

Welfare Assistance Scheme



Durham County Council's Welfare Assistance Scheme is designed to help the most vulnerable in meeting their immediate short-term needs or maintaining their independence in the community.

There are two types of Welfare Assistance available (see below). Please note that we do not give cash payments.

- **Daily living expenses** to help meet your immediate short-term need for goods or services that arise due to a disaster or unforeseen circumstances. This may include direct help with your gas & electricity or a food parcel.
- **Settlement grants** to help you remain in the community, or move back into the community, after a period in supported or unsettled accommodation. This will be achieved by providing access to a range of standard items such as beds, bedding, furniture and white goods.

Daily Living Expenses (DLE)

A Daily Living Expenses (DLE) award will help you with short-term requirements, however, it may not resolve a crisis altogether.

What will it cover?

DLE will only cover the following:

- living expenses such as food, baby milk & nappies or hygiene products
- emergency payment voucher for heating & lighting
- travel expenses
- clothing (restrictions may apply)

How will I get paid?

DLE will not be paid in cash. Instead, you will receive your award in other ways, including:

- an ASDA food parcel
- payment voucher for utilities, travel, hygiene & baby milk/nappies and clothing

Only one DLE award will be made to you or your household within a 6 month period unless there are exceptional circumstances.

You cannot claim another DLE if you have claimed previously for lost or stolen money.

Settlement Grant

A Settlement Grant will help you to remain in your home or move into a new home after a period in supported or unsettled accommodation, for example if you have been staying in temporary accommodation due to a long stay in hospital, care or a refuge etc.

The application form will need to be completed by your support organisation and they will need to provide the evidence that they are supporting you.

There will be two stages to the assessment of a Settlement Grant application

- assessment of need; and
- financial assessment.

What will it cover?

A Settlement Grant can be awarded for:

- beds
- tables
- pans, utensils, crockery and cutlery
- storage or removal costs
- wardrobes
- floor coverings
- chairs/sofas
- white goods
- curtains/bedding

How will I receive my award?

The value of your award depends on your needs and an assessment of your financial situation. A Settlement Grant will not be paid in cash. Your award will be made via a prepayment card or goods will be provided up to the amount of the award. Please note that recycling schemes may be used to provide some items.

Qualifying conditions

You must live in County Durham. If you are in the process of moving to County Durham, your application will be considered if you:

- previously lived in County Durham for three months and within the last 12 months; or
- have been in supported or residential accommodation, hospital or prison; or
- have other exceptional circumstances, e.g. disaster or sudden emergency, and where a link to a close family member in County Durham can be proven.

You must be aged 16 or over and should have no other form of immediate financial assistance, for example family, friends, employer, savings or other available funding.

To qualify for a Settlement Grant, you should be receiving or about to receive a qualifying Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) benefit, e.g. Income Support, Income Based Jobseeker's Allowance, Income Related Employment and Support Allowance, Universal Credit, Pension Credit or Housing Benefit/Council Tax Reduction.

How do I apply?

You can make an application for Daily Living Expenses or Settlement Grant by telephone or online. You or your support organisation can make applications. Proof will be required that they are acting on your behalf and supporting you.

We will carry out a financial assessment and will ask you questions to help us understand your circumstances: including what benefits you currently receive; how much your bills are; how much it

costs you to live; and if you have access to any other form of finance, e.g. from an employer, family etc.

Where can I make an application or get further information?

To make an application or for further information and advice on the Welfare Assistance Scheme: www.durham.gov.uk/welfareassistance Telephone 03000 267 900

What can I do if I disagree with a decision?

Once a decision on your Welfare Assistance application has been made, you (and your support organisation, if relevant) will be notified of the outcome in writing. An appeal can be made by you or your support organisation with your consent where appropriate.

- An appeal about a DLE application should be made within five working days of the notification of the decision being made, or a longer period if considered reasonable.
- An appeal about a Settlement Grant decision should be made within one calendar month of the notification of the decision being made.

What other help is available?

Budgeting Loan

You could get a Budgeting Loan from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) to help pay for essential things such as rent in advance, furniture, clothes or hire purchase debts. The smallest amount you can borrow is £100. A Budgeting Loan is interest-free so you only pay back what you borrow. You normally have to repay the loan within 104 weeks.

You can apply for a loan if you have been getting income-related benefits for at least 26 weeks. How much you could receive depends on if you:

- are single
- have children
- can pay the loan back
- have any savings over £1,000 (or £2,000 if you or your partner are over aged 62);
or
- already owe money to the Social Fund

A Budgeting Loan from the DWP is usually paid into your account, for example, a bank account.

Who can get a Budgeting Loan?

To qualify for a Budgeting Loan you or your partner must have been getting one of these benefits for at least 26 weeks:

- Income Support;
- income-based Jobseeker's Allowance;
- income-related Employment and Support Allowance;
- Pension Credit; or
- Universal Credit

What can a loan pay for?

A Budgeting Loan can pay for:

- rent in advance
- furniture or household equipment
- clothing or footwear
- removal expenses when you move home
- travelling expenses
- things to help you look for or start work
- improving, maintaining or securing your home
- maternity or funeral expenses; and
- repaying hire purchase or other debts you took out to pay for any of the above.

How to claim

You will need to complete claim form SF500, and send or take it to your local Jobcentre Plus.

You can also get these forms from your local Jobcentre Plus, or from the Government's website at:

<https://www.gov.uk/budgeting-helpbenefits/how-to-claim>

If you have any questions about your claim, contact your local Jobcentre Plus.

Short Term Benefit Advance

You may be able to get an advance on your first benefit payment if you're in urgent financial need. This is called a 'short term benefit advance'.

You can apply if you've recently applied for:

- Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA)
- Income Support
- Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)
- Carer's Allowance
- Pension Credit
- State Pension
- Universal Credit

You'll be told when you'll be paid, but it's usually on the same day or the next working day. It will be paid into your bank or post office account. How much money you get will depend on your circumstances

How to apply

Contact either Jobcentre Plus, Department for

Work & Pensions or Pension Service. You must tell the adviser about your circumstances and how much you think you need to borrow.

Getting another advance

You can ask for another advance straight after receiving one (or being turned down) but only if you can show that your circumstances have changed, eg you need more than you previously thought.

Paying it back

The adviser will tell you how to pay back the advance. Usually a little will be taken from your benefit each week until it's paid back.