London Borough of Richmond upon Thames

Local Assistance Scheme

The scheme has been introduced following the abolition of the Social Fund. The scheme is intended to be broadly the same as the Social Fund provision with the exception that the Council will offer grants rather than loans for emergency / disaster related payments.

Grants will cover a range of items including furniture, white goods, clothing and short term living expenses.

What situations does the scheme cover?
Grants may be awarded in the following circumstances:

• To help you, or a member of your family, or someone you will be looking after to return to the community from care;
• To prevent you, a member of your family, or someone you are looking after from going into care
• To help you, or your partner, care for a prisoner or young offender on their release from an institution
• To help people set up home in the community as part of a planned resettlement programme following an unsettled way of life
• To ease exceptional pressures on you or your family arising from wholly exceptional circumstances

Who is eligible?
You may be able to get a grant if you are currently receiving one of the following:
• Income Support;
• Income based Job Seekers Allowance;
• Income related Employment and Support Allowance;
• Pension Credit.

[This list will be revised as Universal Credit is introduced]
• You may also be eligible if you are due to leave care (e.g. hospital, care home, prison) within the next 6 weeks and are likely to receive one of the benefits listed above.
• You may also be eligible for an emergency or disaster payment if you are on a low income but not in receipt of benefits

Applicants must also meet the following conditions:
• You must be aged 16 or over;
• You must not have received a grant under the scheme within the past 6 months;
• You must not have received a grant under the scheme for the item / service for which you are applying within the past 12 months;
• You cannot meet the need through any other source e.g. savings, help from family or friends, other local authority service etc;
• You, or your family, would be subject to serious hardship which might affect your / their health and safety
• You must be normally resident in Richmond;
• You must not be subject to any immigration controls
Restrictions
The Council has a fixed amount of money to run the scheme and, in order to target the funding at those in most need, it is necessary to place certain restrictions on grants:

- The maximum amount for an individual grant is £1,500
- In emergency / disaster situations, support will only cover short term needs
- No more than 2 awards will be made to an individual in a single 12 month period
- Within the one year period, a second award for the same reason as a first award will not be considered
- Minor Repairs are down to the council or Landlord, NOT the scheme.
- Will not substitute for lost benefits.

What expenses are not covered by the scheme?
The following items are not covered by the scheme:

- a need which occurs outside the United Kingdom
- or an educational or training need including clothing and tools
- or distinctive school uniform or sports clothes for use at school or equipment to be used at school
- or travelling expenses to or from school
- or school meals taken during school holidays by children who are entitled to free school meals
- or expenses in connection with court (legal proceedings) such as legal fees, court fees, fines, costs, damages, subsistence or travelling expenses
- or removal or storage charges if you are being rehoused following a compulsory purchase order, a redevelopment or closing order, a compulsory exchange of tenancies, or under homelessness legislation
- or domestic assistance and respite care
- or any repair to council property and, in Scotland, any repair to property of certain housing trusts (you should contact your local council for advice)
- or a medical, surgical, optical, aural or dental item or service (note that needs under all of these headings can be provided free of charge by the National Health Service, if you are getting Income Support, income-based Jobseeker’s Allowance, Employment and Support Allowance (income-related), or Pension Credit)
- or work related expenses
- or debts to government departments
- or investments
- or costs of purchasing, renting or installing a telephone and of any call charges
- or any expense which the local authority has a statutory duty to meet
- or costs of fuel consumption and any associated standing charges
- or housing costs, other than minor repairs and improvements and charges for accommodation associated with certain visits
- or council tax, council water charges, arrears of community charge, collective community charge contributions or community water charges

How will grants be paid?
It is the Council’s intention to avoid the use of cash grants. Where possible, awards will be made using store vouchers, travel warrants etc. Where it is necessary to provide cash, this will be done via the PayPoint system.