Sustain people's tenancies and prevent homelessness
- Safeguard people in their own homes
- Help people who are trying to help themselves
- Keep families together
- Support elderly or vulnerable people in the local community
- Help people through personal and difficult times
- Support young people in the transition to adult life
- Promote good educational outcomes for children and young people
- Ensure Social Fund awards are made to those most in need
- Reduce incidents of repeat offending

2. Crisis Support

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

- 1) An assessment of need - to establish if the applicant meets one of the qualifying conditions set out in 2.1 below.
- 2) A financial assessment - to establish if the applicant has immediate access to any other form of financial assistance.

2.1 Qualifying conditions

To qualify for Crisis Support, the applicant must meet **either** of the following conditions:

- 1) The applicant has suffered a disaster to their home such as major flooding, gas explosion or house fire, where serious damage has been caused to the home or the home is now uninhabitable.
- 2) As a direct result of the inability to afford the goods or services requested either the health of the applicant or their partner will immediately deteriorate.

In relation to the second condition only, the applicant or their partner who lives with them must also meet at least one of the following:

- a) They have a serious physical health problem, which they are receiving treatment for
- b) They have a dependent child who normally lives with them and that child's health would be at immediate risk
- c) They are homeless, or at risk of homelessness
- d) They have a substance or alcohol misuse problem, which they are receiving treatment or support for
- e) They are on probation or receiving support relating to their offending history
- f) They are affected by, or at risk of domestic abuse
- g) They have a learning disability
- h) They have a physical or sensory impairment
- i) They have a mental health problem, which they are receiving treatment or support for
- j) They are an older person with support needs
- k) They are pregnant

2.2 Forms of support

Forms of support will include:

- Food
- Clothing

- Key consumables for babies (e.g. nappies)
- Heating
- Travel to hospital
- Travel to emergency accommodation
- Other forms of support, as set out in 3.2

The method of support will include:

- Supermarket vouchers
- Pre-payment meter cards
- Bus vouchers or arrangement of a taxi
- The provision of items as set out in 3.2

Support will **not** include:

- Cash payments
- Payments into individual's bank accounts

2.3 Award values and duration

Apart from the provision of items, the value and duration of the award will be at the discretion of the Council, in relation to the needs being presented and the financial situation of the applicant. In most cases however, support provided to cover needs will usually last no longer than 7 days.

The value of awards for food will be based on a percentage of the applicant's Applicable Amount (the amount used by the Department for Work and Pensions to assess the minimum income for a household to live on).

2.4 Application and assessment process (direct presentation by the applicant, their appointee, their carer, their advocate or referral from a third party agency)

- 1) Applications will be made by telephone, or by presentation at the Town Hall. Where the applicant is unable to use a telephone, unable to visit the Town Hall and has no-one who can make the application on their behalf, a visit will be arranged to the applicant's home.
- 2) Applications can be made by the applicant, their appointee, their carer, their advocate or a third party agency acting on behalf of the applicant. Confirmation will be accepted verbally that the third party agency is acting on behalf of, and with the consent of the applicant.
- 3) The Council will confirm with the applicant, appointee, carer, advocate or referring agency if one of the qualifying conditions set out in 2.1 have been met.
- 4) The Council will require evidence of one of those qualifying conditions by either:

APPENDIX 3 – Proposed Local Social Fund Policy

- a) Confirmation by telephone with a specialist provider (as defined in appendix A), or
 - b) Other evidence provided by the applicant, their appointee, their carer, their advocate or referring agency, based on the individual circumstances of each case.
- 5) Where the applicant has health, support or care needs which aren't currently being met or have not been assessed by a specialist provider (for example by a GP, support or care agency), the applicant will be signposted to the relevant specialist provider to assess their needs. Crisis Support will be given to a client without a specialist provider assessment if it is their first application (providing they meet the eligibility criteria and are deemed to be in financial crisis). The applicant may be informed any subsequent Crisis Support applications (even if this is for a different reason) will not be given until the applicant has presented to a specialist provider if this is appropriate.
- 6) The Council will also make a financial assessment, which will involve a series of questions to establish if the applicant has immediate access to any other form of financial assistance.
- 7) The Council will process the application and inform the applicant of the outcome of their application during the initial telephone call. If successful, the decision may be pending the provision of evidence by the applicant, or confirmation with a specialist provider.
- 8) If unsuccessful, the Council will notify the applicant of their appeal rights over the telephone. Applicants will have the right to appeal in writing, however a verbal appeal will be accepted in these circumstances (see Decision Making and Appeals).
- 9) The Council will also provide the applicant with any relevant welfare advice, or signpost to an advice agency if, for example it appears that the applicant may qualify for additional welfare benefits or Tax Credits.
- 10) If successful and the decision is:
- a) Before 1pm, the applicant will be able to collect the relevant voucher etc. from the Town Hall 2 hours after the application was made. The Council's closing time is 5pm (4:30pm on a Friday)
 - b) After 1pm, the applicant will be able to collect the relevant voucher etc. from the Town Hall after 9am on the following day (9:30am on a Thursday)
- 11) For the majority of successful applicants, relevant evidence (of need and identity) will need to be provided to Council staff at the point of collection. Acceptable evidence will be agreed with the applicant during the application process.
- 12) A letter will be sent within 24 hours explaining the award decision and the appeals process

2.5 Application and assessment process (referral from a specialist provider)

- 1) Applications will be made by telephone from the specialist provider. Confirmation will be accepted verbally that they are acting on behalf of, and with the consent of the applicant.
- 2) The Council will decide if one of the qualifying conditions set out in 2.1 have been met. The Council will only require verbal confirmation from a specialist provider that the applicant meets one of the qualifying conditions set out in 2.1. The Council will not require any details of the treatment, support or care being provided, or whether the applicant is currently engaging with services.
- 3) The Council will also make a financial assessment, which will involve a series of questions to establish if the applicant has immediate access to any other form of financial assistance.
- 4) The Council will process the application and inform the specialist provider of the outcome of the application over the telephone.
- 5) The Council will also provide the applicant with any relevant welfare advice, or signpost to an advice agency if, for example it appears that the applicant may qualify for additional welfare benefits or Tax Credits.
- 6) If successful and the decision is:
 - a) Before 1pm, the applicant will be able to collect the relevant voucher etc. from the Town Hall 2 hours after the telephone call. The Council's closing time is 5pm (4:30pm on a Friday)
 - b) After 1pm, the applicant will be able to collect the relevant voucher etc. from the Town Hall after 9am on the following day (9:30am on a Thursday)
- 7) For the majority of successful applicants, relevant evidence (of identify) will need to be provided to Council staff at the point of collection. Acceptable evidence will be agreed with the specialist provider during the application process.
- 8) A letter will be sent within 24 hours explaining the award decision and the appeals process

3. Community Care Support

There will be two stages to the assessment of a Community Care Support application:

- 1) An assessment of need - to establish if the applicant meets one of the qualifying conditions set out in 3.1 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.

3.1 Qualifying conditions

To qualify for Community Care Support, the applicant must meet **both** 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
 - 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) Support to prevent a serious deterioration of health within the home
- 2) The applicant or their partner who lives with them must also meet at least one of the following:
 - a) They have a serious physical health problem, which they are receiving treatment for
 - b) They have a dependent child who normally lives with them and that child's health would be at immediate risk
 - c) They are homeless, or at risk of homelessness
 - d) They have a substance or alcohol misuse problem, which they are receiving treatment or support for
 - e) They are on probation or receiving support relating to their offending history
 - f) They are affected by, or at risk of domestic abuse
 - g) They have a learning disability
 - h) They have a physical or sensory impairment
 - i) They have a mental health problem, which they are receiving treatment or support for
 - j) They are an older person with support needs
 - k) They are pregnant

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

Applicants may receive Community Care Support if they are leaving accommodation in which they received significant and substantial care and supervision. Examples of such accommodation are:

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

The applicant must also be establishing themselves in the community. Both the time spent in the accommodation (usually a minimum of 3 months or a pattern of frequent or regular admission) and the level of individual care and supervision provided whilst living in the accommodation will be taken into consideration when making a decision.

Support to move out of inappropriate accommodation

Applicants may receive Community Care Support if it can be verified by a specialist provider that the applicant or a member of their family is living in accommodation that is no longer suitable for them. Reasons for accommodation being identified as inappropriate will include:

- Over or under occupation within the property
- Accommodation is deemed unsuitable for human habitation
- There is an unacceptable risk of domestic abuse within the home
- Housing conditions will result in a serious deterioration in the health of the applicant or family member

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

Applicants may receive Community Care Support if this will help them to 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 the applicant is 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 of situations where support may be provided are:

- Help with expenses for improving the home to maintain living conditions
- Help to move to more suitable accommodation or to be nearer someone who can provide care and support

Prevent a serious deterioration of health within the home

Applicants may receive Community Care Support if the health of the applicant or family member will significantly deteriorate as a direct result of the inability to afford the goods or services requested.

3.2 Forms of support

Awards will be made for the provision of:

- Beds
- Bedding
- Chairs/Sofas
- Tables
- Wardrobes
- White goods
- Pans, utensils, crockery and cutlery
- Floor coverings
- Curtains
- Travel costs to hospital, a funeral or prison visits
- Storage or removal costs

3.3 Award values

The value of the Community Care Support award will be at the discretion of the Council, in relation to the needs being presented and the financial situation of the applicant. The Council will undertake a full income and expenditure calculation of the applicant and their household to determine if they have any excess income that could be used to meet all or part of the cost of the support.

3.4 Application and assessment process (direct application by the applicant, their appointee, their carer, their advocate or referral from a third party agency)

- 1) Applications will be made by e-form. Applications can be made by the applicant, their appointee, their carer, their advocate or a third party agency acting on behalf of the applicant. Confirmation will be accepted that the third party agency is acting on behalf of, and with the consent of the applicant. Council staff will be able to assist the applicant with the application, if required. Where the applicant is unable to use the e-form, unable to visit the Town Hall and has no-one who can make the application on their behalf, a visit will be arranged to the applicant's home.
- 2) The Council will decide if one of the qualifying conditions set out in 3.1 have been met.

- 3) The Council will require evidence of one of those qualifying conditions by either:
 - a) Confirmation by telephone with a specialist provider (as defined in appendix A), or
 - b) Other evidence provided by the applicant, their appointee, their carer, their advocate or referring agency, based on the individual circumstances of each case.
- 4) Where the applicant has health, support or care needs which aren't currently being met or have not been assessed by a specialist provider (for example by a GP, support or care agency), the applicant will be signposted to the relevant specialist provider to assess their needs. Community Care Support will not be given until the applicant has presented to the specialist provider.
- 5) The Council will also make a financial assessment which will involve an assessment of the income and expenditure of the applicant to establish if they have any excess income or capital that could be used to meet some or all of the required support.
- 6) The Council will process the application and inform the applicant of the outcome of their application. If successful, the decision may be pending the provision of evidence by the applicant, or confirmation with a specialist provider.
- 7) The Council will also provide the applicant with any relevant welfare advice, or signpost to an advice agency if, for example it appears that the applicant may qualify for additional welfare benefits or Tax Credits.
- 8) The Council will then process the application as follows:
 - a) If the application is fully complete, the Council will contact the applicant within 5 working days with a decision
 - b) If the application is incomplete, the Council will contact the applicant (or third party, where permission has been given) for further information. Once all relevant information and evidence has been received, the Council will contact the applicant within 5 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
- 9) A letter will be sent within 10 working days explaining the award decision and the appeals process

3.5 Application and assessment process (referral from a specialist provider)

- 1) Applications will be made by e-form from the specialist provider. Confirmation will be accepted on the application form that they are acting on behalf of, and with the consent of the applicant.

- 2) The Council will decide if one of the qualifying conditions set out in 3.1 have been met. The Council will only require written confirmation from a specialist provider that the applicant meets one of the qualifying conditions set out in 3.1. The Council will not require any details of the treatment, support or care being provided, or whether the applicant is currently engaging with services.
- 3) The Council will also make a financial assessment which will involve an assessment of the income and expenditure of the applicant to establish if they have any excess income or capital that could be used to meet some or all of the required support.
- 4) The Council will process the application and inform the applicant and the specialist provider of the outcome of their application.
- 5) The Council will also provide the applicant with any relevant welfare advice, or signpost to an advice agency if, for example it appears that the applicant may qualify for additional welfare benefits or Tax Credits.
- 6) The Council will then process the application as follows:
 - a) If the application is fully complete, the Council will contact the applicant and the specialist provider within 5 working days with a decision
 - b) If the application is incomplete, the Council will contact the specialist provider for further information. Once all relevant information and evidence has been received, the Council will contact the applicant and the specialist provider within 5 working days with a decision
 - c) If successful, awards will provided in line with the applicants needs but usually not within 48 hours of the award decision
- 7) A letter will be sent within 10 working days explaining the award decision and the appeals process

4. Evidence required as part of the application process

The Council may request any information or evidence it reasonably requires in support of an application for a Social Fund award. For Crisis Support the information and evidence to be provided will be identified during the telephone assessment and evidence will be provided when the relevant support is collected or received.

For Community Care Support, 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 Council will contact the applicant or the specialist provider, requesting the information and evidence required. Applicants or specialist providers will be expected to provide the requested information and evidence within 5 working days (or contact the Council within 5 working days if more time is required) and the Council team will make a final decision within 5 working days, once all requested information and evidence is received.

The Council reserves the right to verify any information or evidence provided by the applicant, as required. Any such request will be essential to the decision making process and will only be used in connection with the Social Fund. If the applicant is unable to or does not provide the required evidence, the Council will consider the application and will make a decision on the available information and evidence.

Examples of evidence that may be required include:

- Passports, driving licences or other evidence of identity
- 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

5. Decision making and appeals

5.1 Notification of decisions

Once a decision on the Social Fund application has been made, the applicant (and specialist provider, if relevant) will be notified of the outcome in writing. For Crisis Support, the decision will also be notified verbally over the telephone. The notification letter will include the following:

- Where Social Fund is awarded, the item(s) to be provided and the period of the award (if relevant)
- Where the Social Fund awarded does not provide all support requested, the reasons for this decision
- Where Social Fund 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 the Council of any changes in their circumstances, which may affect their Social Fund award.

5.2 Crisis Support appeals

The Council will deal with appeals about Crisis Support decisions as follows:

- A dispute about a Crisis Support Social Fund decision should be made within 5 working days of the notification of the decision being made, or such longer time as the Council considers reasonable
- The appeal can be made in writing, verbally or by e-mail
- The appeal can be made by the applicant, their appointee, their carer, their advocate or a third party, with the applicant's consent where appropriate
- Where an appeal is made, the Council 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 over the telephone and confirmed in writing.

5.3 Community Care Support appeals

The Council will deal with disputes about Community Care Support decisions as follows:

- A dispute about a Community Care Support decision should be made within one calendar month of the notification of the decision being made, or such longer time as the Council considers reasonable
- The appeal can be made in writing, verbally or by e-mail
- The appeal can be made by the applicant, their appointee, their carer, their advocate or a third party, with the applicant's consent where appropriate
- Where an appeal is made, the Council will conduct a review of the decision and contact the applicant within 5 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
- If the applicant is still not satisfied with the initial review they can request a Stage 2 review, which will lead to the application and decision being reviewed by a Head of Service within the local authority. This must be requested within 10 working days of the Stage 1 Review decision letter being issued, and must be made in writing. Applicants will receive notification of the decision within one calendar month of the stage 2 review request being received by the Council.

6. Factors used to decide the financial need for support

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

- All of the income and essential expenditure of the applicant and their household will be taken into account.
- Any disability related expenditure of the applicant and their household.
- All income will be taken into account in full, including income that is normally disregarded for benefit purposes, for example Disability Living Allowance or child maintenance
- When considering the applicant's expenditure, consideration will be given as to whether or not expenditure is considered as above the basic living requirements. If expenditure appears to be unreasonably high, the Council may make enquiries with the applicant to clarify the details. In these circumstances the Council may substitute a sum for the expenditure concerned, which it considers represents a reasonable amount
- Any savings and investments held by the customer and their household, which could be used to help their financial situation
- Whether other family members external to the household could help in any way towards the customers financial situation
- Whether the customer and their household could reduce expenditure on non-essential items
- Whether the customer and their household are entitled to other welfare benefits or Tax Credits, but are not claiming them
- The level of indebtedness of the customer and their household
- Whether the customer and their household are taking long-term action to help their problems in meeting their living costs
- Any other steps taken by the customer to help themselves
- Financial advice they have sought to alleviate their situation, for example from Citizens Advice Bureau or Welfare Rights.

The following income and capital will be disregarded when assessing entitlement to a Social Fund award:

- Any payment of expenses for:
 - participation in 'work for your benefit' schemes
 - attending mandatory work activity, employment, skills or enterprise schemes
 - a person who is a volunteer for a charitable or voluntary organisation.
 - a person who participates in a service user group
 - jurors, witnesses or prison visitors
- Certain benefits and discounts:
 - Discretionary Housing Payments
 - Council Tax discounts and reliefs
 - Council Tax Support

- Housing Benefit
- Mortgage interest relief payments
- Other Social Fund awards
- Any income payable or capital held outside the United Kingdom where there is a prohibition against the transfer to the United Kingdom of that income
- Any payment made by a Local Authority under section 17 of the Children's Act 1989, unless they are for the same need as the Social Fund award
- Any payment for banking charges or commission, to convert a payment of income to sterling
- Any payment made under the Eileen Trust, the Independent Living Fund, the Skipton Funds, the London Bombing Relief Charitable Fund, or the Variant Creutzfeldt-Jacob Disease Trust
- Refugee integration loans
- The dwelling normally occupied by the applicant as their home
- Any property which is actively being sold
- Any property acquired by the applicant, which they intend to occupy as their home, whilst they are preparing for occupation
- Any property acquired by the applicant, which they intend to occupy as their home, which is undergoing essential repairs or alterations
- The proceeds of sale of any property formerly occupied by the applicant as their home, which is to be used for the purchase of another property intended for occupation
- Any property occupied by a partner or relative of the applicant or any member of their family, where that person is a pensioner or is disabled
- Any property occupied by the former partner of the applicant as their home, where the former partner is a lone parent, or where the property is actively being sold
- Any payment made by a local authority to the claimant, to be used to purchase a property for occupation as their home, or to carry out repairs or alterations to the home
- Any future interest in property, other than land or premises where the claimant has granted a lease or tenancy
- The assets of any business owned by the claimant for the purpose of their self-employment
- Any amount paid to the claimant, or acquired by the claimant as a loan, as a result of damage or loss of the home or personal possessions and intended for its repair or replacement, unless it is for the same need as the Social Fund award
- Any amount deposited with a Registered Provider, which is to be used for the purchase of another property intended for occupation
- Any personal possessions, unless it is for the same need as the Social Fund award

- The value of the right to receive any income under an annuity or the surrender value of an annuity
- Where the funds of a trust resulted from a payment for a personal injury to the claimant or their partner, the value of the trust fund, payments from the trust and the right to receive any payment under that trust
- The value of the right to receive any income under a life interest or from a life rent
- The surrender value of any life insurance policy
- Where payments of capital are made by instalments, the value of the right to receive any outstanding instalments
- Any payments for:
 - travel expenses for hospital visits
 - medical supplies and vouchers
 - health in pregnancy grants
 - Home Office payments for prison visitsUnless they are for the same need as the Social Fund award
- Any payment made to assist a disabled person to obtain or retain their employment
- Any capital administered on behalf of a person by the High Court, County Court, or the Court of Protection
- Any payment made by a local authority for a service which is provided to develop or sustain the capacity of the claimant or their partner to live independently in their accommodation, including personal budgets

The Council will also take 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
- The amount of Social Fund budget available for the remainder of the financial year
- Other Social Fund requests and awards being made and the overall impact on the remaining Social Fund budget available.

A Social Fund award does not necessarily make the applicant eligible to receive a further award if, for example the initial Crisis Support 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.

7. Exclusions

Support will **not** be awarded for the following items or services:

- A need which occurs outside Darlington Borough Council, unless the need is for a person who is in the process of moving into Darlington and that item or service will assist them in their move
- An 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
- 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 care
- 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 or Pension 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 Social Fund

- People who normally reside outside of Darlington Borough, unless the need is for a person who is in the process of moving into Darlington
- People who are deemed by a specialist provider to have no local connection to Darlington
- Care home residents and hospital in-patients, unless the need is for a person who will be discharged as part of a resettlement plan
- 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
- 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 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

8. Monitoring arrangements and managing the Social Fund

The Council will undertake monitoring of the number, amount and period of Social Fund awards in relation to the available Social Fund budget. The purpose is to ensure the Council has sufficient funds to meet current and future demands on the Social Fund budget throughout the financial year.

The Council will also monitor cases where a Social Fund application has been refused, to ensure decisions are being made fairly and consistently, in accordance with the Council's Equality duties.

For internal quality assurance 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 Social Fund scheme.

9. Publicising the Social Fund

The Council will publicise the Social Fund and will work with all interested parties to achieve this. The Social Fund will be publicised on the Council's website and the Council will ensure local registered housing associations and voluntary sector organisations are made aware of the Social Fund, the qualifying criteria which needs to be met to receive support and how applications can be made.

The Council office will ensure:

- Training is provided for front-line staff to ensure their knowledge of the scheme is both relevant and up to date
- Referrals to the Council for Social Fund applications are consistent and

- appropriate
- The list of specialist providers remains appropriate with new services added and services no longer appropriate being removed

10. Access to the service

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

Monday	8:30am to 5:00pm
Tuesday	8:30am to 5:00pm
Wednesday	8:30am to 5:00pm
Thursday	9:30am to 5:00pm
Friday	8:30am to 4:30pm

11. Counter Fraud

Darlington Borough Council is committed to the fight against fraud in all its forms. An applicant who fraudulently claims or attempts to fraudulently claim a Social 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 the Council suspects 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 Social Fund that has been fraudulently claimed will be recoverable from the person who made the claim.

12. Review of the policy

This policy will be reviewed on an annual basis by a steering group and taking into account the views of applicants, Council staff, Council members, specialist providers, other referral agencies and other voluntary sector organisations with an interest in the Social Fund scheme.

Appendix 1 Specialist Providers

For the purpose of this policy, specialist providers are those organisations who either assess the needs of clients or who provide treatment, care or support to those groups listed in 2.1 (2) and 3.1 (2) of this policy.

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

- The Key Point of Access;
 - First Stop Darlington
 - Darlington Borough Council's Housing Options Team
- Darlington Borough Council's Supporting People Team
- Services commissioned by Darlington Borough Council's Supporting People Team, who are providing housing related support to the applicant or a family member
- Darlington Borough Council's Adult Social Care Teams
- Services commissioned by Darlington Borough Council's Adult Social Care Teams, who are providing care or support to the applicant or a family member
- Darlington Borough Council's Children's Services Teams
- Services commissioned by Darlington Borough Council's Children's Services Teams, who are providing care or support to the applicant or a family member
- The Durham and Darlington Probation Service
- Darlington Borough Council's Youth Offending Team
- Darlington Borough Council's Private Sector Housing Team
- The Darlington Drug and Alcohol Action Team
- Services commissioned by the Darlington Drug and Alcohol Action Team to provide treatment, who are providing treatment, care or support to the applicant or a family member
- GPs and other medically qualified professionals who are providing treatment to the applicant or a family member