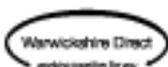




Warwickshire Local Welfare Scheme

July 2014



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Warwickshire Local Welfare Scheme

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1 Background

- 1.1 From the 1st April 2013 the national scheme of emergency financial support for vulnerable households will end and local authorities will run their own local schemes. This policy document sets out Warwickshire County Council's provision ("Warwickshire Local Welfare Scheme") detailing the support individuals can apply for and the eligibility criteria that Warwickshire County Council (WCC) will use to process applications from July 2014.

2 Policy Aims

- 2.1 The policy is intended to support those people in Warwickshire who are in greatest need and will aim to facilitate a non-monetary solution to meet their immediate need.
- 2.2 WCC is committed to working with the statutory services, local community, voluntary groups and other interested parties to facilitate this scheme.
- 2.3 WCC's local welfare scheme will be in 2 parts, a reactive element for immediate and short-term provision and a pro-active element of planned support to people requiring assistance to find longer-term sustainable solutions.
- 2.4 Each application will be administered strictly on its merits and all applicants will be treated equally and fairly. The policy will support WCC's corporate aims to:
- support people experiencing 'crisis' situations
 - help applicants through personal crises and difficult events by signposting to appropriate support
 - develop a scheme which is sustainable and flexible to accommodate changes in local need and / or priority in the longer term
- 2.5 A crisis is defined as an unexpected set of circumstances, which have left someone with an immediate need that the individual has no other way of meeting.

- 2.6 WCC will only have limited funds for this scheme and therefore any support will be provided within available resources.

3 The Scheme

3.1 Immediate and Short-Term Need (Reactive Element)

- 3.1.1 WCC will consider making an emergency award for food or heating to applicants who meet the Eligibility Criteria (see below).
- 3.1.2 An Immediate Need award is for food or heating that the applicant needs at once because:
- they are in an emergency or crisis situation **and**
 - they have satisfied WCC that they have no other access to funds or services **and**
 - there are no other agencies who provide help

The crisis could be for example one of the following:

- no access to essential items (food, heating)
- a flood, fire or gas explosion
- a situation that poses a serious risk to the health and safety of you or your immediate family

A crisis would not be:

- replacing lost or spent money
- minor mishaps or damage
- failure of a household item
- inability to access savings or capital

- 3.1.3 The awards will take the form of the following:
- Food parcels containing enough food for 3 days
 - Credit to your electricity meter, card or key, depending on your supplier
 - Loan of an item such as an electric heater
- 3.1.4 Cash awards are not part of the scheme. This means WCC will not give out cash. Instead it will signpost applicants to any other organisation that may be able to help, for example, other discretionary grants such as budgeting loans from Department of Work and Pensions, or housing grants from district and borough councils, or by providing budgeting advice and debt management.
- 3.1.5 In some instances WCC may consider providing a limited range of essential items which cannot be provided by other agencies, such as a microwave, bed or bedding, as part of the Short-Term Need element of the scheme, i.e. in order to provide interim support whilst a longer term solution is found.

- 3.1.6 Where repeated applications for Immediate and Short-Term Need are made, WCC may attach conditions. For example, WCC may make it a condition of an award that applicants engage with additional planned support services, such as budgeting advice or debt management training, to address issues that are leading to repeat applications being made.
- 3.1.7 Applications can be made by calling the Freephone 0800 number or the landline number.
- 3.1.8 It is WCC's discretion as to whether the award will be made to applicants if they refuse to meet such conditions.
- 3.1.9 If applicants do not qualify for an Immediate Need award WCC will inform them of any other agencies or charities that may be able to offer assistance or support. Applicants can also contact the WCC if they do not think they would qualify for an Immediate Need award but would like to be signposted to other agencies which may be able to help.

3.2 Planned Support (Pro-active Element)

- 3.2.1 The Planned Support element is to assist applicants by providing a limited range of essential items that cannot be provided by any other agency. Applicants will be those leaving care and setting up, or resettling in the community, where a planned programme of support has been, and will continue to be, in place with appropriate agencies.
- 3.2.2 The Preventative element of Planned Support will commission appropriate additional support services that are identified, such as money or debt management training, to address issues that are leading to repeat applications being made.
- 3.2.3 These preventative services may include support for
- Income / benefits maximisation
 - Budgeting advice, debt management training or loan shark awareness for adults
 - Ways to address food / fuel poverty
 - Key job / employment skills

4 Eligibility Criteria

- 4.1 To be considered eligible for an award under the scheme, applicants must satisfy WCC in respect of all of the following conditions:
- to be aged 16 or over for the immediate need element only
 - to have no other access to funds or sufficient resources to meet an immediate need
 - that their situation poses a serious risk to the health and safety of them or their immediate family
 - to have been a resident of Warwickshire for the past 6 months or 3 years out of the past 5 years. Or, if a member of the Armed Forces, then to demonstrate a strong connection to the Warwickshire area
 - to be legally resident in the UK
- 4.2 Exceptions may be granted at the discretion of WCC where the circumstances of an applicant require careful consideration of the risk surrounding non-provision.

5 Exclusions

5.1 The following people are excluded for support:

- someone in hospital or care home (independent or local authority), unless their discharge is planned to take place imminently
- someone subject to immigration control by virtue of the Immigration and Asylum Act
- applicants or their immediate family who have received 2 awards for energy, household items or clothing within a rolling 12 month period, or 3 awards for food within a rolling 12 month period, (commencing from the date their last application was received)
- prisoners and people lawfully detained, including those released on parole or on bail pending a court hearing
- members of a religious order who are fully maintained by the order
- someone from abroad who fails or would fail the habitual residence test for the purpose of welfare benefits and other entitlements

6 Reviews

6.1 If applicants are turned down for an award they may request a review of the decision using the procedure below:

6.2 An applicant (or their appointee or agent) who disagrees with a decision may request a review. An applicant can ask for a review if they can demonstrate:

- there has been a factual error based on the decision made or an oversight of a significant piece of evidence or
- that new evidence has come to light which was not provided with the original application

6.3 In either circumstance, applicants must provide all relevant information or evidence. Such review requests must be made to: Warwickshire County Council Local Welfare Scheme within one calendar month of the decision being issued.

6.4 The review decision will be final.