

North Somerset Welfare Provision Scheme

New provision from 1 April 2013



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As a result of the government's welfare reforms, there are many changes to benefits from April 2013.

One of these abolishes crisis loans and community care grants that formed part of the social fund paid by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP).

In North Somerset, we have developed a scheme called the Welfare Provision Scheme.

The scheme is there to help you with financial help in a crisis. The amount of financial help may vary depending on your circumstances.

The new scheme is designed to assist vulnerable people in:

- meeting their needs for subsistence or financial support where they are unable to meet their immediate short term needs in the case of a crisis, or
- where they require assistance to maintain their independence within the community.

The DWP are still responsible for other parts of the social fund such as budgeting loans, alignment payments, sure start maternity grants, funeral payments, cold weather payments and winter fuel payments.

What is the difference?

The key differences between the DWP social fund and the North Somerset Welfare Provision Scheme are:

- The scheme is discretionary. The council can decide who is eligible and how much it pays.
- Our annual funding is limited, once this fund has gone there will be no more awards.
- You will only be able to apply twice in any 12-month period.
- Loans will be repayable, however grants will not be.

What does the scheme cover?

An urgent, one off need, paid as a short-term fix that will seek to help with:

- moving out of institutional care
- furniture, white goods, beds and household equipment
- a disaster such as a serious flood
- gas and electricity
- minor repairs to white goods
- food
- clothing and footwear.

These are only examples, if the situation you are in is not mentioned, it doesn't mean you will not get help.

Can you claim?

To qualify for an award under the scheme you will have to meet all of the following:

- Be aged at least 16 years of age.
- Be a resident of North Somerset.
- You must be in receipt of a qualifying benefit or waiting to hear on a claim for a qualifying benefit*.
- Not have access to money that could be used to meet your needs.
- If previously awarded a loan in the last 12 months, you have repaid or set up an arrangement to repay.
- Be without support, which in turn could result in serious risk to your own or your family's health and safety.
- Not have received, or be eligible to receive, help from other public funds for the same needs.

How to apply

Claims can only be made by calling **01934 888 035** or **0800 138 5665** between 10am and 4pm Monday to Friday (freephone number may incur additional cost for a mobile phone). You may need to provide evidence to support your application.

What happens next?

We will:

- consider if you meet the criteria for a Welfare Provision Scheme payment
- want to know whether you have any other possible sources of help
- consider your circumstances and what you are applying for
- normally make awards in goods, services or vouchers
- decide how much to award, and that there are still funds available.

Once a decision is made you will be notified by letter. If you are granted an award then payment will be available for collection at set specified times. Some items will be delivered direct to you.

* *qualifying benefits are: Income Support, income based Jobseeker's Allowance, income based Employment Support Allowance, Housing Benefit, Pension Credit and Universal Credit.*

Payments will also depend on the level of funds available. Even if successful you may not receive the full amount you claimed for. Once the council has used all the funding available then all applications will be refused, even if the eligibility criteria is met.

Not happy with the decision?

With one exception*, you can ask for your claim to be reviewed. A review must:

- give, in writing or verbally, the reasons why the decision is wrong, and
- be made within five working days of the date the claim decision was issued.

More information

For more information visit
www.n-somerset.gov.uk/wps

You can also call **01934 888 035** or **0800 138 5665** (Freephone number may incur additional cost for dialing from a mobile phone).

* *There is no right of review if a decision not to pay you was because there are no more funds available.*