

# Discretionary Grants Team



## Completing our application form for assistance

We can only accept applications for assistance which are made using the application form either downloaded or online at [www.solihull.gov.uk/localwelfareprovision](http://www.solihull.gov.uk/localwelfareprovision)

### 1. About the Discretionary Grants Team

The Discretionary Grants Team provides advice, guidance and grant support to residents who experience unforeseen crisis events, exceptional financial hardship or require help to live safe and independent in the community. We can assist you to access specialist support on benefits, debt, housing and employment matters.

### 2. What can I apply for?

The Discretionary Grant Application form provides the opportunity to apply for two grants:

- **Community Care Grants** - are intended to help vulnerable people live safe and independent lives so as to remain and become a part of their community. This includes assistance to set up a new home following an unsettled way of life, help to ease exceptional pressures or help to stay in the community rather than enter care. No cash awards are made. Please carefully read our eligibility criteria in the application form.
- **Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP)** - are payments to help claimants of Housing Benefit (HB) with their housing costs. DHP is a short term award to support claimants that experience exceptional financial hardship. Support can include, for example, help to meet the shortfall between rent and housing benefit, rent deposits or removals in order to move to affordable accommodation. DHP cannot be used to pay for service charges, water rates, heating, lighting, meals, support services and overpayments.

### 3. Completing the application form

Before completing an application form please read the policy available to see if you are eligible for assistance and exclusions do not apply.

Please look at the evidence checklist at the start of the application. You must provide evidence that relates to your circumstances. Solihull Council reserves the right to reject applications which have failed to provide sufficient information from this checklist.

A summary of the information we require from each part of the application is outlined below:

- **Part one** requires information about your household (e.g. who lives there)
- **Part two** ask you about your household finances, debts, arrears, income and savings and your current benefit entitlements. This section **MUST** be completed in full providing supporting information to allow the team to complete a financial statement. Please provide proof of income and bank statements dated within the last two months for ALL accounts held. If you do not have a bank account you will be asked to complete an income and expenditure statement that can be verified by a money advisor. Proof of debts is required as the team may be able to refer you into appropriate support.
- **Part three** is requesting information about your need and the type of assistance you require. This section asks you to indicate whether you're applying for a community care award or a Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP), or both. The purpose of these grants is explained in part 3 (a).

Priority will be given to people that have characteristics as shown in appendix D of the application form. Please specify the items / support you require, including any help you have received from other agencies or charities. It's important you detail any actions you have taken to help ease or improve your circumstances. Omission of any detail here may result in an application being refused on the grounds of insufficient information.

A supporting letter from a professional or advocacy service will help to verify your circumstances. If item(s) are requested on the basis of a medical need, we will require supporting documentation e.g. GP note, hospital letter, letter from health or social care professional. Any medical needs must be linked appropriately to each item to demonstrate how these items will ease exceptional pressures.

- **Part four** asks for the details of the support worker assisting you with the application, it **MUST** be completed by the person representing you and signed. Failure to provide this information will result in a delay in your application. Please confirm that we can make contact with your support worker.
- **Part five** allows you the opportunity to provide references of appropriate people that can act as a reference to support your application. This must not be a family member or friend. If you do not have a suitable person please indicate why, please provide their contact number as not providing this information will delay your application.
- **Part six** if you fail to complete and sign the declaration your application will be refused and a letter will be sent to you advising you of this. Failure to complete this will result in you having to re-apply.
- **Part seven and eight** supports Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council in monitoring our commitment to Equal Opportunities within our Equal Opportunities Policy. Solihull MBC aims to promote fairness and equality of access to all in respect of service provision.
- **Appendices** - applicants must refer to appendices (found at the end of the application form). Applications will be refused where all items are ineligible. Ineligible items will not be assessed for support and will be refused. Appendix B details what items and services are excluded if you are applying for DHP. Appendix C – indicates list of people who are given priority under discretionary grant schemes.

#### 4. Help to complete the application form

If you have a disability and require assistance in completing the form, we can arrange for a home visit to be undertaken or a referral will be made to an organisation that will help you to gather the information required for your application. A list of organisations that can help you apply can be found at end of this factsheet.

#### 5. Decision making process

A decision on your application is made within 14 working days upon receipt of your application. If you fail to provide a bank statement (backdated 2 months) and supporting evidence of your need, we will request this information in writing. If this information is not supplied within 7 working days following the request, the application will be closed.

We will only consider making an award where the applicant has met the criteria. No cash awards are made. A decision maker will take account of:

- If you're moving into a new tenancy, we will look at available monies which could have been used to budget for items whilst you're residing at home or in temporary accommodation.
- We will not fund planned house moves that are not due to exceptional pressures or an unsettled way of life.
- Backdated payments of benefit that could be used to pay for basic items
- Available monies and resources of all household members, including bank transfers received and paid to family and friends.

- Cash withdrawals and any transactions that cannot be linked to priority expenditure (e.g. water, food, gas, and electricity) will be taken as non-priority expenditure that could be used to budget for the items required.
- Proof of all priority debts will be required.
- Equity from the sale of a house will be considered. All non-priority debt repayments from the sale of a property or equity received will be disregarded and treated as monies available to pay for the items required.
- We will not replace items that are due to fair wear and tear, which could have been replaced if budgeted.
- We will exclude non-priority debts (e.g. credit cards, hire purchase agreements, money borrowed from family and friends and catalogue debt) from our financial assessment. Applicants are advised to seek help with all debts (see sources of help at the end of the factsheet). Non-priority debts can be re-negotiated and the consequences of non-repayment are less severe than priority debts (which in some cases may result in prison). You may have to return items on a hire purchase agreement if you cannot afford to make repayments.
- Awards for carpets will only be considered where there is a more than likely risk of the applicant falling and causing serious injury due to a chronic health condition. We will require you to provide supporting evidence from social or health care professionals.
- Carpeting for children will only be considered if they are at risk of becoming a child in need (as defined by the Children Act 1989) and a social worker or any similar professional states this item is essential part of safeguarding their welfare (e.g. if cited in a children in need or child protection plan).
- How household members have coped without the items required.

**6. Awards we will consider** - Applicants will be considered for three award categories, only:

- **A starter pack** that may include a microwave, under counter fridge, toaster, kettle and single bed & mattress. This pack is considered for people who have no dependant children, have the ability to maximise their income through work (includes applicants in a work related activity benefit group) or can budget for additional basic items over time e.g. white goods.
- **A resettlement pack** that may include a cooker, fridge, washing machine, single bed & mattress. This pack is eligible for applicants with complex community care needs and medical conditions that require specific care needs, limited excess income, no capacity to maximise their income and impeded mobility that prevents access to community facilities (e.g. laundrettes). Applicants will be expected to budget for smaller items given the value of this award.
- **Discretionary Housing Award** – short term financial assistance to meet the shortfall between weekly housing benefit and rent, rent deposits, rent in advance and removal costs (this service will be arranged by SMBC only).

Solihull Council reserves the right to decide which award pack is appropriate owing to the discretionary nature of the grants scheme.

**Additional items** - carpets and sofa's will only be considered in exceptional circumstances. Please see 'LWP item Criteria for additional items' (at the end of this factsheet) to understand what evidence we require for specific items.

## 7. Appeal

An applicant (or their appointee or agent) who disagrees with a decision can request a right to seek a review if they can demonstrate:

- A decision was made on a factual error that was through no fault of the applicant; An oversight on a significant piece of evidence.
- New evidence has come to light which was not provided within the original application. Such evidence should be timely and restricted to the events stated in the original application.
- In either circumstance, the applicant must provide the relevant details and it is at the discretion of the Council as to whether a review will take place.

All review requests must be made in writing to for the attention of Jason Ward: Income and Awards, Solihull Council, P.O. Box 1761, Council House, Solihull B91 9RR within 14 days of the decision being issued or emailed to [localwelfareprovision@solihull.gov.uk](mailto:localwelfareprovision@solihull.gov.uk)

The Council, in conjunction with an independent appeals officer / panel, will conduct a full review of the decision. A decision will be made within 14 working days of the appeal being submitted. The outcome of the appeal will be notified in writing to the applicant and / or the person submitting the appeal. Important to note: the purpose of the appeals process is to analyse how a decision was made so as to ensure objectivity. It is not a process for overturning decisions - this remains at the Councils discretion.

## 8. Help to apply

The following agencies can help you make an application to the Discretionary Grant Scheme:

Organisation	Specialim	Who they can support
Age UK  0121 709 3058 <a href="mailto:benefits@ageuksolihull.org.uk">benefits@ageuksolihull.org.uk</a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support claiming benefits</li> <li>• Attendance Allowance</li> <li>• Disability Living Allowance</li> <li>• Personal Independence Payments</li> <li>• Pension Credit</li> <li>• Financial Crisis</li> </ul>	Over 50yrs
DIAL  0121 770 0333 <a href="mailto:manager@dialsolihull.org.uk">manager@dialsolihull.org.uk</a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support Claiming Disability Benefits</li> <li>• Appeals for DLA, ESA &amp; PIP</li> <li>• Complex Disability issues</li> <li>• Financial Crisis</li> </ul>	Under 50yrs
Citizens Advice Solihull Borough  0121 703 0945 <a href="http://www.casb.org.uk">www.casb.org.uk</a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Debt renegotiation</li> <li>• General benefits</li> <li>• Advice and support</li> </ul>	Multiple Financial Issues
Income & Awards  0121 704 8100 <a href="http://www.solihull.gov.uk/localwelfareprovision">www.solihull.gov.uk/localwelfareprovision</a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discretionary Grants</li> <li>• Welfare Reform Advice</li> <li>• New Housing Benefit Claims</li> <li>• Notify change of circumstances</li> <li>• Problems paying council tax</li> </ul>	Housing Benefit Council Tax

<p>Employed for Success</p> <p>0121 704 8076</p> <p><a href="mailto:employmentteam@solihull.gov.uk">employmentteam@solihull.gov.uk</a></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Help to access local jobs and training</li> <li>• Advice and guidance on routes into work</li> <li>• Work clubs</li> </ul>	<p>Looking for Employment</p>
<p>Solihull Community Housing</p> <p>Money Advice</p> <p><a href="mailto:housingmoneyadvice@solihullcommunityhousing.org.uk">housingmoneyadvice@solihullcommunityhousing.org.uk</a></p> <p>0121 717 1515</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rent Arrears</li> <li>• Problems paying rent</li> <li>• Debt problems</li> <li>• Debt problems</li> <li>• Mortgage Rescue</li> <li>• Welfare benefit work</li> </ul>	<p>Council Tenants</p> <p>Homeless</p>
<p>Housing Associations</p> <p>Bromford – 704 9936</p> <p>Sanctuary – 0800 131 3348</p> <p>Waterloo – 355 4651</p> <p>Optima – 687 3111</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rent arrears</li> <li>• Problems paying</li> <li>• Property too big</li> </ul>	<p>Housing Association</p> <p>Tenants</p>

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## 9. LWP Item Criteria for additional items

Item	Criteria	Evidence
Cooker	Medical conditions that require strict nutritional intake as a result of a severe medical condition, for example, to control glycaemic levels, heart and kidney diseases or moderate the side effects of medication.	A medical note  Reference to a medical note in a statutory assessment form
	To care for the well-being of young children, particularly under the age of 5, where they are subject to a Child Protection Plan, or where there are child safeguarding issues.	Supporting letter from a social, welfare or health care professional
Washing Machine	The applicant's mobility is restricted or impeded by a chronic health condition and cannot use a laundrette or any other washing facilities. (For the foreseeable future)	A medical note  Reference to a medical note in a statutory assessment form
	The applicant needs to maintain strict personal hygiene due to a risk of infection or disease. (For the foreseeable future)	
	To care for the well-being of young children, particularly under the age of 5yrs, where they are subject to a Child Protection Plan, or where there are child safeguarding issues. .	Supporting letter from a social, welfare or health care professional
Carpets  Restricted to 3 rooms.	Risk of falls and injuries due to a medical condition e.g. hypomobility, epileptic seizures, cerebral palsy, Parkinson disease, severe side effects of medication etc.	A medical note  Reference to a medical note in a statutory assessment form
	The floor poses a health & safety risk e.g. risk of injury, which cannot be resolved, by simple maintenance or repair to the current floor	Confirmation of a visit & supporting letter outlining the specific hazards / risks
	To care for the well-being of children under the age of 5, where they are subject to a Child Protection Plan, or where there are child safeguarding issues.	Supporting letter from a social, welfare or health care professional
Sofas	To help deliver, at home, medical interventions, therapies, regular one to one support to maintain a tenancy as part of a long term structured resettlement plan  General floating support is EXCLUDED.	A medical note  Letter of support from an approved social care / health professional.
	To care for the well-being of children, particularly under the age of 5, where they are subject to a Child Protection Plan, or where there are child safeguarding issues.	Supporting letter from a social, welfare or health care professional