

Local Welfare Assistance

Eligibility Criteria

Expanded for the purpose of distributing Household Support between 1 Oct 2022 and 31 March 2023

1. Applications for Local Welfare Assistance

a) Date of application

The date of a written application for the Local Welfare Assistance is the date it is received in Housing Benefits office, provided the application is in writing and:

- on Ealing Council's approved form and completed in accordance with instructions on the form **or**
- if an application is made on behalf of a person, by someone other than an appointee, that person must give their consent in writing to the application being made on their behalf

b) evidence and defective applications

It is the applicant's responsibility to provide all the evidence necessary to determine an application. Sometimes it may be necessary to seek further information or clarify an aspect of the application. Ealing Council will resolve this by either:

- contacting the applicant
- contacting a third party
- requesting further supporting evidence
- checking Departmental records or
- arranging for clarification to be provided at a pre-award visit

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

- the current application form
- supporting documents and correspondence
- telephone or interview records
- a record of observations on 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
- Police evidence
- Evidence from insurance companies

If the applicant or third party gives any information over the telephone, this may be acceptable as corroborating evidence.

If the applicant does not produce the evidence, a decision maker will make a decision based on the completed application and any other evidence already held. If the evidence already provided seems inconsistent, improbable or contradictory, and no further evidence is provided, a decision maker may deem such application as defective and the Local Welfare Assistance (community care/crisis elements) payment will not be paid.

c) Repeat applications

- If the applicant applied for a LWA (community care element) for the same items or services within the last 12 months and there has not been a relevant change of circumstances, then he/she will not be eligible for a LWA (community care element).
- The applicant will be allowed maximum 4 crisis payments. Subsequent awards in 12 months may be considered at the discretion of the Council if an emergency or a disaster is not a consequence of an act or omission for which the applicant or his partner is responsible and the applicant or his partner could not have taken reasonable steps to avoid the emergency, and
- In case where the reason for Crisis payment application is 'lost or stolen money' only one application will be allowed within 12 month period.
- The applicant will agree to be referred for further help and advice depending on reoccurring emergency (i.e. budgeting advice, debt management or other agencies/charities e.g. turn2us)

d) Referral from another service

Referral from another Council Service, in particular, Social Care or Housing where the department identified an individual's genuine need for support with food, utilities and other essentials.

2. Decision making process

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

- the nature, extent and urgency of the 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 Welfare Assistance funds remaining

a) the amount of Local Welfare Assistance (Community Care element)

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

- 100% of the needed grant to cover essential items minus any savings above £250 (depending on funds available)
- Price list of essential items for guidance
- In some cases it may be decided that payment in kind is made, i.e. second hand furniture, clothing, etc.

b) The amount of the Local Welfare Assistance(Crisis Element)

- If the application is made to cover living expenses and/or groceries the maximum amount of awarded Crisis Payment will be 60% of applicant's weekly personal allowance however the actual payment amount will be determined by the caseworker dealing with the claim and will depend on the applicant's personal circumstances.
- If the application is made to cover other emergencies the amount awarded will be dependent on type of emergency and immediate needs of the applicant
- In all cases the decision maker will also take into account the existence of other available to the applicant resources from which the need may be met (cash in the bank, building society, Post Office accounts, cash in hand and others)

3. Notification of the decision

- In case of Local Welfare Assistance (Community Care element) applications the decision will be notified in writing directly to the applicant and/or his representative within 2 weeks from the date of the application provided all required supporting evidence have been submitted. A decision maker will explain the reasons for their decision.

- In case of LWA applications (Crisis Element) the decision will be notified by telephone followed by a written explanation of the decision. The decision will be made within 2 working days depending on the type of emergency.

4. Method of payment

Majority of the payments will be issued as cash payments directly to the applicant's bank account. The Council reserves the right to issue the payments in a different form, for example in the form of supermarket voucher or via a pre-paid card.

In some cases, Local Welfare Assistance (Community Care element) may not be paid until the claimant moves into the property.

5. Requests for reviewing a decision

If an applicant is unhappy with the decision you can ask for a review. The application together with supporting documents will be looked at again and a further decision will be notified in writing.

6. Further help available

If the application for a payment from a Social Fund is unsuccessful or we cannot pay full amount requested Ealing Council can refer the applicant to a voluntary or charitable organisation for further help.

7. Purpose of Local Welfare Assistance Community Care Element

LWA Community Care element is intended to help vulnerable people live as independent a life as possible in the community. There are certain eligibility criteria that need to be met however the scheme is discretionary and an award of LWA Community Care Element will not only depend on applicant's circumstances and their needs but also on budget remaining for Local Welfare Assistance payments.

The objectives of Local Welfare Assistance Community Care Element are to:

- help people to establish themselves in the community
- help people remain in the community
- help with the care of a prisoner or young offender on release on temporary licence
- ease exceptional pressures on families
- help people setting up home as a part of a resettlement programme

8. Qualifying conditions

a) Qualifying age

LWA Community Care Element is available to people aged 18 and over. In certain cases, where all other qualifying conditions are met LWA Community Care Element can be paid to 16 -18 year old.

b) Qualifying benefit

LWA Community Care Element is available to individuals:

- already in receipt of Job Seekers Allowance Contribution based or Employment Support Allowance Contribution based if these benefits are the only income in the claimant's household for a period of no longer than 26 weeks
- already in receipt of Income Support, income-related Employment and Support Allowance, income-based Jobseeker's Allowance, Pension Credit, or payment on account of one of these benefits or their replacement under Universal Credit for a period of no longer than 26 weeks

or

- who are likely to start getting one of these benefits within the next six weeks because they are moving out of care
- or
- in receipt of Income Support, income-related Employment and Support Allowance, income-based Jobseeker's Allowance, Pension Credit, or payment on account of one of these benefits or their replacement under Universal Credit for a period of more than 26 weeks but who are not eligible for a budgeting loan from DWP
- or

- where available budgeting loan will not cover all the priority needs of the individual and that would prevent the person from living independent life in the community.

c) Circumstances that may entitle an individual to apply for LWA Community Care Element

- Applicant is an Ealing resident. Ealing resident is someone who is established in Ealing area. Established means someone who resided in Ealing for at least 6 months' period or someone who has secured a tenancy and can provide evidence of that.
- Applicant is in receipt of one of the qualifying benefits or likely to receive them within the next 6 weeks because they are moving out of care
- Applicant is moving out of residential or institutional care to live independently. Examples of residential or institutional care:
 - hospital or other medical establishment
 - care home
 - hostel
 - staff intensive sheltered housing
 - local authority care
 - prison or detention centre.

- Applicant is moving to a new home which will be more suitable following an unsettled period in his/her life and is being resettled by an organisation like a local council or voluntary organisation
- Applicant needs help because he/she and his/her family face exceptional pressure, such as family/marital breakdown or because one of them has a long-term illness.
- Applicant looks after someone who is ill or disabled, or who has been released from custody on temporary licence
- Applicant needs help with expenses (excluding travel) such as visiting someone who is ill, or to attend a relative's funeral

d) Savings

All savings above £250 will be taken into account and offset against the amount of eligible grant.

e) Budgeting loan

The amount of budgeting loan available to the individual should also be taken into account if the applicant is applying for a Community Care Grant to cover difference between the

amount of money needed to meet the priority needs and the amount of the budgeting loan available to him.

9. Goods and services that may and may not be covered via LWA Community Care Element

a) LWA Community Care Element may cover full or partial costs of the following items:

- Essential furniture (e.g. settee, armchair, carpets, curtains, wardrobe)
- Essential white goods/household equipment (e.g. cooker, fridge, washing machine, kettle, toaster)
- Bedding
- Crockery
- Storage charges
- Reconnection charges
- TV or radio if recommended as an essential item (e.g. if house bound)

b) LWA Community Care Element will not cover the following expenses:

- Non-essential items such as DVD players, Hi-Fis, computers, laptops, mobile phones, garden sheds, TV licences, etc.
- a need which occurs outside the United Kingdom
- or an educational or training need including clothing and tools
- or distinctive school uniform or sports clothes for use at school or equipment to be used at school
- or travelling expenses to or from school
- or school meals taken during school holidays by children who are entitled to free school meals
- or expenses in connection with court (legal proceedings) such as legal fees, court fees, fines, costs, damages, subsistence or travelling expenses
- or removal or storage charges if you are being rehoused following a compulsory purchase order, a redevelopment or closing order, a compulsory exchange of tenancies, or under homelessness legislation
- or domestic assistance and respite care
- or any repair to property
- or a medical, surgical, optical, aural or dental item or service (note that needs under all of these headings can be provided free of charge by the National Health Service, if you are getting Income Support, income-based Jobseeker's Allowance, Employment and Support Allowance (income-related), or Pension Credit)
- or work related expenses

- or debts to government departments
- or investments
- or costs of purchasing, renting or installing a telephone and of any call charges
- or costs of fuel consumption and any associated standing charges
- or housing costs including minor repairs and improvements and charges for accommodation associated with certain visits
- or council tax, water rates, arrears of council tax, collective community charge contributions or community water charges
- or daily living expenses, such as food and groceries, except when caring for a prisoner on release on temporary licence
- adaptations to properties due to disability
- rent

10. Purpose of Local Welfare Assistance Crisis Element

LWA Crisis Element is intended for applicants who are unable to meet their immediate short term needs:

- To meet immediate needs and help those who are struggling to afford food, energy and water bills or other essentials
- either in an emergency in relation to some expenses or
- as a consequence of a disaster
- where there is an immediate danger to health or safety of the applicant (and his family)

11. Qualifying conditions

a) Residency

Applicant is an Ealing resident. Ealing resident is someone who is established in Ealing area. Established means someone who resided in Ealing for at least 6 months' period or someone who has secured a tenancy and can provide evidence of that.

Tenants who have been placed in Temporary Accommodation by Ealing Council in an accommodation out of borough but who remain liable for rent to Ealing Council and cannot receive support under the Local Welfare Provision where they live.

b) Qualifying age

LWA Crisis Payment Element is available to people aged 18 and over. In certain cases, where all other qualifying conditions are met LWA Crisis Element can be paid to 16 -18 year old.

c) Qualifying benefit

Crisis Payments are available to individuals:

- already in receipt of Job Seekers Allowance Contribution based or Employment Support Allowance Contribution based or State Retirement Pension if these benefits are the only income in the claimant's household
- already in receipt of Universal Credit and not in employment, Income Support, income-related Employment and Support Allowance, income-based Jobseeker's Allowance, Pension Credit, or payment on account of one of these benefits
- as a result of a disaster the LWA Crisis element can be awarded even if the above benefits are not in payment. A disaster can be defined as flood, fire, gas explosion, chemical leak and similar
- those who are employed or self-employed (regardless whether Universal Credit is in payment) and whose household net earned income does not exceed the following thresholds:

	Single person	Couple
weekly	£230	£379
monthly	£997	£1642

those with no income where lack of income is not an act of omission or negligence on individual's behalf

d) Savings

LWA Crisis Element is awarded to persons who have no savings. Any available funds in the bank or building society account including Post Office and Credit Union accounts, stock and shares, cash ISAs or cash in hand will be taking into

account by a decision maker. Any agreed bank account overdraft facilities will also be taken into account.

12. Items LWA Crisis element may and may not cover

Crisis Payment may be paid for certain expenses in other emergency or disaster situations. These are:

- Living expenses for up to 60% of weekly personal allowance. The amount of living expenses will take into account how many days the support is needed for. The living expenses payment will be calculated as follows: $(60\% \text{ of person's or family's personal allowance}) / 7 \times \text{number of days support is needed for}$. The maximum days of support that can be paid for is 14 days however final decision on the payment amount will depend on the caseworker dealing with the claim and taking into account personal circumstances of the claimant.
- Groceries
- Sanitary products
- essential clothing (e.g. winter clothing)
- blankets
- certain travel expenses and transport-related costs such as repairing a car, car fuel for essential travel only e.g. hospital appointments, school transport, etc (maximum award of £500)
- energy bills (including ineligible services which are part of customer's rent)
- repaying emergency credit on a pre-payment fuel meter
- cost of gas cylinders
- water bills
- boiler service and repairs (maximum award of £1,500)
- support with other bills such as essential broadband and phone bills
- other emergencies, i.e. benefit spent and need money for living expenses
- disasters such as fire, flood, gas explosion or chemical leak
- lost or stolen money (if it affects persons health and safety)
- need to replace essential white goods following a disaster i.e. flood, fire in the property
- housing costs in cases of exceptional emergency (e.g. where customer is at high risk of eviction) where existing housing costs schemes do not meet this exceptional need (eligibility for HB, UC, DHP and Homelessness Prevention Grant needs to be considered in the first instance)

LWA Crisis element will not be made towards the following items:

- emergencies which are result of an act or omission for which applicant or partner is responsible for example gambling or misspending

- rent and deposit payments (these can be applied for through Discretionary Housing Payment)

13. People excluded from applying for LWA Crisis Element

Some groups of people are excluded from a Crisis Payment and they are listed below:

- care home residents and hospital in-patients unless it is planned that they will be discharged within the following 2 weeks.
- persons who are members of and fully maintained by a religious order
- those receiving education and thus not entitled to Income Support, income-based Jobseeker's Allowance or income-related Employment and Support Allowance;
- you may be entitled to LWA payment if you are a full time student and you have parental responsibility for a child;
- you are disabled and in receipt of Personal Independent Payment, Disability Living Allowance, Attendance Allowance or Armed Forces Independent Payment
- Prisoners who are in prison or released on temporary licence
- Persons from abroad/persons subject to immigration control except in cases where:
 - There are community care needs
 - They have serious health problems
 - There is a risk to a child's wellbeing

14. Maximum awards

Maximum awards of Local Welfare Assistance will be capped at £400 per household. In exceptional circumstances, where urgent needs of an applicant and their household exceed the maximum award allowed, the Council has a discretion to award higher amount.