



HILLINGDON

LONDON

Local Welfare Support Scheme

What are Local Support Payments?

Local Support Payments exists to prevent serious risk to the health or safety of the borough's most financially excluded residents, ease severe financial pressure on families in certain situations and to help those without the necessary means to either establish themselves in the community after a period of institutional care or to remain in their community.

Who can apply for a Local Support Payment?

To be entitled to a Local Support Payment:

- *You must be aged 16 or over, and*
- *You must live in the Borough or have been placed in social housing outside the borough by this authority, or in the case of someone leaving prison, have an intention to move into the Borough, and*
- *You must be in receipt of a qualifying benefit or you must be due to leave an institution or care home within 6 weeks, and*
- *You must not have savings that can be relied on to meet the need you are presenting with, and*
- *You must not have made more than two claims from the Social Fund or Local Support Payment schemes within the past 12 months, and*
- *You must be without sufficient resources which would cause serious risk to your own, or your family's health and safety, or*
- *You must require essential goods and furniture to establish yourself, or to remain, in the community, and*
- *The funds for resources you require cannot be claimed from the Department for Work and Pensions, for example assistance via a Budgeting Loan or Advance.*

You cannot claim if you are:

- *You are a person subject to immigration control with no recourse to public funds, or*
- *You are a student who cannot claim housing benefit, or*
- *You are involved in a trade dispute, or*
- *You are subject to a Department of Work and Pensions sanction.*

A Council decision maker will decide if you should get a Local Support Payment and how the payment should be made. For every application, we will look at all the circumstances and decide whether the required conditions are met. Cases where the eligibility criteria are met will normally qualify for Local Support and the level of support provided will be decided based on the merits of each individual case, subject to funds available.

The only exception occurs when the limited funds available for Local Support are exhausted. Once the council has used all of the funding available for Local Support in 2013/14, all applications will be refused regardless of whether eligibility criteria are met.

Expenditure on successful applications for Local Support will be carefully monitored from April 2013. If there is serious risk of the available funds being exhausted before March 2014, an urgent review of the eligibility criteria will be instigated.

What are the qualifying benefits?

You must be receiving, or likely to receive one of the following:

- Job Seekers' Allowance (income or contribution based)
- Income Support
- Pension Credit (guaranteed)
- Employment Support Allowance (income based)
- Housing Benefit
- Council Tax reduction

However, not everyone on these benefits will be entitled to a local support payment. You will have to demonstrate that this is the only way that serious risk to the health or safety of you or your family can be avoided or where you have to stay in the community a local support payment is the only way for you to remain.

We may consider you for a local support payment due to a disaster even if you if you don't receive a qualifying benefit (see page 4).

How much?

We will decide the size of the payment you need.

A local support payment is intended to help you over a period of crisis, it may not necessarily solve the crisis altogether. We will decide how much money you need to get you through the crisis, which may not mean replacing all the losses and repairing all the damage.

If you have any other means of help

When deciding your application for a payment, we will want to know whether you have any other possible sources of help to cover the costs of the crisis. If you do, then the amount of money you get will be affected. You may either get a reduced amount, or you may not get any at all. You will be asked, as part of your application, about such sources of money, for instance:

- any savings
- any earnings

- any other income
- cash in hand
- readily available funds in bank or building society accounts
- any sources of credit such as cash cards, store cards, credit cards, cheque cards, cheque accounts, overdraft facilities, loan arrangements
- any help family, friends, employers, charities or benevolent funds
- any help which is likely to be available from other funds, such as, Social Services, Discretionary Housing Payments, Short Term Advances and Budgeting Advances issued by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). See section on Other Help.

How are Local Support Payments made?

Local Support Payments will be made via:

- payment cards for emergency food or clothing provision, consequences of a disaster or serious emergency, or
- vouchers to be exchanged for goods and services.

What Local Support Payments cover?

Local support payments are intended to cover immediate short-term needs to prevent serious risk to the health or safety of a person or their family or where essential assistance is required to help someone stay in the community. An award in the form of a payment card or voucher may be issued to pay for a specific item or service to meet a need.

We can also help with certain expenses in other emergency or disaster situations. These are:

- help with moving out of institutional accommodation
- a disaster, for example a serious flood, causing substantial damage, loss or destruction to possessions or your property
- furniture, cookers, beds, bedding and household equipment, floor covering, curtains and heaters.
- connection charges when setting up or moving home
- food
- clothing and footwear

Please remember that these are just examples and a local support payment may not necessarily be appropriate in the above situations. Similarly, if a situation is not mentioned, it does not mean you would not get help. We will look at the individual circumstances of an application.

What a local support payment will not cover

See Appendix A

What is a disaster?

Disasters are events of great or sudden misfortune. The result of which will normally be significant damage to, destruction or loss of, possessions or property. The effects of a disaster are generally felt by a whole community (e.g. street or larger geographical area). Examples of disasters are:

- flooding,
- gas explosion,
- chemical leak,
- fire.

Applications for Local Support Payments

How to apply

By telephoning xxxxxxxx (*number to be confirmed*). Monday to Friday. 9 am and 5 pm.

Date of application

- The date the application is made to the Council, or
- Advance claims of four weeks for those leaving institutional accommodation.

Evidence and defective applications

It is the applicant's responsibility to provide all the evidence necessary to determine an application. All evidence must be supplied within 14 days of request, to a specified address, or the claim will be deemed defective.

The minimum requirement for every application is documentary evidence of identity and national insurance number if not on a qualifying benefit that can be verified by Council systems.

Sometimes it may be necessary to seek further information or clarify an aspect of the application. Hillingdon Council will resolve this by either.

- contacting the applicant or their representative
- contacting a third party i.e. social worker etc
- requesting further supporting evidence
- checking departmental records

Evidence can be documentary, verbal or physical. It may be derived from such sources as:

- the current application
- supporting documents and correspondence
- telephone or interview records
- a record of observations on a visit
- previous applications
- computer systems
- local knowledge

Evidence may be provided by, for example:

- applicants and/or their representatives
- social workers
- probation officers
- medical doctors
- housing departments
- landlords
- visiting officers
- decision makers/reviewing officers.

If the applicant or representative does not produce the evidence, within 14 days of claim, or request the decision maker will make a decision based on the completed application and any other evidence they already hold. If the evidence already provided seems inconsistent, improbable or contradictory, and no further evidence is provided, the decision maker may deem the application to be defective and a Local Support payment will not be paid.

Repeat applications

If an applicant applied for a local support payment for the same items or services within the last 12 months, and there has not been a relevant change of circumstances, then they will not be eligible for a further payment.

Only two applications within a 12-month period will be allowed.

Decision making process

The decision maker will have regard to all the circumstances of each case, in particular:

- the nature, extent and urgency of need
- the existence of other available resources from which the need may be met
- the possibility that some other person or body may wholly or partly meet the need
- Local support payments allocation and funds remaining.

In deciding the amount of payment the decision maker will take into account:

- The level of need.
- Price list of essential items for guidance.
- Any savings above £250.

The minimum payment will be £20.

The maximum payment will be £250

Notification of the decision

- Emergency payments will be notified by telephone followed by a written explanation of the decision. The decision will be made between 2 and 9 working days depending on the emergency.

- In other cases a decision will be notified in writing directly to the applicant and/or their representative within 2 weeks from the date of application, provided all required supporting evidence had been submitted.

If you are dissatisfied with the decision

With one exception, the decision on local support payment carries the right to request a review. A review request must be:

- in writing stating the reasons why the council's decision is wrong, and
- must be requested within 14 days of the date the decision on a local support payment decision was issued.

A review will be considered and the outcome notified within 10 working days.

The exception where there is no right of review if a decision to refuse Local Support because no more funds are available.

Following award

You may be subject to the following post award checks

- A visit from a Council officer
- Requests for receipts,

Please note: if you knowingly give information that is found to be incorrect or incomplete, you may be liable to prosecution or other action, including repayment of the local support payment granted.

Other help available

A short-term advance or budgeting advance

If you have just made a claim for a DWP benefit and are awaiting your award or you have started work and are awaiting your first pay cheque you may be able to claim for short-term advance from the DWP if you are experiencing financial difficulty. Short-term Advances of benefit will be available to claimants of any contributory or income-related social security benefit, including Universal Credit, from 1st April 2013

If you need to purchase essential items or have expenses related to maternity or starting work you may be able to claim a budgeting advance. Budgeting advances will be available if you have been receiving income-related benefits for 26 weeks or more.

Contacts:

Working age – Job Centre Plus www.gov.uk/contact-jobcentre-plus

State Pension Credit age – Pension Service www.gov.uk/contact-pension-service

Discretionary Housing Payments

Are available to help with certain Housing costs providing Housing Benefit is in payment. For more information visit our website at www.hillingdon.gov.uk

Appendix A

Local Welfare Support payments are not available for:

- A need which occurs outside the United Kingdom
- An educational or training need including clothing and tools
- Distinctive school uniforms or sport 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
- Domestic assistance and respite care
- Any repair to council property or Housing Association property (you should contact your landlord for advice)
- Medical, surgical, optical, aural or dental items or service (all of these can be provided free of charge by the National Health Service, if you are getting Income Support, income-based job seekers allowance, income-based employment support allowance, Pension Credit)
- Work related expenses
- Debts to government departments
- Investments
- Costs of purchasing, renting or installing a telephone and of any call charges
- Any expense which the local authority has a statutory duty to meet
- Costs of fuel consumption and any associated standing charges
- 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.
- Travelling costs
- Rent deposit, rent in advance or removal costs, as a Discretionary housing payment is potentially available to cover this type of housing cost if you are in receipt of housing benefit.
- If you applied for and were refused a discretionary housing payment for the same costs.
- Removal or storage charges if you are being re-housed following a compulsory purchase order, a redevelopment or closing order, a compulsory exchange of tenancies, or under homelessness legislation.
- Council tax
- Mortgage payments
- Water charges
- Travelling costs