



Emergency Welfare Assistance Policy

1. Introduction and aim of policy

From April 2013 Community Care Grants and Crisis Loans for living expenses administered by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) were abolished. A grant was awarded to unitary and first tier Councils for them to spend on local welfare provision for 2013/14 and 2014/15. How the money was spent was for each council to determine but there was no expectation to replicate the scheme that was operated by the DWP. The DWP will still administer some types of assistance including:

- **Short term benefit advances (STBA)** which will give financial assistance to people making a new claim or who have a significant change in circumstances until their benefit is in pay.
- **Budgeting Loans** which are interest free loans to help pay for essential things such as furniture, clothes, rent or hire purchased debt. In order to be able to apply for such a loan the applicant must have been in receipt of certain benefits for at least 26 weeks or more. Applications will be unsuccessful if the applicant does not have the means to pay back the loan or if they already owe the Social Fund a specified amount.

From 2015/16 the Government was due to withdraw funding, however they are currently reconsidering this decision, however regardless of this Telford & Wrekin Council have committed to providing a level of assistance to the most vulnerable residents who find themselves in a crisis situation. This policy outlines how Telford & Wrekin Council will assist residents who either;

- a) experience a crisis by granting emergency welfare assistance . A crisis refers to an urgent need as a consequence of an emergency, disaster, unforeseen circumstance or an urgent need that is strikingly different from the pressures generally associated with managing on a low income. Examples include no access to essential items for healthy living (food, heating and clothing), a flood, fire or gas explosion ; or
- b) require assistance to remain or to help them establish themselves in the community by granting emergency resettlement welfare assistance This includes assistance for people leaving care to establish themselves in the community, assistance for people to stay in the community rather than enter care, assistance for a prisoner or young offender on home leave or release to re-adjust to life outside of prison and assistance for people to set up a home as part of a resettlement programme following a period without a settled way of life;

where the person or their immediate family do not have the funds available or access to funds to meet their basic living expenses.

The core eligibility criteria are that the applicant must:

- Be aged 16 or over.
- Be without sufficient resources to meet an urgent need that poses a serious risk to the health and well being of the applicant or their immediate family member(s).
- A resident within the Telford & Wrekin Borough. However, exceptions will be granted where the applicant requires refuge or care following abuse, harm or has an unsettled way of life.
- Legally resident in the UK

In the case of those requiring help to establish themselves in the community under the Emergency Resettlement Welfare Assistance element of this policy the applicant must also be in receipt of one of the following benefits:

- Income Support
- Jobseekers Allowance (Income Based)
- Employment and Support Allowance (Income Related)
- Pension Credit
- Anyone who has yet to apply for the above but who is likely to qualify

Each case will be treated on its own merits within the scope of this document. All applicants will receive equal and fair treatment to take account of the Council's responsibilities under all relevant legislation, for example the Human Rights Act and Equality Act 2010.

Telford & Wrekin Council is committed to working with the local community, partnership organisations, the voluntary sector and other interested parties to facilitate this scheme.

2. Operation of the scheme

Applicants will need to complete the designated claim form. This will be available on the Council's website, for those who are not able to access the internet a telephone application can be made. In most instances the completion of an application will be made by a support worker already involved in supporting the applicant e.g. social worker, resettlement officer, or officer / volunteer of a partner organisation.

Evidence may be required to support the application but this will vary depending on the reason for the application. It may be necessary for a decision maker to visit the applicant to corroborate the application.

Telford & Wrekin Council will consider granting assistance to applicants who meet the eligibility criteria set out in this policy document. The operation of the scheme is at the Council's discretion and applicants do not have an automatic right to assistance. The scheme's budget position will be taken into consideration when making a decision on whether or what assistance can be granted.

The budget will be profiled over the year, with consideration being given in the profiling for certain peak pressure points. The Council has a limit on the funding available and profiling the available budget each month will hopefully prevent the fund running out before the end of the year. In an extreme case it may with a Revenues or Benefits Service Delivery Manager's permission be possible to grant assistance for someone experiencing a crisis. Any budget not spent will roll into the next month.

Assistance will not be granted where another statutory body is obliged to provide assistance.

An application for Emergency Welfare Assistance , Discretionary Housing Payment or Council Tax Support Hardship Assistance will be considered under whichever scheme best suits the applicant's needs. For example if an applicant completes an application for Emergency Welfare Assistance but their needs would be best met under a Discretionary Housing Payment then their application will be considered under the Discretionary Housing Payment scheme. If there are no funds left within the Discretionary Housing Payment or Council Tax Support Hardship Assistance then it may be possible to provide assistance under this policy.

Basic Principles

The following are the basic principles of the scheme:

- The assistance will be granted not loaned
- If an applicant qualifies for assistance this will be in the form of goods or service. Cash will not usually be granted. In exceptional circumstances it may be necessary to make a small cash award for an item or service which it is not possible to procure.

The following are deemed to be the essential expenditure that the scheme may cover:

- Gas or electric provided via a prepaid meter
- Essential white goods or the cost of repair of those goods
- Essential Furniture i.e. bed and a seat
- Bedding
- Crockery and cutlery
- Basic clothing i.e. a change of clothes and protective outerwear such as a coat and a pair of shoes.
- Travel warrants
- Other items or service where it is deemed that the applicant or their immediate family require the item or service to ensure their basic health or wellbeing.

The precise items that are essential for an individual will depend on their personal circumstances.

Food parcels are provided via the Telford Crisis Network.

3. Emergency Crisis Welfare Assistance

Emergency Crisis Welfare Assistance may be granted in situations where a household has insufficient resources to meet an urgent need that poses an immediate and substantial risk to their health and wellbeing.

A crisis refers to an urgent need as a consequence of an emergency, disaster, unforeseen circumstance or a pressing need that is strikingly different from the pressures generally associated with managing on a low income. A crisis could, for example, cover the following risks:

- No access to essential items necessary for healthy living (food, heating and clothing)
- The imminent risk of homelessness
- The imminent risk of children being taken into care
- Unexpected death of an immediate family member
- The breakdown of a family relationship due to cases of domestic abuse, neglect or harm
- Help to ease exceptional pressures such as exceptionally poor living conditions or the onset of, or deterioration in the health of an immediate family member
- A flood, fire and gas explosion

Issues that we will not treat as a crisis include: Minor mishaps or damage, lost or spent money, unable to access savings or capital.

Benefit disallowance or sanctions will not usually be treated as a crisis unless we are satisfied that the sanction has been applied through no avoidable fault of the applicant or they are at risk of one of the situations listed above. Any assistance will only be to ease the customer over the initial crisis period, they will then need to seek their own solution e.g. apply for hardship payments from Jobcentre Plus.

In order to validate a request for an item / service arising from exceptional pressures, we will usually require information confirming the situation from an agency working within a health or social care or support role.

In determining the nature and complexity of a crisis, we will consider:

- Circumstances that place the household / immediate family members under greater pressure than might generally be associated with managing on a low income;
- It does not matter whether it is a single major pressure or the cumulative effect of a number of less significant pressures, which may not be exceptional if taken individually. It is the overall impact on the household's circumstances that is important;
- The individual's / household's resources and skills for coping with the crisis;

- The point the crisis occurred and the date the application was received in relation to the number and type of associated incidences happening within this period; and

We will also take into account, whether the urgent need:

- Should be considered by another organisation or agency that has a statutory responsibility for assessing assistance in relation to the specific need;
- Can be met through the income, savings or resources that are available to the members of the household;
- Can be met by other sources of help or the possibility that some other person or body may wholly or partly meet the need;
- Would not abate without immediate support;
- Is the consequence of an act or omission for which the applicant or partner is responsible; and the applicant or partner could not have taken reasonable steps to avoid.

If the crisis has been compounded by factors such as a deterioration in health, drug and alcohol problems, unemployment, an abusive relationship and so on; we will review whether the applicant:

- Is in receipt of agency support to address the factors that underscore the crisis;
- This support will prevent the crisis from re-occurring, so the applicant is unlikely to submit another application within the next 12 months.

Core Eligibility Criteria for Emergency Crisis Welfare Assistance

To be considered eligible for Local Crisis Assistance applicants must satisfy ALL of the following conditions:

- Be aged 16 or over.
- Be without sufficient resources to meet an urgent need that poses a serious risk to the health and safety of the applicant or their immediate family member(s).
- A resident within the Telford & Wrekin Borough. However, exceptions will be granted where the applicant requires refuge or care following abuse, harm or has an unsettled way of life.
- Legally resident in the UK

Exclusions

The following people are excluded for support in all circumstances:

- A person in hospital or care home (independent or local authority), unless their discharge is planned to take place imminently

- A person or immediate family member that has been granted assistance under this policy on 3 separate occasions within a rolling 12 month period, commencing from the date their last application was received. Exemptions may be granted in exceptional circumstances. In such cases, the applicant may be required to attend a face to face interview.
- Prisoners and people lawfully detained.
- Members of a religious order who are fully maintained by the order.

The following people are also excluded from support, except in very exceptional circumstances:

- Full-time or part-time students not on Income Support, Income Based Job Seekers Allowance, Income Related Employment Support Allowance, Pension Credit (including payments on account) or equivalent welfare benefits – they can only receive support for expenses arising out of a disaster.
- A person from abroad who fails or would fail the habitual residence test for the purpose of welfare benefits and other entitlements.
- A person subject to immigration control by virtue of the Immigration and Asylum Act

Emergency Crisis Welfare Assistance **will not** help with the following;

- a need which occurs outside the United Kingdom
- **or** an educational or training need including clothing and tools (these may be granted by the school e.g. through the pupil premium)
- **or** travelling expenses to or from school
- **or** school meals for those eligible 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** domestic assistance and respite care
- **or** any repair to a rented property which is the responsibility of the landlord
- **or** replacing or repairing of any goods provided by a landlord as part of a tenancy
- **or** help with removals where the person is moving to Telford from outside the Borough, unless in exceptional circumstances where the move is required by Social Services.
- **or** 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 or their partner is in receipt of Income Support, income-based Jobseeker's Allowance, Employment and Support Allowance (income-related) or Pension Credit (which includes the guarantee credit) or replacement under Universal Credit
- **or** work related expenses
- **or** debts to government departments
- **or** investments
- **or** council tax or arrears of community charge

4. Emergency Welfare Resettlement Assistance

Emergency Welfare Resettlement Assistance is intended to help vulnerable people live independent lives to remain or become integrated within their community. The applicant can be the person requiring assistance, a member of their immediate family, or someone else the applicant or their family will be providing support for.

An application may be considered for one of four categories of assistance:

- Assistance for people leaving care to establish themselves in the community
- Assistance for people to stay in the community rather than enter care
- Assistance for a prisoner or young offender on home leave or release to re-adjust to life outside of prison
- Assistance for people to set up a home as part of a resettlement programme e.g. through Housing and Cohesion Team following a period without a settled way of life

Only those who meet all elements of the core eligibility criteria will be considered for Emergency Welfare Resettlement Assistance. However, by itself, the benefits specified in the core eligibility do not give an entitlement to assistance; therefore, regard to all circumstances will be taken into account.

The applicant must demonstrate that the need cannot be met by another source, they have not got the funds to provide the goods / items themselves and the assistance will have a substantial and immediate effect on improving their circumstances.

The applicant will be required to supply information about their circumstances and the nature of the circumstances that have led to them requiring assistance.

If necessary, applicants may be advised to seek assistance from statutory health and social care agencies, as well as community and voluntary organisations that can assist the process by providing a professional opinion on the needs of the claimant, as well as delivering support and assistance in relation to the applicant's ongoing support and welfare.

Assistance for people leaving care to establish themselves in the community

This category of need is intended to help people establish themselves in the community following a stay in institutional or residential care. Care refers to institutional or residential accommodation in which the person concerned has received care. This could include: residential care homes, rehabilitation units, hospitals or local authority care.

Assistance is also available to people if they are within 6 weeks of leaving one of the above institutions or residential accommodations.

The length of time the applicant has been in care should normally be:

- a period of three months or more, or
- a pattern of frequent or regular admission to care; linked to the nature of their presenting health problems.

In the case of children and young people leaving care, we will liaise with health and social care agencies to ensure they are able to establish themselves safely and securely in the community to prevent the risk of homelessness, exploitation and harm. Assistance may be granted for children and young people who: have left care in the last 12 months; or are in the process of setting up a new home, if age appropriate.

Applicants may be required to demonstrate what other broader support will be in place to help the person concerned to:

- Make the immediate transition from care to the community;
- Remain in the community and not return to care

Being in receipt of a 'personal budget' for adult social care or disability related benefits does not automatically qualify someone for assistance.

Each application will be assessed on its own merits in the context of the individuals; symptoms, level of functioning; finances, family and community resources.

If the person concerned is suffering from a deteriorating medical condition, a serious illness or is exposed to a harmful situation that will inevitably lead to return to care; granting Emergency Welfare Resettlement Assistance award may delay such a decision, and for this reason, an award may be refused. Making a decision to refuse an application in such cases will be based on the recommendation of a professional such as a Social Worker.

Assistance for people to stay in the community rather than enter care

This category of need is designed to support someone to live independently, rather than go into institutional or residential accommodation, such as a residential care home, hospital, rehabilitation units or local authority care. An award may also be made to help prevent a child being taken into care. Prisoners or young offenders on release or home leave cannot apply for this category [see section "Assistance for a prisoner or young offender on home leave or release to re-adjust to life outside of prison"].

The risk of the person being taken into care has to be substantial – supported by a statutory authority or lead health or social care practitioner to substantiate;

- the threat of care is immediate or imminent; and

- there is a direct link between the threat of care and the need in question

The person concerned should require a significant and substantial amount of care or supervision because they;

- cannot adequately look after themselves or others;
- would be a danger to themselves or others;
- are at risk of harm or abuse

In order to validate a care need, we will require verification from professional agencies working within a health or social care role.

If the person concerned is suffering from a deteriorating medical condition, an illness or a harmful situation that will inevitably lead them to going into care and granting Emergency Welfare Resettlement Assistance will delay such a decision then assistance may be refused. Making a decision to refuse an application in such cases will be based on the recommendation of a professional such as a Social Worker.

Being in receipt of a 'personal budget' for adult social care or disability related benefits does not automatically qualify someone for assistance. Each application will be assessed on its own merits in the context of the individual's; symptoms, level of functioning; finances, family and community resources.

Assistance for a prisoner or young offender on home leave or release to re-adjust to life outside of prison

This category of need is designed to support prisoners and young offenders, leaving prison, or on home leave, adjust to life outside of prison through the provision of essential items.

One of the intentions of this category is to support the individual, immediately after their release, to prevent the likelihood of re-offending and the risk of harm.

An application can be made 6 weeks in advance of the person's release date.

If the person is on temporary release, the person caring for the prisoner or young offender must make the application.

When considering a case under this section of the policy the following will be considered:

- How long the person has been released from prison
- The goods e.g. clothing, furniture etc. that the person may have access to from before they went to prison
- The support they have in place e.g. from family / Probation Service

- If they have applied for any discharge grants from the prison they may be eligible for e.g. for clothing, travel etc.
- That they have applied for all relevant benefits.

Telford & Wrekin Council reserves the right to reject applications where it becomes clear that the planned resettlement or temporary release does not have sufficient arrangements in place to reduce the likelihood of re-offending and risk of harm to the public. This information is likely to be provided by a professional working with the offender e.g. Prison Service or Probation Service.

Assistance for people to set up a home as part of a resettlement programme following a period without a settled way of life

This assistance is intended to help people establish a settled way of life following a period of continuous instability.

The fact that someone has lacked accommodation does not necessarily constitute an unsettled way of life. For instance, an applicant evicted from a longstanding tenancy who, after staying with their relatives for a month, obtains a new tenancy will not satisfy requirements under this category.

Assistance will only be considered if the application forms part of a planned resettlement programme. The programme may be provided by the Council or other agency or charity providing support to the person. This programme must include:

- Help to set up a new home or secure stable accommodation; and
- Activities / actions designed to help the applicant settle in the community

If the requested item(s) / service(s) are for the purpose of setting up a new home, the home need not be permanent. For instance, applicants may satisfy requirement if they are moving into assured short hold tenancies, temporary accommodation or a refuge that will eventually lead to a settled way of life. In such instances there will be an expectation that the applicant will take any items granted with them when they move into more permanent accommodation.

To determine whether an applicant has an unsettled way of life, a range of circumstances will be considered, in particular:

- When the applicant last lived in settled accommodation;
- The different places they have stayed;
- The types of accommodation involved;
- The periods spent in each place;
- The reasons for leaving; and
- Factors that may have caused and maintained an unsettled way of life.

If the unsettled way of life is a consequence of an act or omission to which the applicant is responsible for or could have taken steps to avoid, assistance will not be made, unless there are exceptional circumstances for doing so.

An unsettled way of life, for example, may refer to the following situations;

- a rough sleeper
- a person using a night shelter, temporary accommodation or a hostel over a prolonged period of time.
- victim(s) of domestic abuse seeking refuge

However, this does not mean that everyone who is staying in a hostel or temporary accommodation is without a settled way of life. Each case will be considered on its own merits.

Core Eligibility Criteria for Emergency Welfare Resettlement Assistance

To be considered eligible for Local Resettlement Assistance applicants must satisfy ALL of the following conditions:

- Be aged 16 or over.
- Be without sufficient resources to meet an urgent need that poses a serious risk to the health and safety of the applicant or their immediate family member(s).
- A resident within the Telford & Wrekin Borough. However, exceptions will be granted where the applicant requires refuge or care following abuse, harm or has an unsettled way of life.
- Legally resident in the UK

The applicant must also be in receipt of one of the following benefits:

- Income Support
- Jobseekers Allowance (Income Based)
- Employment and Support Allowance (Income Related)
- Pension Credit
- Anyone who has yet to apply for the above but who is likely to qualify

Where;

- the applicant's capital and that of their immediate family is less than the amount they would need to meet their or their families basic living expenses for a period of 1 month and the applicant or their immediate family do not have the funds available to cover the cost of the items / service requested.

If an applicant requires help to set up a new home, they must be at the start or in the process of doing so. No assistance will be granted for applicants that have completed this process.

In determining whether an applicant is in the process of setting up a home, we will take into account:

- how long the applicant has been living in the property;
- the furniture and equipment they have in their home; and
- how they are managing without the items they lack

Exclusions

The following people are excluded from assistance in all circumstances:

- A person in hospital or care home (independent or local authority), unless their discharge is planned to take place imminently
- A person moving into care settings such as nursing and residential homes.
- A person subject to immigration control by virtue of the Immigration and Asylum Act as they are not able to claim benefits. This may be because they haven't got permission to enter or remain in the UK, only have permission to enter or remain in the UK if they don't claim benefits or use other public services or were given permission to enter or remain in the UK because someone has formally agreed to support them.
- A person or immediate family member that has been granted assistance under this policy on 3 separate occasions within a rolling 12 month period, commencing from the date their last application was received. Exemptions may be granted in exceptional circumstances. In such cases, the applicant will be required to attend a face to face interview.
- Prisoners and people lawfully detained with the exception of those due to be released imminently and who fall under the criteria for "Assistance for a prisoner or young offender on home leave or release to re-adjust to life outside of prison".
- Members of a religious order who are fully maintained by the order.

The following people are also excluded from assistance, except in very exceptional circumstances:

- A person from abroad who fails or would fail the habitual residence test for the purpose of welfare benefits and other entitlements.
- Unless there are exceptional circumstances, applications from people living with family members or in a furnished property who are moving out to set up home in a none furnished property will not be awarded help.

Emergency Welfare Resettlement Assistance **will not** help with the following;

- a need which occurs outside the United Kingdom
- **or** an educational or training need including clothing and tools (these may be granted by the school e.g. through the pupil premium)
- **or** travelling expenses to or from school
- **or** school meals for those eligible 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** domestic assistance and respite care
- **or** any repair to a rented property which is the responsibility of the landlord
- **or** 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 or their partner is in receipt of Income Support, income-based Jobseeker's Allowance, Employment and Support Allowance (income-related) or Pension Credit (which includes the guarantee credit) or replacement under Universal Credit
- **or** work related expenses
- **or** debts to government departments
- **or** investments
- **or** council tax or arrears of community charge

5. Decision Making

Whilst recognising the need for individual consideration of the circumstances of each case, consistency is also important. Each case needs to be looked at on its own merits but all customers need to be treated equitably and fairly when the scheme is administered.

Requests for Further Information

Although some decisions may be able to be made based on the information provided within the application, it may be necessary to request further information to enable the decision maker to reach a decision. Extra information may be requested by:

- Telephone to verify information provided, identify whether the customer has the funds available to purchase requested items, clarify details of the crisis or care need; review what has caused the urgent need and to discuss other types of support that may be appropriate to the specific need.
- Interview to verify the same information as would be requested during a telephone call. Sometimes however it is easier to speak with applicant face to face.
- Visit – it may be necessary for a visiting officer to visit the applicant in their home to gather information or assess their requirements.
- Liaising with advocacy services, agencies and statutory authorities – through working with the applicant these bodies may have additional information on the applicant's circumstances and the impact on the applicant's health and wellbeing the requested item or service will have. It may also be necessary to seek additional advice or guidance from appropriate bodies on the other options that may be available to the applicant to alleviate their circumstances.
- In writing – when dealing with urgent requests it is unlikely that requests for additional information will be made in writing, however on occasions it may be deemed appropriate to request information in writing. An example may be a non-urgent Emergency Welfare Resettlement Assistance where the person is not yet in a position to move back into the community or where all other methods of communication have not elicited a response.

The applicant will need to provide information within a tight time limit due to the urgent need for a decision to be made. In most instances an applicant for Local Crisis Assistance will need to provide information within 1 working day of any request. In most instances for Local Resettlement Assistance the applicant will need to provide information within two weeks of the request. The time limit can be adjusted according to the circumstances of the application. If a person fails to provide the necessary information then the application will be rejected.

Rejection of Application

On reviewing the applicant's circumstances, case details and eligibility; a decision maker may reject an application on the basis:

- The urgent need can be met by other sources of help or the applicant has failed to demonstrate how they have sought to address their need through other types of assistance;
- The applicant is deemed to have sufficient resources to meet the urgent need;
- Following the date the crisis or care need had arisen, the circumstances of the applicant or their family members' have changed in such a way that they no longer satisfy the criteria for assistance;
- The applicant has been granted assistance on 3 separate occasions within a rolling 12 month period, commencing from the date their last application was received. Exemptions may be granted;
- The applicant is deemed to not meet the considerations for assistance set out in this policy;
- The item(s) or service(s) applied for are ineligible as set out in sections 3 and 4;
- The application is deemed to be fraudulent [see section 8];
- Insufficient information is provided to verify the applicant's need, circumstances or eligibility;
- The operation of the scheme is at the Council's discretion and applicants do not have an automatic right to assistance.

Making Decisions

In reaching a decision a decision maker may decide that:

- An application is rejected.
- Partial assistance is granted as it is deemed that not all of the requested items or services will directly reduce the health and safety risks associated with the applicant's circumstances.
- Having regard to all the applicant's circumstances a decision maker may decide that alternative item(s) or service would best suit their needs to reduce the health and safety risks with the circumstances they find themselves in. Such decisions will usually be made after consultation with any support worker that is assisting the applicant.
- Full assistance is granted i.e. the items or services requested are granted in full.
- Not all qualifying applications can be paid as this scheme has a cash limited budget. A decision will take account of monthly budget positions, demand patterns and resource levels.

Telford & Wrekin Council reserves the right to reject applications at any stage of the assessment process.

Timescales for Decision Making

It will be necessary to make decisions on Emergency Welfare Crisis Assistance applications in most cases within one working day, for example if the applicant is in need of a gas or electricity voucher for a prepaid meter Applications received before 4:45pm Monday – Friday will usually be looked at the same day to determine the urgency of the case. Some applications are less urgent e.g. a request for washing machine or cooker. For these requests decisions will be made within 3 working days or as soon as is practically possible. In many instances the decision on Emergency Welfare Resettlement Assistance applications is less urgent as usually there is notice of the person returning to the community, decisions in these cases will where possible be made within 2 weeks of the application or as soon as is practically possible. In some instances a more urgent decision will need to be made e.g. if someone has to move quickly due to suffering domestic violence.

6. Granting of Assistance

Assistance may be in the form of:

- Items of essential furniture. Where the appropriate item(s) are available they will be sourced from local community recycling schemes for which the Council will recompense the scheme for the value of the goods. Where it is not possible to purchase used goods the Council will look to purchase a new item. The Council will arrange for the item to be delivered.
- Essential white goods which where there is an appropriate item available will be sourced from local community recycling schemes for which the Council will recompense the scheme for the value of the goods. Where it is not possible to purchase second hand goods the Council will look to purchase a new item. The Council will arrange for the goods to be delivered, installed and any existing item which is being replaced to be removed to be repaired or recycled.
- Essential items of crockery and cutlery. Where appropriate the items will be sourced from second hand providers.
- New beds and bedding
- Voucher for essential clothing
- Travel warrant
- A pre-paid voucher which can be used at any PayPoint facility to credit the applicant's gas or electricity key, card or account. The voucher will only be able to be redeemed against the applicant's specific key, card or account.
- Other items or service where it is deemed that the applicant or their immediate family require the item or service to ensure their basic health or wellbeing.

No cash awards will be made unless a grant is awarded under unusual circumstances where it is not possible to procure the item or service. If a cash award is to be made this will either be made directly into an appropriate bank account or by way of a PayPoint voucher which the applicant can cash at a local PayPoint terminal.

Depending on the applicant's circumstances assistance may be granted to:

- The applicant
- Their partner or immediate family member acting as an appointee
- An advocate service or statutory authority acting on behalf of the applicant.
- Other third party where the applicant has an illness or disability that impairs their ability to make a transaction or receive a delivery for the agreed item / service

A decision on assistance being granted may be conditional upon the applicant agreeing or meeting certain requirements to prevent the risks associated with the crisis or the support need reoccurring. For example, if an unsettled way of life has been mediated by drug and alcohol addiction, the applicant will be required to seek treatment / therapies as advised by specialist health workers.

Should an applicant be unsuccessful, they can ask for their decision to be reviewed if there is reasonable grounds to do so [see section 10].

7. Notification

Applicants will be notified of their decision either in writing (including e-mail) or via telephone (including text message). In some cases a decision may be made face to face.

The reasons for a decision will be explained as well as the options available to the applicant.

8. Fraud

Telford & Wrekin Council is committed to the fight against fraud in all its forms. An applicant who tries to fraudulently claim a grant by falsely declaring their circumstances, providing a false statement or evidence in support of their application, may have committed an offence under the Fraud Act 2006.

Where it is alleged, or the authority suspects that such a fraud may have been committed, the matter will be investigated and if fraud is found to have occurred, action will be taken including, if appropriate, criminal proceedings.

9. Officer Roles

Decision Maker (Discretionary Awards Officer or equivalent) – will gather all necessary information they deem necessary to make a decision. Where further information is required the decision maker will telephone, arrange a meeting or visit the applicants in their home. Or where appropriate they will contact any third party who may be able to provide additional information.

The decision maker will consider all the information available and with regard to the qualifying criteria and factors to consider will decide whether assistance can be granted.

The decision maker will notify the applicant or their representative of their decision and will offer advice on any other steps the applicant can take to ease their circumstance or other support available. The decision maker where necessary will refer the applicant to other agencies or departments who can provide support and assistance.

The Benefit Service Delivery Manager has the authority to delegate decision making powers to another suitably experienced officer if there should be a need.

Review Officer – any appeals received will be decided by the Discretionary Awards Team Leader, or where they have made the original decision the Benefit Welfare & Assurance Group Manager will undertake the review.

The Benefit Service Delivery Manager has the authority to delegate this function to another suitably experienced officer if there should be a need.

10. Reviews

Emergency Welfare Assistance are discretionary awards however an applicant who is dissatisfied with a decision regarding one of these awards may apply for it to be reviewed. Applications for a review must be in writing and contain reasons for the application and be received within 14 days of being notified of the original decision.

A reviewing officer will consider the request for a review. It may be necessary to speak to the applicant or their representative either via the telephone or face to face.

The outcome of the review will be notified in writing.

Should the applicant remain dissatisfied with the outcome of the review, they have the right to contact the Local Government Ombudsman.

11. Publicity

Details of the scheme and the application will be included on the Council's website. The Council will work with relevant interested parties who work with people who are most likely to require assistance from the scheme. The Revenues and Benefits Service will seek the co-operation of various service areas across the Council and partner organisations including social services, family and cohesion services, housing associations, the probation service and voluntary sector organisations.