

Early Support Fund Scheme Guidance - September 22

Overview

The Early Support Fund is targeted to support residents who we know face additional barriers, such as people with long term health needs, families, older people and single people in private rented accommodation. A key focus will be on homelessness and debt prevention, including those in rent and council tax arrears – however this is designed to be an inclusive fund to help anyone to overcome barriers to live a good quality of life.

The Early Support Fund can provide a flexible grant to families identified as needing assistance to improve their overall financial position and reduce inequalities created by or exacerbated by the negative effects of the Covid pandemic.

Applications for early support fund are made through advice and support services in York.

Advice and support services need to be a registered partner with the scheme to be able to make applications via Early Support Fund. The registration criteria and agreement are set out in the Service Level Agreement.

Registered partner services carry out the assessment and complete the online grant application.

Registered partners are given a unique log-in and password providing access the online form.

Eligibility

Early support fund Scheme eligibility

- The application is for a household resident within City of York boundaries.
- The household is seeking advice and support from the partner service
- AND they are a vulnerable household
- AND they are unable to meet the costs of the items needed and funding is not available via other routes.

A vulnerable household may include, but is not restricted to:

- A person who has a physical or sensory impairment, learning disability or mental health problem¹ and who may be unable to protect themselves from harm or abuse, or their carer.
- Elderly, frail or confused older people
- People who are seriously ill or have a severe long time health condition.
- People who are recently bereaved
- Pregnant women or those who have recently given birth
- Those who have obvious difficulty in understanding, speaking or reading English
- Care leaver
- Those fleeing domestic abuse
- Anyone suffering severe hardship

Grants of up to £250 to be made to individuals or families – with discretion for up to a further £250 where needed (e.g. where bankruptcy fee is £525 for example and customer can not contribute).

Grants to be paid to improve the overall financial position of customers identified as needing a financial support to facilitate this.

Requests for grants via the application process will need to provide a rationale for the grant and evidence of the item, bill or service to be paid for.

Requests can be made by any recognised organisation currently working to provide advice, support and advocacy to residents experiencing financial and / or social hardship, where an assessment of their financial situation has been done.

¹ The Royal College of Psychiatrists and Money Advice Trust's Debt collection and mental health: ten steps to improve recovery provides useful guidance and further definition of what constitutes a mental health problem

- Initially requests will be made by CYC internal teams including Local Area Coordinators, Housing Management Officers, CYC Benefits Advisers, Local Area Teams,

It is expected that this grant will be one small part of an overall action plan to secure the longer-term financial security, social inclusion and wellbeing of the person in question. In this way it will contribute to creating resilient citizens and communities.

Examples of expenditure could include (but are not exclusive to):

- Items which will assist residents to improve their health and well-being, including managing money, reducing outgoings and preventing homelessness.
- 'Outside the box' items to help people access community groups to overcome social isolation i.e. transport costs to attend an initial sessions or art materials to enable someone to join an online class
- Large rubbish collections for people allocated an emergency move to avoid voids charges
- Funding to assist hoarders to declutter in a planned, psychologically informed way
- Phone credit and charger to enable someone to access important telephone appointments with their mental health worker
- Passports and ID to allow people to access employment opportunities, bank accounts or travel overseas to visit family.
- Mobile phone
- Wi-fi hot spot
- Utility debts
- DRO fee
- Rent arrears not covered by DHP

Administration

Applications will be made via an online application form.

Applications will be considered by grant managers within City of York Council.

Applications will be considered in a timely manner. We aim to consider applications within 10 working days.

Decisions will be sent to the support worker making the application who will liaise with the applicant.

Payments will be direct to organisations, companies or suppliers wherever possible. In exception, where this is not possible pre-payment cards will be used.

There is no right of appeal on this decision, however one request can be made for the decision to be reconsidered. In these cases, another manager will review the decision.

Early Support Grants are not emergency grants. Where there is an emergency situation, applications should be made to York Financial Assistance Scheme.