

Hertfordshire Welfare Assistance Service Policy 2024

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The welfare assistance service exists to support residents of Hertfordshire who are in crisis and without additional support they or their family would be at risk. It is intended to be one part of a broader support network including:

- Citizen's advice (finance / benefits and debt advice).
- Carers in Herts (support for individuals acting as carers to a family member).
- Age UK Hertfordshire (support for older residents).
- Help to stop smoking.
- Gambling addiction support.
- HertsHelp for independent information and advice

Due to additional funding provided by the Department for Work and Pensions (Household Support Fund) we have currently been able to relax the criteria for accessing the service.

You will need to supply supporting evidence with your application.

For a list of documents, we will accept with your application please see appendix A.

Hertfordshire Welfare Assistance Service Criteria for support

1. You must be a Hertfordshire resident when you apply.
2. Only 1 (successful application) can be made in any 3-month period
3. You may be able to get a local welfare assistance payment if you're getting one of these benefits (or are likely to in the next 6 weeks if you're due to leave care):
 - Income support
 - Employment and support allowance
 - Jobseeker's allowance
 - Pension credit
 - Universal credit

4. Or you are employed or self-employed and your net earned income does not exceed £293 per week (£15,236 after tax and deductions) if you are a single person, or £482 (£25,064 after tax and deductions) if you are part of a couple.
5. One of the following must apply. You:
 - are leaving residential or institutional care, e.g., a care home or prison.
 - are being resettled into a new home by your council or a voluntary organisation following an unsettled period in your life.
 - are looking after someone who is ill, disabled or just out of prison.
 - need help to stay in your home and not go into residential care or hospital.
 - need help because you or your family face exceptional pressure - e.g., because of a family breakdown or illness.
6. You can apply for a crisis payment if you:
 - don't have enough money to meet your or your family's immediate needs after an emergency or disaster.
 - think there will be serious damage or risk to your or your family's health or safety without the payment.

Crisis payments are to help pay for:

- food (not including alcohol or tobacco)
- essential clothing
- pre-paid meter fuel debt
- Support towards the repair or replacement of essential items

You need to tell us in detail about:

- the hardship you're experiencing.
- why you aren't able to meet your expenses.

If you're applying for household items and you've been in receipt of the above benefits for longer than 26 weeks, you may be expected to apply to your local Jobcentre Plus for a budgeting loan or a budgeting advance (if on Universal Credit) in first instance.

Only one support request towards the cost of repair or replacement of White goods may be requested in any six-month period.

Crisis payments and community care grants are discretionary. Each application is assessed on its individual merits and no two applications can be compared. Awards are also subject to overall funding limitations within the local welfare

assistance scheme. We reserve the right to change the level of and reasons for awards subject to budgetary pressures.

Privacy statement

The Welfare Assistance Scheme keeps information about the people it provides help to. All personal data is processed in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulations. In order that we can maximise the amount of assistance that may be available to you we may share information with other organisations and charities. Why are personal records kept?

The information we hold helps us to decide the best way to help people. We need to keep this information to help plan and provide the correct level of grant for you. After you have finished receiving help from us, we may keep the information we hold about you if it seems likely that you might need our help again, or we are requested by law to do so. We will not keep your records for longer than is necessary.

What sort of information is kept?

When you ask for help from us, we collect information about your personal and family circumstances. We will ensure that your personal data is treated as confidential where appropriate, is relevant, accurate and kept up to date. You have the right to ask to withdraw your consent for the council to use or share this data. For further details of how we use and share your data please read our Privacy Policy

<https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/about-the-council/legal/privacy-policy/privacy-policy.aspx>

Appendix A

- Proof of Identity for all adults included in the application - Acceptable forms of ID are:
 - Driving Licence
 - Passport
 - Birth certificate
 - Citizenship card
- Proof of address; GP/hospital letter, HMRC letter, Council tax bill etc
- If on Universal credit, full most recent UC statement
- If employed most recent wage slip
- If requesting white goods support; repair quote or photographic evidence of the damage (please be aware attaching a copyrighted image will result in the declining of the full application).
- If requesting white goods for a rented property; Tenancy agreement for the property
- If requesting either a Home or kitchen starter pack; Tenancy agreement dated within 3 months.
- All bank account(s) / saving account(s) statement covering the most recent full month.
- We only accept pictures of an electronic bank statement from the bank's website if your name and address are clearly visible.
- We do not accept screenshots from a banking app, statements without a name or address, or statements with any information blacked out or removed.
- We do not accept Excel downloads of statements.

PLEASE ENSURE THAT ALL DOCUMENTS YOU SUBMIT IN SUPPORT OF YOUR APPLICATION ARE INDIVIDUALLY NAMED. IF YOU SUBMIT TWO DOCUMENTS WITH THE SAME NAME, THEY WILL OVERWRITE EACH OTHER AND WE WILL NEED TO ASK YOU TO RESUBMIT YOUR DOCUMENTS. THIS WILL CAUSE A DELAY IN PROCESSING YOUR APPLICATION.