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Application Guidance 2025-26

*Contact details:* [*support@ageukbarnet.org.uk*](mailto:support@ageukbarnet.org.uk) *or call our reception team on* ***0208 203 5040***

The intention of the Fund is to provide one-off crisis support to vulnerable households in the most need with the cost of essentials. Awards are granted on a per-household basis. Where multiple eligible applicants living in the same household would like to apply, applications will be merged into a joint award.

# Eligibility Criteria

Successful applicants must be:

* *Of pensionable age (i.e.,) in receipt of state pension OR aged 55+ but living with a long-term health condition and/or facing financial hardship*
* *Living within the London Borough of Barnet (minimum 12 months)*
* *In possession of no more than £16,000 total in savings, investments, or capital (not including the value of their home, but including any other properties). We will request to see evidence as part of the application process*

We unfortunately cannot consider applications from:

* *Anyone living outside the United Kingdom*
* *Anyone not resident in Barnet*
* *Anyone living in residential and/or permanent care*
* *Anyone in prison*
* *Anyone in the UK unlawfully*

We cannot issue grants where the older person is not the main beneficiary, for example items for other family/household members who do not also meet our eligibility criteria.

As the Fund is intended for acute crisis support and is not intended for ongoing or repeated support, we cannot award grants to households who have received a grant from us in the past 12 months.

## Defining Low-Income

For the purposes of this Fund, low income is defined as defined as being in receipt of a means-tested benefit OR up to 20% more than the Minimum Income Standard (MIS). When assessing clients’ incomes, we will disregard any income from PIP, Attendance Allowance, or Disability Living Allowance. This is because there are often extra costs incurred by living with a disability, which these benefits are often insufficient to cover.

## Applicants with No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) Status

The DWP has advised that HSF qualifies as a public fund. This means that we unfortunately are unable to support those with NRPF status, unless:

* *There are child welfare concerns*
* *There is a genuine care need that does not arise solely from destitution, or the (anticipated) effects of destitution.*

# Application Process

We will need to see certain supporting documents as part of each application.

These will include:

* *Evidence of sources of income and any savings*
  + *This can be 2 months’ recent bank statements, or a recent universal credit award letter, showing the breakdown of the included elements*
* *For those seeking support with utility bills, copies of the relevant bills, showing the amounts charged, any arrears, and the customer reference number.*
  + *If you pay by top-ups (e.g., for a legacy meter), please send receipts of your recent payments to help us understand what you pay in a typical month*

As demand for the Fund tends to be very high, we ask that all applicants send us their supporting documents **within 2 weeks** of submitting their application. If we have not received any documents in this period we may have to close the application.

We will do our best to process grant applications as quickly as possible. On receipt of all the required information, a decision will be made within 4-6 weeks. Applicants will usually be informed of the outcome within 21 working days of that decision.

Unfortunately, we do not offer fast track or emergency grants. All applications are dealt with on a first come, first served basis.

Decisions on what form of, and how much, support is given will be made based on the nature of each applicant’s circumstances and the evidence submitted. Please note that cash award payments will be very limited, and the fund will normally issue vouchers as the form of payment. For support with utility costs, we will typically pay directly to the appropriate utility provider.

# Guidance for Professional Referrers

As we are a small team, professional referrals are essential in ensuring we reach as many people as possible who are in genuine need.

If you are referring a client to us, please ensure:

* *You have used the 2025-26 professional referral application form*
* *You have obtained client consent for the referral*
* *All form fields are completed in appropriate detail (including the key info table) and any supporting documents are attached with the form*
* *If support from the grant is to go towards utility costs, please provide copies of the relevant utility bills with this referral form*

If key information is missing, the referral may be delayed or rejected.

As mentioned, awards are given per household. We can combine applications for eligible people living together, but we can’t accept new referrals from the same household after someone has already received support. If you’re referring more than one person from the same household, please send all referral forms at the same time.

# What Can Be Awarded

One- off grants can be awarded towards the following areas as a form of crisis support, or to avoid crisis:

* *Energy and water bills (including service charges for these costs)*
* *Grocery costs*
* *Wider essentials*

‘Wider essentials’ is a broad category encompassing:

* *Essential household appliances, e.g., fridges, cookers*
* *Including broadband or phone bills*
* *Clothing, bedding, devices for warmth in winter (e.g., electric blankets)*
* *Beds and mattresses*
* *Hygiene products*
* *Essential transport-related costs such as repairing a car, buying a bicycle, or paying for fuel.*

The Fund can in limited circumstances help with housing costs if the applicant cannot be supported through other channels (e.g., Discretionary Housing Payment). The Fund can, exceptionally and in genuine emergency, be provide support for historic rent arrears built up prior to an existing benefit claim for households already in receipt of UC and Housing Benefit. This is because these arrears are excluded from the criteria for Discretionary Housing Payments.

# What Cannot Be Awarded

As the Fund is intended for the provision of crisis support, we cannot issue grants towards:

* *Mortgage support, though homeowners could still qualify for the other elements of the Fund (such as energy, food, water, and wider essentials).*
* *Holidays*
* *Home redecorations (including flooring and carpeting)*
* *Consumer debts and goods already purchased*
* *Help with long term respite costs*
* *Other furniture*
* *Items which should reasonably be provided via statutory services.*

In situations where the support requested is for costs not covered by the Fund, we will try to provide support through the other categories to help with the applicant’s wider financial situation.