



Appendix 4

Community Care Fund Policy

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1. INTRODUCTION AND AIMS OF THE SCHEME

The main features of the scheme are that:

- The operation of the scheme is at the Provider's discretion
- People do not have a statutory right to a Community Care Fund award
- The total amount of Community Care Fund awards made in any financial year is cash limited
- The Community Care Fund 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 Provider has the discretion to make Community Care 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 Provider will operate this policy to support the Council 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 Community Care Fund awards are made to those most in need
- Reduce incidents of repeat offending

A range of activities may contribute to deliver the aims as listed above:-

- Maximise the take up of benefits in Darlington
- Provide accessible and high quality financial advice
- Reduce the level of personal debt in the Borough
- Support the use of appropriate low cost forms of lending and purchasing
- Deter the promotion and sale of exploitative or high cost products, lending and services (including energy, appliances, loans, insurances and guarantees).
- Support preventative tactics in relation to avoidable debt and financial crises

2. EVIDENCE REQUIRED AS PART OF THE APPLICATION PROCESS

The Provider may request any information or evidence it reasonably requires in support of an application for a Community Care Fund award.

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 Community Care Fund Provider will contact the applicant or the specialist organisation, requesting the information and evidence required. Applicants or specialist organisations will be expected to provide the requested information and evidence within 5 working days (or contact the Provider **within five working days** if more time is required) and the Provider will make a final decision within **ten working days**, once all requested information and evidence is received.

The Provider 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 Community Care Fund. If the applicant is unable to or does not provide the required evidence, the Provider 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
- Contact details for support worker in relevant support agencies

3. DECISION MAKING AND APPEALS

3.1 Notification of decisions

When a decision on the Community Care Fund application has been made, the applicant (and an organisation listed in Appendix, if relevant) will be notified of the outcome in writing. The notification letter or email will include the following:

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

3.2 Community Care Fund appeals

The Provider will deal with disputes about Community Care Fund decisions as follows:

- An appeal about a Community Care Fund decision should be made within one calendar month of the notification of the decision being made, or such longer time as the Provider 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 Provider 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/email.
- 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 an officer of the Provider. This must be requested within 14 calendar days of the Stage 1 Review decision letter or email 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 Provider.

4. FACTORS USED TO DECIDE THE FINANCIAL NEED FOR SUPPORT

When deciding the on the potential support to be provided, the Provider 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 Provider may make enquiries with the applicant to clarify the details. In these circumstances the Provider 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 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.

The Provider 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 Community Care Fund budget available for the remainder of the financial year
- Other Community Care Fund requests and awards being made and the overall impact on the remaining Community Care Fund budget available
- Consideration will be given to other sources such as Credit Union, DWP Budgeting Loan, Furnished Tenancy Options, Charities and other grant-making bodies.

A Community Care Fund award does not necessarily make the applicant eligible to receive a further award as each application is decided on the individual merits at that time. This applies even if the applicant's circumstances remain the same.

5. EXCLUSIONS

The following are specifically excluded:-

- Repeat applications for the same item within 12 months, with the exception of storage and removal costs, curtains and floor coverings.
- Floor coverings and curtains for people living in temporary accommodation provided under licence.
- Items already owned by the applicant, unless they require replacement.
- Items that the applicant has deliberately deprived themselves of, in order to obtain a replacement through the Community Care Fund.
- Items that the landlord is under an obligation to provide as part of the tenancy agreement.
- Items for which there is no identified need.

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

- With the exception of removal costs a need which occurs outside of the borough of Darlington, 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
- 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)
- Purchase, installation, rental and call charges for a telephone
- Mobility needs
- 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)

The following people **cannot** be supported by the Community Care 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 (except removal costs)
- 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
- 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

6. COMMUNITY CARE FUND APPLICATION

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

- 1) An assessment of need - to establish if the applicant meets one of the qualifying conditions set out in 6.1 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.

6.1 Qualifying conditions

To qualify for Community Care Fund, 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

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

Applicants may receive Community Care Fund 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 establishment
- 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.

4. Support to move out of inappropriate accommodation

Applicants may receive Community Care Fund support if it can be verified by an organisation listed in Appendix A 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

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

Applicants may receive Community Care Fund 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

6. Prevent a serious deterioration of health within the home

Applicants may receive Community Care Fund 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.

Exclusions

The following are specifically excluded:

- Repeat applications for the same item within 12 months, with the exception of storage and removal costs, curtains and floor coverings.
- Floor coverings and curtains for people living in temporary accommodation provided under licence.
- Items already owned by the applicant, unless they require replacement.
- Items that the applicant has deliberately deprived themselves of, in order to obtain a replacement through the Community Care Fund.
- Items that the landlord is under an obligation to provide as part of the tenancy agreement.
- Items for which there is no identified need.

6.2 Forms of support

Awards may be made for the following items, but only where there is an identified need for the item.

- Single beds, usually for single applicants and children
- Double beds, usually for couples living in the same property
- Bedding and towels, appropriate to the size of the household
- Sofas or armchairs, appropriate to the size of the household
- Dining tables and chairs, appropriate to the size of the household
- Wardrobes/chest of drawers, appropriate to the size of the household
- White goods, but note:
 - Washings machines will usually only be awarded where there is a specific medical need or where there are children in the household
 - For cooking facilities;
 - A microwave oven, usually for couples or single people, or
 - An electric cooker, usually for families, or
 - A gas cooker, usually for families, but only where an electric cooker cannot be connected.
- Pans, utensils, crockery and cutlery
- Floor coverings, usually for a living room and any occupied bedrooms
- Curtains, usually for any occupied bedrooms
- Storage or removal costs

6.3 Award values

The value of the Community Care Fund award will be at the discretion of the Provider, in relation to the needs being presented and the financial situation of the applicant.

6.4 Application and assessment process (referral from an organisation listed in Appendix A)

- 1) Applications will be made by e-form from the specialist organisation. Confirmation will be accepted on the application form that they are acting on behalf of, and with the consent of the applicant.
- 2) The Provider will decide if one of the qualifying conditions set out in 6.1 have been met. The Provider will only require written confirmation from an organisation listed in Appendix A that the applicant meets one of the qualifying conditions set out in 6.1. The Provider will not require any details of the treatment, support or care being provided, or whether the applicant is currently engaging with services.
- 3) The Provider 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 Provider will decide the application and inform the applicant and the specialist organisation of the outcome of their application.
- 5) The Provider will signpost to an advice agency if, for example, it appears that the applicant may qualify for additional welfare benefits or Tax Credits.
- 6) The Provider will then process the application as follows:
 - a) If the application is fully complete, the Provider will contact the applicant and the specialist organisation within **ten** working days with a decision
 - b) If the application is incomplete, the Provider will contact the specialist organisation for further information. Once all relevant information and evidence has been received, the Provider will contact the applicant and the specialist organisation within **ten** working days with a decision
 - c) If successful, awards will provided in line with the applicants needs but usually not within **five working days** of the award decision

A letter or email will be sent within 10 working days explaining the award decision and the appeals process.

7. MONITORING ARRANGEMENTS AND MANAGING THE COMMUNITY CARE FUND

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

For internal quality assurance a sample of cases will be audited at random to ensure consistency in assessment and decision making.

The Provider 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 of the Community Care Fund scheme.

8. PUBLICISING THE COMMUNITY CARE FUND

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

The Provider 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 Provider for Community Care Fund applications are consistent and appropriate
- The list of specialist organisations remains appropriate with new services added and services no longer appropriate being removed

9. ACCESS TO THE SERVICE

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

Monday	10:00am to 4:00pm
Tuesday	10:00am to 4:00pm
Wednesday	10:00am to 4:00pm
Thursday	10:00am to 4:00pm
Friday	10:00am to 4:00pm

10. COUNTER FRAUD

Any payments from the Community Care Fund that has been fraudulently claimed will be recoverable by the Provider from the person who made the claim.

11. REVIEW OF THE POLICY

This policy may be reviewed on an annual basis

Appendix A Specialist organisations of Advice and Support

For the purpose of this policy, specialist organisations are those organisations who either assess the needs of clients or who provide treatment, care or support to those groups listed in 6.1 (2) of this policy.

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

- 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 Tees Valley Community Rehabilitation Company Ltd.
- Darlington Borough Council's Youth Offending Team
- Darlington Borough Council's Private Sector Housing Team
- Darlington Public Health or their contracted providers
- Drug and Alcohol Services commissioned by Public Health 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
- Darlington Housing Plus Team
- Darlington CAB
- First Stop Darlington