

Local

Welfare

Support

Scheme

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1.0 Purpose of the scheme

- 1.1 The Local Welfare Support Scheme provides support to Leeds residents facing financial hardship where they are unable to meet their immediate short term needs or where they require assistance to move into or maintain their independence within the community. It aims to alleviate that hardship through short-term support, allowing applicants the time to take the necessary steps to resolve the cause of hardship, where possible.
- 1.2 As part of the scheme, consideration is given to ways in which applicants could benefit from further support, to help address the root cause of the hardship. This will be provided through both immediate signposting and a person-centred support programme, that aims to connect applicants to wider support services in Leeds, for example with debt management, benefits advice or budgeting support.
- 1.3 Principles:
- We will endeavour to award all eligible applicants.
 - We will provide quality signposting to relevant support services for both applicants who are eligible and those who are ineligible for an award, to help applicants resolve challenges affecting their income levels. This may also involve a referral if consent is provided.
 - The Local Welfare Support Scheme is one part of a network of organisations and services across Leeds that can support.

2.0 Eligibility

2.1 To be eligible for an LWSS award, applicants must:

- Be a Leeds resident
- Be aged 16 years or over
- Have access to public funds and not be subject to immigration control (we will try to signpost to services that can support if we cannot)
- Be in receipt of benefits* **OR** on a low income* **AND**
- Be able to evidence insufficient funds to meet their/their dependant household's immediate needs
- Be willing to engage with wider services for support, as appropriate

2.2 An award will not be made if:

- Applicants have sufficient funds (e.g. savings) to meet immediate needs
- Applicants have other means of accessing support, such as through friends or family

- Applicants have already received support from another scheme for the same need
- Applicants cannot provide evidence of their financial situation
- There is evidence that awards are likely to be sold on or otherwise misused

*Eligible benefits include:

- Income Support
- Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance
- Employment and Support Allowance (income-related)
- Pension Credit
- Universal Credit
- Housing Benefit
- Council Tax Reduction
- Child/Working Tax Credit
- Disability Living Allowance
- Personal Independence Payment

*Income will be calculated on a case-by-case basis, based on the total household income, the number of dependents in the household and the ages of the dependents.

The amount will be reviewed, as necessary, and based on current living costs and informed by a range of sources, including Joseph Roundtree Foundation, the Leeds Poverty Factbook and the Minimum Income Calculator.

Example

At the time of publication (August 2022), for a single person household without children, low income would be classed as an income under £19,000.

3.0 Application process

3.1 Applications can be made via the following routes:

- Direct phone number
- Online form*
- At Community Hub sites*
- Through trusted partner agencies*

*These application methods are currently in development. This document will be updated as soon as they launch.

3.2 Applicants must provide:

- Full name
- Date of birth
- Contact number
- Details of other members of household, where applicable
- Current full address and postcode
- If applicable, the tenancy start date and details of the property being moved into
- Details of income received, whether through a salary, benefits or other means
- Details of any savings
- Details of why help is needed and any supporting information

- National insurance number, if in receipt of benefits

3.3 Supporting evidence is required in order to confirm the applicant's identity, address and financial situation. This is most likely to be a bank statement, but could include other documentation and system checks, as necessary. Applicants must provide the evidence required and it should be provided at the earliest opportunity in order to prevent delays. *

*Opportunities to reduce the ID requirements are being considered as part of the review. A flexible approach to providing any necessary documentation will be taken, for example via email, at community hub sites and upload of documents to online form, whilst this is in development.

3.4 Following receipt of an application **and** supporting evidence, the contents will be reviewed, and an outcome decided:

- Where the applicant **meets** the eligibility criteria, an award will be offered alongside any relevant signposting information.
- Where the applicant **does not meet** the eligibility criteria for an award, they will be offered relevant signposting information to services that may be able to support.

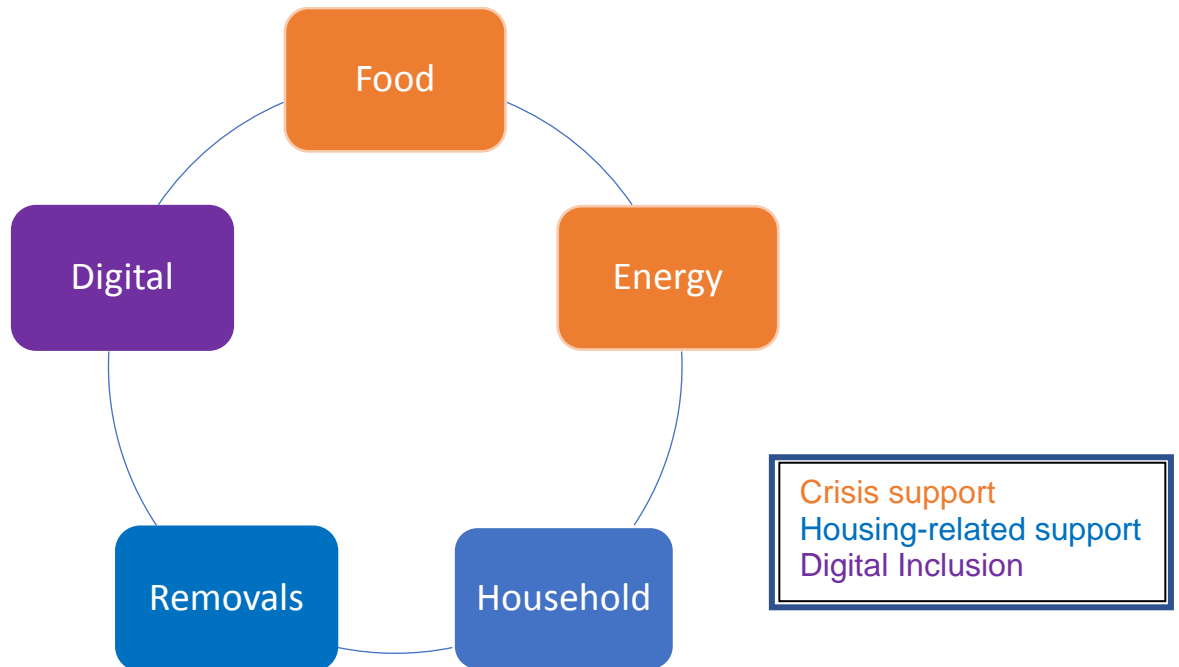
3.5 We aim to provide support to all applicants. If an applicant is not eligible for an award, they will be offered other support in the form of a referral to a relevant service or signposting information. Staff will always endeavour to provide as much support as possible, within the remit of the scheme and the wider welfare support offer available in Leeds.

3.6 Additional person-centred, intensive support will be available to applicants that have a repeat need (referrals to this support will be judged on a case by case basis) for support via the Local Welfare Support Scheme. This could include support with debt management, energy efficiency, benefits advice and money management. Additional discretionary support, such as supermarket and/or energy vouchers, may also be awarded to these applicants. Those in the most urgent need will be prioritised. *

*This support programme is currently in development. This document will be updated as soon as it is launched.

4.0 Awards

4.1 The Local Welfare Support Scheme in Leeds provides a range of support, focussing on (but not limited to) the below key areas:



4.2 Typical awards could be:

Food - Cash, supermarket voucher, food pantry/foodbank referral

Energy – Smart meter top up, BACS transfer, fuel voucher

Household – Fridge/freezer, cooker, washing machine, microwave, bed, cot, sofa

Removals - Removal costs where it is linked to the Homelessness Prevention Fund and approved by the Homeless Support Team/Housing Options.

Digital – Sim card with credit*

*This award is currently in development. This document will be updated as soon as it is launched.

4.3 The Council will determine the most appropriate method of support to be provided to successful applicants, which may be through the provision of vouchers, cash, bank transfer or the purchase of items or a combination. The decision will be made based on the type of support required, the individual's circumstances and personal preferences.

5.0 Partnership Working

5.1 The Local Welfare Support Scheme works in partnership with a wide range of organisations across the city in both the public and third sector, working collectively to support residents facing financial insecurity and tackle poverty and inequalities.

5.2 Where a partner organisation would be better placed to support a customer, a customer may be referred to them, subject to customer's consent.

5.3 Where there are other suitable funds to apply for within the Council or in the city, a customer may be advised to apply for these. Where possible applications to alternative support funds will be a fully integrated part of the LWSS offer following completion of the 2022 review

5.4 The LWSS person-centred, intensive support programme will help customers to navigate the support available in the city, to identify what best meets the customer's needs at a time when they are ready to receive support. This may involve support from more than one organisation at any one time. *

*This support programme is currently in development. This document will be updated as soon as it is launched.

6.0 Reviews

6.1 An applicant can ask for the decision to be looked at again if there has been:

- A factual error in the decision making
- An omission or oversight in the decision making
- New evidence since the application which was not put forward at the time.

6.2 The review request will need to be sent/logged within 14 working days of the date of decision.

6.3 The review process will involve a re-assessment by a more senior officer than the original decision maker. Their decision will be final.

6.4 If the applicant remains dissatisfied, they will retain the right to make a complaint to the Local Government Ombudsman or seek a Judicial Review.

7.0 Accessibility

7.1 To ensure accessibility for speakers of community languages, an over-the-phone interpreting service will be offered via Language Line for applicants who require it. Language Line provide interpreting services.

7.2 Video calls with a BSL interpreter or use of platforms, such as Type Talk can be used for customers that use British Sign Language.

7.3 The online application form has been developed in line with Leeds City Council's accessibility statement, available on the following link:

<https://www.leeds.gov.uk/accessibility>.

8.0 Monitoring

8.1 The scheme will be monitored and will be subject to monthly and quarterly reporting providing data and information such as:

- Number of applications and reasons
- Number successful vs. unsuccessful applications
- Number of awards per ward area
- Value of awards
- Funding committed and funding remaining
- Compliments and complaints

8.2 Regular quality assurance checks will take place to review the outcome of applications to ensure that they are dealt with fairly and consistently.

8.3 Customer feedback will be reviewed to ensure that continual improvement takes place.

8.4 The Local Welfare Support Scheme works closely with partners in Leeds to address financial exclusion. Where funding is allocated to support community initiatives aimed at tackling financial exclusion, debt, fuel poverty and food poverty and is directly working with LWSS, additional reporting will take place in order to review the effectiveness of the initiatives.

9.0 Policy Reviews

9.1 This policy will be reviewed to accommodate any changes in legislation, funding and living costs, as necessary.