

Local Welfare Assistance

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Background to changes

- DWP Community Care Grants and Crisis Loans (commonly known as “Social Fund”) abolished 31.3.13 - replaced by locally administered schemes .
- Cabinet approval February 2013 for Dudley’s transitional scheme; Local Welfare Assistance.
- Scheme administered by Benefit Services & DC+
- Funding for 2013/14
 - Admin & set up; £153,402
 - Award fund; £693,159

Main features of the scheme

- Two types of awards
 - Crisis awards – to help people with an immediate crisis that poses a significant risk to health & safety.
 - Community care awards - to help people remain in the community, establish themselves in the community or to resolve an exceptional pressure
- No cash awards, no loans.
- Third sector partners assisting with delivery of awards.
- Freephone & local rate telephone number , self serve internet , third party referrals .

Main Criteria

- Must meet Dudley residency criteria
- Must be 18 or over
- Must be unable to meet the need from their own resources
- No more than 2 awards per year
- Must not be in an excluded group
 - Those who do not meet habitual residency
 - Those subject to immigration control
 - Those not in receipt of appropriate benefit
 - Those subject to benefit sanction / disallowance

How needs are met

Food	Black Country Foodbank Supermarket vouchers
Energy	Paypoint top up vouchers
Furniture	St Thomas' Community Network Loaves & Fishes Mary Stevens Hospice DMBC purchase card
White Goods	Geoff Hill
Clothing	Black Country Foodbank Loaves & Fishes Supermarket vouchers
Household goods	St Thomas' Community Network Loaves & Fishes Mary Stevens Hospice Supermarket vouchers DMBC purchase card

Local Welfare Activity – the first 3 months.

	April	May	June
Calls handled	684	601	544
Applications submitted	182	123	122
Awards granted	107	77	86
Awards refused/withdrawn	75	46	36
Crisis award spend	£1,335.95	£614.40	£1,578.34
Community care award spend	£6,668.42	£6,274.69	£1,2456.83

Type of awards made

	April	May	June
Food awards	76	57	56
Energy awards	64	42	42
Furniture/carpets /household items	6	14	27
White goods	19	15	21

Reasons for awards (20% sample)

Benefit delay; new claim or change of benefit	27
Moving to new home	9 <ul style="list-style-type: none">•Homelessness 3•Resettlement 2•Essential item needed 2•Other 2
Money spent / lost / stolen	10
Broken “essential” household item	3
Leaving prison	1

Reasons for refusals (20% sample)

Scheme criteria not met	7
Personal /household resources available	5
Requested evidence /information not supplied	3
Referred to other sources of help	2
Other	3

Lessons learnt

- Transitional policy is appropriate.
- Food and energy awards not always realistic .
- Each case is treated on its own merits, considering specific impact of circumstances on a particular individual.
- Need to be non judgemental .
- Underspend and different approach validates the decision to change how the “ social fund” operates.

Successes

- Excellent relationship with third sector partners
- How we deliver awards is working well
- Positive feedback
 - speed of decisions
 - ease of contact
 - being able to deal with the same person
 - empathetic staff

What next ?

- Policy review – use our experience so far to improve our policy.
- Continue to raise awareness of the scheme with other agencies and support services.
- Monitor & review the reliance/impact on third sector
- Continue to develop working relationship with DWP – operational meetings & visits.
- Improve team skills & knowledge of other sources of help - ‘live 4 less’ training
- Review impact of other issues - school holidays , winter weather, social sector under occupancy charge.
- Improve working knowledge of Northgate computer system – use this more effectively