

Community
Legal Service



Coventry Law Centre[®]
legal action for the community

COMMUNITY CARE GRANTS

Community Care Grants are one off payments from the DSS

HOW TO APPLY

**To obtain an application form telephone:
0845 6088649**

Community Care Grant

The Community Care Grant does not have to be repaid. You must be in receipt of income support, income based job seekers allowance or pension credit or likely to get one of these within six weeks. This could be where you are expected to leave a hospital, nursing home or prison, etc, and then claim income support.

You can only be considered for a payment in one of the following circumstances:-

- To help you, or a member of your family, or other person for whom you or a member of your family will be providing care, to re-establish yourselves in the community following a stay in institutional or residential care.
- To help you, or a member of your family, or other person for whom you or a member of your family will be providing care, to remain in the community rather than enter institutional or residential care.
- To help you set up home in the community as part of a planned resettlement program following a period during which you have been without a settled way of life.
- To ease exceptional pressures on you and your family.
- To allow you, or your partner, to care for a prisoner or young offender on temporary release.
- To help you, or one or more members of your family, with travel expenses within the UK in certain circumstances.

Travelling Expenses to:-

1. Visit an ill relative, partner or, in some cases, a close friend.
2. Go to a relative's funeral.
3. Ease domestic crisis.
4. Fares when moving to a more suitable home.
5. Go to court to be at your child's custody hearing.

Savings up to £500 are ignored if you are applying for a Community Care Grant/Budgeting Loan. The savings ignored is up to £1,000 if you or your partner are aged 60 years or more.

NOTE

THESE SOCIAL FUND PAYMENTS ARE DISCRETIONARY. THEREFORE, YOU MAY NOT RECEIVE A PAYMENT EVEN IF YOU COME WITHIN THE ABOVE CATEGORIES. THERE IS A LIMITED BUDGET WHICH THE SOCIAL FUND SECTION CANNOT OVERSPEND.

TO APPLY

Complete Form SF300 from the DSS Office. **Do not underestimate the cost of the things you need; use a local shops catalogue.**

You cannot apply for the same item or service within 26 weeks unless there has been a relevant change of circumstances

DECISION MAKING AND PRIORITIES

Social Fund Officers must consider the circumstances of each case.

This includes:

- The urgency of the case
- If the need could be met in any other way
- How much money is left in the budget

Examples which may affect priority are:

- mental or physical disability
- illness and general frailty
- physical or social abuse or neglect
- a long period of sleeping rough
- unstable family circumstances
- behavioural problem, for example, due to drug or alcohol misuse

If you have borrowed money to obtain an item or service, even if help for that item is excluded by the directions, you can apply for a CCG to repay the debt.

If you are dissatisfied with the amount you have been awarded, you should consider requesting a review.

Tactics

- You should always apply for a Community Care Grant if you are eligible, rather than a budgeting loan or Crisis Loan which have to be repaid from your benefit. You can apply for help with anything other than an excluded item.
- When completing the application form (SF300), you should give full details of the items you need. Try to be as specific as possible (eg, list each item of furniture or clothing you need, rather than just asking for 'furniture' or 'clothes') and include the actual cost or a reasonable estimate of the cost of each item. You cannot get a Community Care Grant for an excluded item. Ask a Welfare Rights Worker for advice on this point if necessary.
- Your application must establish that you need a Community Care Grant for one of the circumstances mentioned above. You should, for example, explain how the payment you are requesting will help the relevant person to become established or remain in the community, or will help ease exceptional pressures on you and your family.
- You should also show why your application should be given high priority, bearing in mind the SF guidance on priorities and what constitutes a high priority application. You can obtain a copy of the local guidance from your local office and refer to it if appropriate. You could also submit supporting evidence – eg, from a doctor or social worker.

WHAT CAN BE REVIEWED

You can ask the DSS to review a decision if:

1. You have been refused a grant.

2. You applied for a grant and loan and the DSS have awarded a loan.
3. You are not satisfied with the amount they have allowed. You should accept payment of the award while still challenging the decision.

HOW TO ASK FOR A REVIEW

All applications for a review should be made in writing to your local DSS office, within 28 days of the date of their decision.

You should give your full reasons for requesting a review. Make sure the DSS know the full facts about your problem. Tell them again why you need the grant and what hardship would result if it is not paid. If possible, get a letter of support from your GP, Social Worker, Probation Officer or Health Visitor. The Social Fund Officer must review a decision where:

1. The DSS did not know about an important fact relating to your claim when the decision was made.
2. There has been a change in your circumstances since the original request was made.

If the DSS agree to your request for a review you will be notified in writing. If they are unwilling to review they will call you into the office for an interview to discuss this. You may take a friend or representative along with you to this interview. If you are unable to go to the office a home visit can be arranged for this interview. It is also possible that the interview can be done over the telephone.

ASKING FOR A FURTHER REVIEW

If you are not satisfied with the decision on your request for a review, you can ask the Social Fund Inspector for a further review. This request must be made in writing to your DSS office, within 28 days of receiving the first review decision.

The Social Fund Inspector's office will ask you to provide written grounds for your review when they send you the documents within a few days. The Law Centre can assist in advising or drafting a response to the Inspector's office. Please telephone the number below for an appointment. The Social Fund Inspector may allow or disallow the application or refer the matter back to the local DSS office. If the Social Fund Officer refuses the application again you can reapply to the Inspector.

If the Social Fund Inspector refuses to change the decision then it is very difficult to challenge this. Normally it can only be through a Judicial Review. The Law Centre can advise you about this.

Please Note

Even if you think the DSS decision is unjust you have no right to an independent tribunal hearing.

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