

## **Help in Emergencies for Local People (HELP)**

<https://www.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk/residents/housing-benefit-council-tax/help.aspx>

The HELP scheme is a discretionary scheme offering local welfare assistance including:

- support for exceptional needs
- limited payments for emergency funding in a crisis or;
- to help people moving out of care

Any awards which are made are conditional. With you accepting any support from us that we consider you need. All awards are subject to a means test, which means we will look at your income and expenditure. This includes income that is available to you, including income we usually ignore when looking at your claim for Housing Benefit and/or Council Tax Reduction.

Funding will be made on a one off basis and will be restricted to one award in any 12 month period. Normally awards will be restricted to provide help with food vouchers or recycled goods.

### **Who can apply?**

- you are a resident in the Cheshire West and Chester area.
- you are be leaving care or be experiencing an emergency which you need help with.
- you agree to accept any support which is offered.
- you will normally be in receipt of housing related financial support, for example Housing Benefit or Universal Credit
- You are also classed as vulnerable.

We define 'vulnerable' for the purposes of the scheme as a person who is:

- physically and/or mentally impaired and in receipt of the severe or enhanced disability premiums
- in receipt of the middle or high rate of Disability Living Allowance (either Care or Mobility component) or the enhanced rate of Personal Independence Payments (either Daily Living or Mobility component)
- has a mental impairment exemption for Council Tax
- the qualifying age for State Pension Credit
- terminally ill

- individuals who have a dependent child living with them on a permanent basis, and the carer of that child qualifies for child benefit
- young people aged 16 to 18
- people who are leaving care or any other type of supported provision

In addition, prisoners on discharge from prison will also be entitled to help in setting up home only providing they meet the other criteria and accept the support which is offered.

We may also might decided that an applicant is classed as vulnerable due to their individual circumstances, but will only do so in rare and exceptional cases.

### Apply

- Telephone: 0300 123 7065 (Monday - Friday, 9am - 5pm) to request a paper form.

Unfortunately you are unable to apply in one of our offices as our customer service staff aren't trained in the scheme. When you make a claim you will need to let us have a telephone number so we can speak to you urgently to discuss your application.

If you are having any problems please email: [help@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk](mailto:help@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk) or call the above number.

### **Evidence needed**

You may be asked for more information to help us to decide if an award can be made.

The request can be made before we complete your application or proof of anything you have bought may be requested after any payment is made.

Unless proof is already held by us the following will be required:

- National Insurance number
- photograph of you
- Identity, benefits, other income and capital (bank statements)
- proof of where you live
- proof of the emergency/crisis
- proof of your outgoings
- any other evidence that we may ask for

### **What happens next?**

We will contact you as soon as we can with the outcome of your application. This will be done by text message, email, telephone or letter, whichever is the fastest and most appropriate in these circumstances.

### **What you can do if you don't agree with our decision**

The scheme is discretionary and there is no law giving the right to appeal. You may request a review if you disagree.

You can't appeal if it has been refused because:

- the Help budget is used up. Funds are monitored and requests will be declined if the monthly limit is reached.
- you have applied within the previous 12 months and have been awarded a payment by us or another council
- you do not fall into a vulnerable group
- you fail to accept the support which is being offered to you.

The request will be reviewed by a more senior officer who will tell you the outcome of the review in writing, usually within one calendar month of the request being received.

The decision is final and binding although any complaints regarding the way the application process has been dealt with should be made in writing to the corporate complaints team.