



Scottish Welfare Fund

Community Care Grants and Crisis Grants

Are you faced with a crisis and require financial assistance for essential living expenses or items?



What is the Scottish Welfare Fund?

From 1 April 2013, changes to the Social Fund meant that Crisis Loans and Community Care Grants, paid by the Department for Work and Pensions, stopped. In their place is a new scheme called the Scottish Welfare Fund. It is delivered by local Councils and provides two types of grant – Community Care Grants and Crisis Grants.

Community Care Grants – These are available to enable or support independent living, preventing the need for institutional care. They can also help someone set up home after an unsettled way of life such as homelessness, help families under exceptional pressures and help care for a prisoner or young offender on release. Applications can be made for essential items such as furniture, household equipment, travel costs, removal expenses, storage charges or connection charges for gas and electricity. Community Care Grants have been paid by Aberdeenshire Council since 01 April 2013. They do not have to be repaid.

Crisis Grants – These are available in a crisis to meet expenses that have arisen as a result of an emergency or disaster, in order to avoid an immediate threat to health or safety. Applications can be made for essential items such as food, heating costs, nappies, toiletries, travel and temporary accommodation costs. Crisis Grants have been paid by Aberdeenshire Council since 01 April 2013. They do not have to be repaid.



Who can claim Community Care Grants and Crisis Grants?

You should be aged 16 or over, be resident in Aberdeenshire and normally be entitled to or in receipt of one of the following benefits:

- Income Support
- Income based Jobseeker's Allowance
- Income related Employment and Support Allowance
- Pension Credit
- Payment on account of one of the above

An exception to this would be if you are leaving care/prison soon and are likely to get one of the above benefits when you move into your new home. Another exception would be if you do not have any other means of support.

A Community Care Grant may not be awarded if you or your partner are below pension age and have savings over £700, or £1,200 if you are above pension age.

A Crisis Grant may not be awarded if you can access other resources to tide you over the crisis.



How do I claim for a Community Care Grant or Crisis Grant?

Completing our online claim form is the quickest and easiest way to claim. Go to our website: www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/benefits, select Scottish Welfare Fund and the link to the form

A claim can also be made in any of the following ways:

- Face to face in any of the 5 benefit offices or to a Welfare Fund Officer in Inverurie and Peterhead
- By downloading a form from the Aberdeenshire Council website www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/benefits/welfare/Scottish_Welfare_Fund_Application_Form.pdf and returning it to:
Aberdeenshire Council, PO Box 18533, Inverurie AB51 5WA or scanning and sending by e-mail to benefits@aberdeenshire.gov.uk
- Calling 08456 080149 to request an application form

It is important that you provide as much information as possible when applying for a Community Care Grant and/or Crisis Grant, in order that the correct award is calculated first time.

How much help might I get and when?

Each application is carefully considered on its individual merits, taking into account personal circumstances and the level of need for the items/service. There is no minimum or maximum award, but each item/service requested will be prioritised as high, medium or low. Aberdeenshire Council review which priority levels they are paying out each month. Information on the current priority levels used to award Crisis Grants and Community Care Grants is available on the Council's website.

Crisis Grants should be paid within 2 working days and Community Care Grants should be paid within 15 working days of receipt of the application form.



If I qualify for a Community Care Grant or Crisis Grant, how will it be paid?

The method of payment will depend on whether you are entitled to a grant for living expenses or household goods.

When an award is made for living expenses, you will receive a cash or energy voucher containing a code by:

- Text message or
- E-mail or
- Collecting it from your Local Council Office

You should take your voucher to your nearest PayPoint to be cashed or have your energy account credited. PayPoints are available in most towns at local shops and garages.

When a Community Care Grant award is made, goods rather than cash vouchers will be provided where appropriate.

Will I receive a letter advising me if my claim has been successful or not?

If you qualify you will receive a letter informing you how much you have been awarded and which items/services it covers or which goods will be delivered to you.

If you do not qualify, we will write and tell you the reason for our decision.

We will also provide details of additional help and support you can get from other services and how to request a review on any decision we make.



What should I do if I disagree with the decision?

There is no right of appeal to a social security tribunal against a Scottish Welfare Fund decision. However, you can ask Aberdeenshire Council to review their decision. There are 3 stages in the review process:

- **First Tier Review** – this must be made in writing within 20 working days from the date of your decision. It should include the reason you disagree with the decision.
- **Second Tier Review** – if you are still unhappy with the decision after a first tier review, you can write and request a second tier review.
- If you are unhappy with the level of service, you can complain to the Local Authority through their complaints procedure or to the Ombudsman.

How many Community Care Grants and Crisis Grants can I be awarded?

Community Care Grants – You cannot reapply if you have had, or been refused, an award within the last 28 days for the same item or service, unless there has been a relevant change in circumstances.

Crisis Grants – You cannot reapply if you have had, or been refused, an award within the last 28 days for the same item or service, unless there has been a relevant change in circumstances. You can only receive 3 Crisis Grants over any rolling 12 month period across all Local Authorities in Scotland.



If you need more help or information

Phone 08456 080149

E-mail benefits@aberdeenshire.gov.uk

Letter Aberdeenshire Council
Benefit Section
PO Box 18533
Inverurie
AB51 5WX

Web www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/benefits



