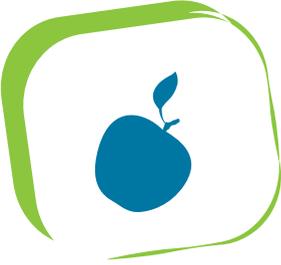


The Scottish Welfare Fund

EXTRA MONEY
TO HELP YOU





What is the Scottish Welfare Fund?

The Scottish Welfare Fund has been set up by the Scottish Government to help people who are on a low income and who are in difficult situations where an award of cash or goods will reduce a risk to their health and safety or help them to live independently.

The Fund is administered by local councils and can provide discretionary help as cash, goods, vouchers or travel tickets. It can provide two types of assistance:

- **Crisis Grants** in an emergency or a disaster, normally for things like food, heating and travel expenses for specific needs.
- **Community Care Grants** are available to help someone live independently, normally for things like cookers, beds and removal expenses.

Crisis Grants and Community Care Grants do not have to be repaid.

The Scottish Welfare Fund cannot help you with some things. These include educational costs, court expenses, funerals costs, debt repayments, and medical needs. Awards for a television or radio are normally excluded, but may be considered in exceptional circumstances if, for example, you need one because of limited mobility or isolation.

Throughout the process of applying to the Scottish Welfare Fund you should expect to be treated with respect and dignity.

When you apply, the council may see from your application that you could benefit from other support. They may signpost or refer you to council services, or to a Citizens Advice Bureau, housing support service, energy advice service, befriending service or a specialist service such as a Carer's Centre.

This leaflet provides general information about the Scottish Welfare Fund. If you need more detailed information call the Age Scotland Helpline on **0800 12 44 222**.



Crisis Grants

In an emergency or a disaster, a Crisis Grant can provide a safety net if there is an immediate threat to health or safety. It can cover immediate short-term living expenses, or items where the need for them has arisen because of a disaster.

An **emergency** is an ‘unforeseen circumstance of pressing need which requires immediate action’ such as losing money, having money stolen, having had to leave home suddenly or being stranded away from home.

A **disaster** is ‘an event of great or sudden misfortune, usually causing damage to, destruction of or loss of possessions or property’ such as a fire or flood.

A decision about a Crisis Grant application should be made immediately once your council has all the information it needs, and at the latest by the end of the second working day after the application. You cannot apply for a Crisis Grant if you have applied for payment for the same thing within 28 days unless your circumstances have changed.

You cannot normally receive more than three crisis grants in a 12 month period. You may be able to receive more grants if you have a partner or at the discretion of your local council.



Community Care Grants

A Community Care Grant can be made to enable independent living or continued independent living. It is intended to prevent the need for institutional care, such as a care home, hospital, or sheltered accommodation with intensive support. It aims to help you retain or establish a settled way of life in the community and to reduce the likelihood that you will not be able to live independently.

A Community Care Grant may also help families facing exceptional pressure. It can also assist you if you are a carer, where the council agrees that an award will support the person you care for to live in the community rather than needing residential care.

Grants can provide help with things like furniture, household equipment, travel costs, removal expenses, and installation charges for cookers and washing machines.

A decision about a Community Care Grant application should be made within 15 working days of receiving your application. You cannot apply for a Community Care Grant if you have applied for payment for the same thing within 28 days unless your circumstances have changed. There is no limit on the number of community care grants you can receive.





How to apply to the Scottish Welfare Fund

You need to apply to the council where you live, or where you plan to live if you are moving to a new area.

The way you can apply for help will vary between local councils, but they take applications in a number of ways including online, by phone and face-to-face and paper application forms.

You can apply yourself, or someone else can apply on your behalf if you give your permission for them to do this.

If you need help to make your claim, you could ask an independent advice agency such as a Citizens Advice Bureau to help you.

In your application, you will need to give the council the information they need to decide your claim, including:

- Yourself and the people who live with you.
- Your income and your partner's income.
- Whether you have savings and can access them; you cannot get a Community Care Grant if you have more in savings than £700 if you are below pension age or £1200 if you are over pension age.
- Whether you are applying for a Crisis or Community Care Grant.
- Why you need an award, what you need, and what will happen if you don't get one.
- If you have had an award before.
- What particular circumstances may make you vulnerable, including health problems and problems caused by your age.
- Any evidence which supports your need for a grant. The council can also ask you, or others such as your doctor or the Department for Work and Pensions, for further information if it needs to.
- Whether you are waiting for a decision about, or payment of, another benefit.

Your application will be given high, medium or low priority. This will depend on the ‘nature, extent, severity and urgency’ of your need, how vulnerable you are, and what is likely to happen if payment is refused.

The council will decide each month the extent to which its budget allows it to meet high, medium or low priority applications. It is likely that sometimes only high priority needs will be met.

Grants can be awarded in cash, goods or cash equivalents such as travel vouchers, high street vouchers or fuel cards.

The council may notify you of their decision by phone, text or email. It should also confirm it in writing. If you need to be told about the decision by another method because of sensory or cognitive impairment, it is important that you inform the council. It should communicate its decision in way that meets your needs.

The decision should make clear:

- Whether the award is a Crisis Grant or a Community Care Grant.
- The date of your application.
- The result of the application, and its priority level.
- The date of the decision.
- Why the decision was made.
- If you have been successful what has been awarded.
- Other possible sources of help.
- How you can ask for a review if you disagree with the decision.



Asking for a first tier review if you disagree with the decision

If you disagree with the council's decision you can ask for it to be looked at again, this is called a first tier review. You must ask for a review in writing, normally within 20 working days of the decision. You need to explain why you think the decision is wrong and whether something has changed since you applied. You, or someone you have agreed can act on your behalf, must sign the application.

If you need help to apply for a review, you could ask an independent advice agency such as a Citizens Advice Bureau to help you.

The decision will be looked at again by someone who was not involved in making the original decision.

A Crisis Grant Review must be carried out within two working days.

A Community Care Grant Review must be carried out within 15 working days.

You may be told of the decision by phone, but this will be followed up with a letter which will explain the review decision.

If you are not happy with the way the council has treated you, rather than the decision you have been given, you could use the council's complaints procedure.

Asking for an independent review

If you are not happy with the outcome of a first tier review you can ask for an independent review. This must be within 20 working days of the first tier review decision letter.

The independent review will be carried out by the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman. You can find out more about the process by calling the Ombudsman on **0800 014 7299** or by visiting their website **www.spsso.org.uk**



Who can help?

Age Scotland Helpline 0800 12 44 222

The Age Scotland helpline provides information, friendship and advice to older people, their relatives and carers.

If you need an interpreter call **0800 12 44 222** and simply state the language you need e.g. Polish or Urdu. Stay on the line for a few minutes and the Age Scotland helpline will do the rest.

You can call us on **0800 12 44 222** for a copy of our publications list or download copies from our website at **www.agescotland.org.uk**.

Citizens Advice Bureau

You can find contact details for your local CAB in your local phone book or by calling Citizens Advice Direct on **0808 800 9060**.

The Scottish Government

The Scottish Government has detailed information about the Scottish Welfare fund available at **www.gov.scot**

Disclaimer

While we aim to ensure that the information in this document is factually correct at the time of production, Age Scotland cannot be held liable for any errors or omissions. Please ensure that you have an up to date factsheet and that it clearly applies to your situation.

No leaflet can ever be a complete guide to the law, which also changes from time to time. Legal advice should always be taken if you are in doubt.

Please note that the inclusion of named agencies, companies, products, services or publications in this factsheet does not constitute a recommendation or endorsement by Age Scotland.



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www.agescotland.org.uk

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