



**HARTLEPOOL**  
**BOROUGH COUNCIL**

# Local Welfare Support Administration Guide 2019/20



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## What is the purpose of this administration guide?

This Administration Guide explains what Local Welfare Support (LWS) is, what it is for, who can apply, how to apply and how we make decisions. Each case is treated on its own merits and all applications receive equal and fair treatment.

## What is Local Welfare Support?

LWS is a short term emergency fund to help those who find themselves in a financial crisis. It is not a means to support reductions in benefit income or a solution to longer term financial issues. It includes

- Awards for those who present to the Council in immediate need – ‘in crisis’
- Awards for those who are residents of Hartlepool, not in immediate crisis but need help with household goods etc – ‘non crisis’.

## What is a ‘crisis’?

A crisis is defined as ‘a time of intense difficulty’ or ‘sudden misfortune’. Examples include (but are not restricted to) an unexpected reduction in welfare benefits and entitlements, loss of paid work, bereavement, breakdown in a relationship, a house fire or flood. In such cases the crisis places the applicant in a situation where they have no access to essential needs which could lead to a deterioration in their health and wellbeing.

### ‘In crisis’

To be considered for an award you can either call the Welfare Support Team on 01429 284284 OR visit the Civic Centre during office hours and speak to a Welfare Support Officer.

Typically awards are made in the form of Foodbank Vouchers, supermarket vouchers, gas and electricity top ups on key cards and clothing vouchers. No cash is provided.

### ‘Non crisis’

This fund is targeted at Hartlepool residents that are leaving accommodation (for example supported accommodation, hospital, a hostel, care or prison) and need household items in order for them to establish a tenancy. It is not intended to support routine house moves nor for routine replacement of broken items or equipment.

To be considered for an award you need to complete an application form explaining (as a minimum) who you are, what your circumstances are, your tenancy information, details of your income and expenditure and your priority items.

## Hartlepool Foodbank

LWS supports the work of Hartlepool Foodbank and offers eligible applicants vouchers that can be redeemed at their premises. Strict criteria is used to determine who can and cannot have a Foodbank Voucher. Applicants who are eligible for a foodbank voucher but decline will not be eligible for alternative food support or vouchers.

### What is the eligibility criteria?

You do not need to be in receipt of benefits to ask for LWS but you must be able to clearly demonstrate you are in crisis, that financial assistance is required and that failure to do so could lead to a deterioration in (your) health and wellbeing.

You must be eligible to access government funding and have recourse to public funds.

### Before you apply

We would expect you to show that you have tried all other sources of support as a means to improve your situation. Welfare Support Officers will signpost you to such support if they believe this will alleviate your crisis and prevent the need for a LWS award.

### Information you need to apply

Before you contact us make sure you have the following -

- your name and contact details
- your address and landlord details
- your National Insurance Number
- confirmation of your benefit entitlements
- details of your income including amounts you receive
- breakdown of your expenses and how you spend your money each week
- details of any arrears or debts you have and the repayment amounts
- details of anyone who lives with you, including their income

If you are applying for 'non crisis' support you need to fully complete an application form and provide all relevant evidence and documentation requested. Incomplete forms will be rejected.

### How we decide who can have LWS

LWS is a limited fund. Once the funding has been spent, no more awards can be made. Applicants must meet the eligibility criteria. We cannot award LWS to each and every applicant that applies but we aim to make sure that payments are made to those who are most in need. Wherever we can we signpost to other support agencies that can meet your needs. This allows us to target awards to those most in need and makes the fund go further.

We look at the following when we make a decision:

- your income
- your savings
- if anyone else in your house can help you
- if you have any loans or debts
- if you could manage your money better
- if you or anyone in your family is ill or disabled; and
- if you have tried to put the situation right

We will not usually pay LWS if we think you can deal with the crisis in other ways such as:

- claiming other benefits you may be entitled to
- negotiating any debt repayments
- cutting down on unnecessary and avoidable expenses
- using your savings to cover the problem
- any contributions that are or could be made by a non-dependent
- accessing support from a local service provider that can meet your needs.

Applications that do not demonstrate that the eligibility criteria are met will be rejected and the applicant notified accordingly. Applications that do demonstrate that the eligibility criteria are met will be considered by an Officer who will decide if LWS is suitable and if so in what terms.

This is for guidance only. We treat every case on its own merits and may also take into account other factors that we have not mentioned above.

### **What cannot be covered by LWS?**

LWS cannot be used for the following –

- An expense which a statutory service provider has a duty to meet
- A need which occurs outside of the UK
- Travel costs to and from school, to and from work or general transport costs
- Expenses in connection with court costs, legal fees, fines etc
- Costs of domestic support or care
- Repairs to housing which should be met by a landlord
- Health costs including optical and dental services
- Debt payments
- Holidays
- TVs, radios or other such electrical goods and their associated licenses
- Costs associated with motor vehicles

### **How much LWS will I get?**

You will not get any cash. LWS is provided in the form of vouchers, top ups or goods. Officers use a 'guide' that helps them determine appropriate allowances based on your personal circumstances.

### **What if my circumstances change?**

LWS is based on your circumstances at the time you apply. If your circumstances change, you must tell us straight away as this could affect your award.

### **What if I disagree with a decision?**

If you disagree with our decision not to give you LWS you can ask us to look at the decision again. We call this a 'reconsideration'.

You should write to us within one calendar month of the date of the decision letter, telling us why you do not agree with our decision.

Your case will be reviewed by another officer who will then make a final decision. You have no further right of appeal against the final decision. You cannot appeal to the Tribunals Service.

