

Back on Track

Welfare Assistance Support in Stockton Borough



Support available from Back on Track

Welfare Reform Act 2012

The Welfare Reform Act 2012 abolished the discretionary elements of the Department of Work & Pensions (DWP) Social Fund (Crisis Loans for items and Daily Living Expenses and Community Care Grants)

Local Authorities were requested to design local provision. Stockton Borough Council responded to this challenge by advertising the commissioning opportunity to run the pilot scheme from 1 April 2013 to the end of March 2014.

Following a tendering process Five Lamps were awarded the contract to deliver the pilot scheme, called Back on Track on behalf of the Council.

Back on Track is designed to help the most vulnerable in meeting their immediate short-term needs or maintaining their independence in the community. To qualify for support applicants must:

- ✓ Live in the borough of Stockton- on- Tees (or be moving into Stockton Borough as part of a planned resettlement programme)
- ✓ Have no other forms of immediate financial assistance (such as family or friends)
- ✓ Be aged over 16 years or over
- ✓ Be able to provide evidence of identification and need

There are 2 forms of support provided by the Back on Track scheme:

Crisis Support for Daily Living Expenses

To prevent an immediate deterioration to an applicant's health by providing short-term access to:

- ✓ Food
- ✓ Gas and electricity supply
- ✓ Limited supplies of clothing
- ✓ Baby consumables (nappies and milk)

Crisis Support for Daily Living Expenses will help applicants with their short-term requirements, however it will not resolve a crisis altogether.

Settlement Support

To help applicants remain in the community or move back into the community after a period in supported or unsettled accommodation. It does this by providing access to a range of standard items such as:

- ✓ Beds
- ✓ Bedding
- ✓ Furniture
- ✓ White goods

Settlement Support will help the applicant with their longer-term requirements to either remain in or resettle within the community

Support available from DWP

Short Term Benefit Advance

If an applicant has made a new claim to benefit or has experienced an exceptional change in circumstance and there is a delay to their benefit payment and they have no money they can apply for a short term benefit advance.

How to apply: contact DWP on 0845 608 8637 and select the option for the benefit the applicant is waiting for.

Budgeting Loan/ Advance

If an applicant has been in receipt of income-related benefit for 26 weeks or more and they require help to buy essential items they can apply for a budgeting loan or advance.

How to apply: contact DWP on 0845 603 6967 or apply online at www.gov.uk/budgeting-loan

Back on Track: qualifying criteria

Crisis Support for Daily Living Expenses

There are 2 stages to the assessment of crisis support:

- ✓ An assessment of need
- ✓ A financial assessment

To qualify for crisis support, the applicant must meet either of the following 2 conditions:

1) Exceptional Event

An immediate need for items or services has arisen following an exceptional event or unforeseen circumstances involving the destruction or loss of property or possessions (eg. the applicant has suffered a disaster to their home such as major flooding, gas explosion or house fire, where serious damage has been caused to the home or the home is now uninhabitable)

2) Health Need

As a direct result of the inability to afford the goods or services requested either the health of the applicant or their partner will immediately deteriorate. The applicant or their partner who lives with them must also meet at least one of the following:

- ✓ They have a serious physical health problem, which they are receiving treatment for.
- ✓ They have a dependent child who normally lives with them and that child's health would be at immediate risk.
- ✓ They are homeless, or at risk of homelessness.
- ✓ They have a substance or alcohol misuse problem, which they are receiving treatment or support for.
- ✓ They are on probation or receiving support relating to their offending history.
- ✓ They are affected by, or at risk of domestic abuse, hate crime, honour based violence or forced marriage.
- ✓ They have a learning disability.
- ✓ They have a physical or sensory impairment.
- ✓ They have a mental health problem, which they are receiving treatment or support for.
- ✓ They are 50 years or over, with support needs
- ✓ They are pregnant

Forms of support will include:

- ✓ Food (Asda pre-paid card)
- ✓ Clothing (Love to Shop pre-paid card)
- ✓ Key consumables for babies (Asda pre-paid card)
- ✓ Heating (direct payment to supplier)
- ✓ Travel to hospital (direct payment to supplier)
- ✓ Travel to emergency accommodation (direct payment to supplier)

In most cases support will only be provided to cover needs that will usually last no longer than 7 days, but in some instance support will be provided for a longer duration.

Applicants will receive a maximum of two awards in any one financial year. The applicant will not be able to receive support with a value exceeding £1,500 in any financial year. Support will not include:

- ✗ Cash payments (except in very exceptional circumstances)
- ✗ Payments into individual's bank accounts

Settlement Support

There are 2 stages to the assessment of settlement support:

- ✓ An assessment of need
- ✓ A financial assessment

To qualify for settlement support, the applicant must meet **all** of the following 4 conditions:

1) Address

The applicant must be a resident of or be in the process of moving into a property within the borough of Stockton on Tees Local Authority area

2) Settlement

The applicant requires support for at least one of the following:

- ✓ Support to move back into the community after a stay in supported or temporary accommodation or following an unsettled way of life (but only where they will be setting up home in the community as part of a planned resettlement programme)
- ✓ Support to move out of inappropriate accommodation
- ✓ Support to stay in the home and prevent a move into residential care or hospital
- ✓ Support to prevent a serious deterioration of health within the home
- ✓ Support with costs to ease exceptional pressures for a customer and their family (eg a breakdown of relationships within the family and including domestic violence, honour based violence or forced marriage)

3) Benefit Entitlement

Be in receipt of:

- ✓ Income Support
- ✓ Income or Contribution Based Job Seekers Allowance
- ✓ Income related Employment Support Allowance
- ✓ Any type of Pension Credit
- ✓ Or the applicant is leaving accommodation in which they receive significant and substantial care and supervision and expect to be discharged within 6 weeks and be expected to receive one of the benefits above

The qualifying benefit or assessment may change with the introduction of Universal Credit).

4) Health Need

As a direct result of the inability to afford the goods or services requested either the health of the applicant or their partner will immediately deteriorate. The applicant or their partner who lives with them must also meet at least one of the following:

- ✓ They have a serious physical health problem, which they are receiving treatment for.
- ✓ They have a dependent child who normally lives with them and that child's health would be at immediate risk.
- ✓ They are homeless, or at risk of homelessness.
- ✓ They have a substance or alcohol misuse problem, which they are receiving treatment or support for.
- ✓ They are on probation or receiving support relating to their offending history.
- ✓ They are affected by, or at risk of domestic abuse, hate crime, honour based violence or forced marriage.
- ✓ They have a learning disability.
- ✓ They have a physical or sensory impairment.
- ✓ They have a mental health problem, which they are receiving treatment or support for.

Settlement Support (continued)

- ✓ They have a substance or alcohol misuse problem, which they are receiving treatment or support for.
- ✓ They are on probation or receiving support relating to their offending history.
- ✓ They are affected by, or at risk of domestic abuse, hate crime, honour based violence or forced marriage.
- ✓ They have a learning disability.
- ✓ They have a physical or sensory impairment.
- ✓ They have a mental health problem, which they are receiving treatment or support for.
- ✓ They are 50 years or over, with support needs
- ✓ They are pregnant

Forms of support will include:

- ✓ Beds (Goods delivered by Smarterbuys or FRADE)
- ✓ Bedding (Asda pre-paid card)
- ✓ Chairs/ Sofas (Goods delivered by Smarterbuys or FRADE)
- ✓ Tables (Goods delivered by Smarterbuys or FRADE)
- ✓ Wardrobes (Goods delivered by Smarterbuys or FRADE)
- ✓ White Goods (Goods delivered by Smarterbuys or FRADE)
- ✓ Pans, utensils, crockery/ cutlery (Asda pre-paid card)
- ✓ Travel to hospital, funeral or prison visits (direct payment to supplier)
- ✓ Storage or removal costs/ rent in advance (in exceptional circumstances and where there is a settlement plan in place and a referral from Stockton Council's Housing Options Team or similar provider)

Applicants will receive a maximum of two awards in any one financial year. The applicant will not be able to receive support with a value exceeding £1,500 in any financial year. Support will not include:

- ✗ Cash payments (except in very exceptional circumstances)
- ✗ Payments into individual's bank accounts

Back on Track: how to make an application

Applications can be made direct by the applicant, their appointee, their carer, their advocate or by referral from a third party organisation. Applications can be made by:

Telephone on 0300 111 0557

Lines are open Monday – Thursday, 08:30 – 17:00 and 08:30 – 16:30 Fridays

Online at www.fivelamps.org.uk/finance/back-on-track

Online applications are only assessed during the office hours listed above

Appointment

In exceptional circumstances, appointments can be made to complete a face-to-face application by ringing 0300 111

0557

Back on Track: assessment process

Applicants will be assessed by a Welfare Assistance Assessor who will:

- ✓ Assess if the applicant meets the qualifying conditions for support
- ✓ Confirm with the applicant (or the person making the application on the applicants' behalf) any evidence that they will need in advance of making a decision
- ✓ Provide the applicant with financial inclusion advice or signpost them to another relevant organisation for additional support

Crisis Support for Daily Living Expenses

If the application is successful:

- ✓ Applicants will be informed verbally that their application was successful
- ✓ If the decision on the application is made before 1pm, the daily living expenses award will be distributed to the applicant the same day
- ✓ If the decision is made after 1pm, the daily living expenses award will be distributed to the applicant the next working day
- ✓ Applicants will also be sent a letter within 24 hours explaining the award decision and the decision review process

If the application is unsuccessful:

- ✓ Applicants will be informed verbally that their application was unsuccessful
- ✓ Applicants will also be sent a letter within 24 hours explaining the award decision and the decision review process

Settlement Support

If the application is successful:

- ✓ Applicants will be informed verbally within 5 working days that their application was successful
- ✓ Awards will be provided in line with the applicants needs but usually not within 48 hours of the award decision
- ✓ Applicants will also be sent a letter within 10 working days explaining the award decision and the decision review process

If the application is unsuccessful:

- ✓ Applicants will be informed verbally within 5 working days that their application was unsuccessful
- ✓ Applicants will also be sent a letter within 10 working days explaining the award decision and the decision review process

The operation of Back on Track is at the Council's discretion

Support may take the form of a loan or a grant (or a combination of the two depending upon an assessment of need and the applicants' financial circumstances. Support will be through goods or services; only in very exceptional circumstances would cash be given

People do not have a statutory right to support. The total amount available for loans and/or grants in any financial year is limited.

Please note that even if an applicant meets the qualifying criteria, an award will not always be given. Consideration will also be given to the balance available in the budget

Support will not be awarded for the following items or services:

- ✘ A need which occurs outside Stockton- on-Tees Borough Council area (unless the need is for a person who is in the process of moving into Stockton Borough and that item or service will assist them in their move)
- ✘ An educational or training need including clothing and tools
- ✘ Distinctive school uniform or sports clothes for use at school or equipment to be used at school
- ✘ Travelling expenses to or from school
- ✘ School meals taken during school holidays by children who are entitled to free school meals
- ✘ Expenses in connection with court (legal) proceedings such as legal fees, court fees, fines, costs, damages, subsistence or travelling expenses (other than emergency travelling expenses when stranded away from home)
- ✘ Removal or storage charges if the applicant is being re-housed following a compulsory purchase order, a redevelopment or closing order, a compulsory exchange of tenancies, or under a housing authority's statutory duty to the homeless
- ✘ Domestic assistance and respite care
- ✘ A medical, surgical, optical, aural or dental item or service
- ✘ Some work related expenses
- ✘ Debts to Government departments or Local Authorities
- ✘ Investments
- ✘ Purchase, installation, rental and call charges for a telephone
- ✘ Mobility needs
- ✘ Holidays
- ✘ A television or a radio, or a licence, aerial or rental charges for a television or a radio
- ✘ Garaging, parking, purchase, and running costs of any motor vehicle, except where the payment is being considered for emergency travel expenses
- ✘ Housing costs (other than minor repairs and improvements and housing advance payments)
- ✘ Council Tax or Council Tax arrears

The following people cannot be supported by the Back on Track Support Fund

- ✘ People who normally reside outside of Stockton- on- Tees Borough, unless the need is for a person who is in the process of moving into Stockton Borough
- ✘ People who are deemed by a specialist provider to have no local connection to Stockton Borough
- ✘ Care home residents and hospital in-patients, unless the need is for a person who will be discharged as part of a resettlement plan
- ✘ Persons who are members of and fully maintained by a religious order
- ✘ People in full-time education unless they are entitled to: Income Support; Income based Jobseeker's Allowance; Income related Employment and Support Allowance; Pension Credit
- ✘ Prisoners who are in prison or released on temporary licence
- ✘ A person who is, or would be, treated as a person from abroad for the purpose of Income Support, income based Jobseeker's Allowance, income related Employment and Support Allowance and Pension Credit, and has no entitlement to those benefits, including: Foreign nationals with limited immigration status; Foreign nationals with no recourse to public funds; Non-economically active European Union individuals; United Kingdom nationals who are not habitually resident in the United Kingdom