

Local Welfare Assistance Scheme in Suffolk (LWAS) Guidance

Context

This document sets out guidance on how gateway partners are able to assist people who are seeking help as part of the Covid-19 pandemic response.

The Local Welfare Assistance Scheme (LWAS) in Suffolk is a local response to those who have found themselves in most severe financial hardship as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic.

It should be noted that LWAS in Suffolk is designed to ensure that vulnerable people in Suffolk, who have no other way of meeting essential basic needs, are able to have those needs met.

This is intended to be a short-term response to the current exceptional circumstances. Once the economy starts to recover and individual and household situations start to move out of crisis, then demand should ease, and it is hoped that existing hardship support routes would be able to meet demand.

The process which is outlined in this document will place the emphasis on ensuring that other sources of assistance are considered before help is provided from the LWAS in Suffolk. This will be done by using a needs-led assessment process.

Assistance from the LWAS will be on a cashless basis*. Help will be provided in the form of referrals for household items (furniture and white goods) and, in exceptional circumstances, fuel vouchers to enable gas and electricity card/key top-ups for those in their emergency supply. Supermarket vouchers are now also included in the scheme.

***Between December 2020 and March 2021 using the Winter Grant Scheme funding, the LWAS is being extended to also include applications for a payment contribution towards gas, electric, and water utility bills; other fuel costs; and items that help keep people warm like winter coats and bedding. See page 3 for more detail**

Eligibility

To be considered for LWAS in Suffolk a person should be:

- Aged 16 or over **and**
- A permanent resident in Suffolk (or in exceptional cases can establish that they will be resident in Suffolk within 28 days, such as people leaving a hostel or prison that is outside of the county) **and**

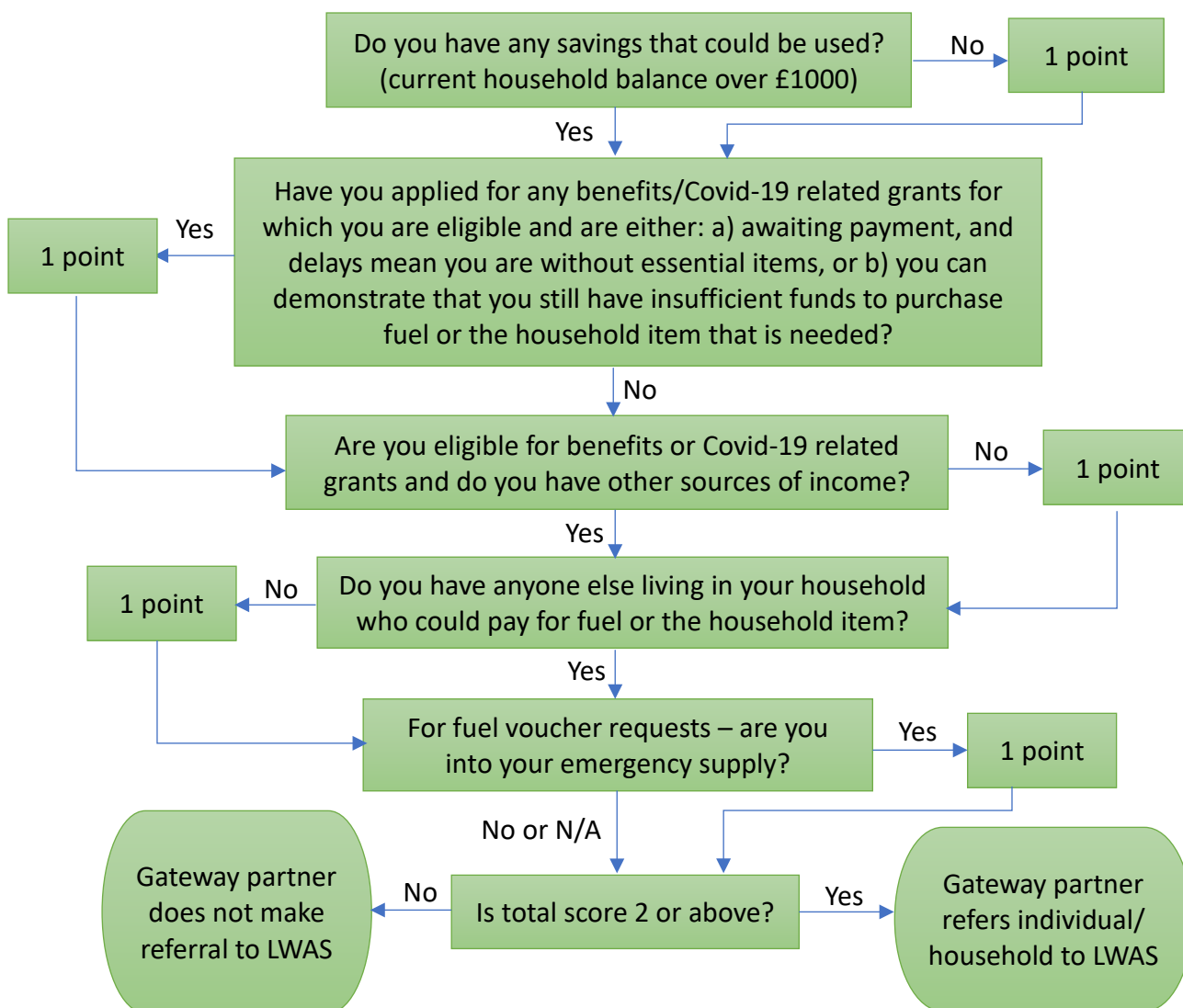
- In need of immediate urgent support **and/or**
- In need of essential basic household items such as furniture, white goods, or fuel top-ups to enable them to set up or maintain their home **and**
- They have no other means of meeting the need(s) presented

Process re identifying eligible individuals/households in most need

To ensure those seeking support are less likely to need future financial assistance, all people who are provided with items/vouchers must also agree to participate in budget planning advice sessions with specified providers (See [Appendix 3](#)).

You are entrusted with evaluating who is eligible to be referred into LWAS. It is crucial that you look into the applicant’s circumstances fully to ensure that those most in need are helped. Identifying those in most need will be based on the individual/household **meeting both the [eligibility criteria](#) set out on page 1 and also scoring at least two points from the criteria shown on the following flowchart.**

The flowchart below shows the sequence of questions you must ask to identify whether or not an individual/household is eligible to be referred into LWAS.



How to apply for essential items of furniture, white goods, fuel vouchers, supermarket vouchers, and cash contributions (December 2020-March 2021)

Once you have identified that an individual/household is eligible to be referred into LWAS, you will need to complete the online application form.

It may be necessary to ask for other proof of a person's situation in some individual cases. Details of this should be recorded on the application form.

You should bear in mind that the LWAS is not intended as long-term support. Where it is identified that applicants have received a third instance of emergency support, it is intended that support will be made available to assist them with identifying any underlying reason why this is occurring and to identify solutions to remedy this.

However, it is also acknowledged that there may be exceptional circumstances where a need for more than three instances of LWAS emergency support might arise. These will be looked at on a case by case basis.

Cash contributions

From December 2020 to March 2021, individuals can request a payment contribution towards their gas, electric, and water utility bills (intended to support both those on a pre-payment meter and those who have a direct debit); other fuel costs such as plug-in heaters, gas canister refills, wood or coal; and items that help keep people warm such as winter coats, jumpers, bedding and blankets.

Any requests for cash payments must be made via the [LWAS online application form](#) which captures individuals' bank details and personal information. Applications must not be sent by email due to the security risk that sending sensitive information may cause. Cash payments will be made directly into the individuals' bank accounts and will be automatically calculated based on the number of individuals in a household. Payments will be made at the rate of £25 per household member, up to a maximum of £100 for households of four people or more.

Household items and white goods

A list of basic essential items can be found at [Appendix 2](#). Where items are identified as being essential to the applicant (and/or their family), but do not appear on the list of basic essential items, you will need to give full reasons why they are being requested and why they are essential on the application form.

For instance, if a single person is requesting a double bed, they would need to provide a reason for this.

Supermarket vouchers

Supermarket vouchers, or e-gift cards can be requested as part of the application. There is still a requirement for you to check the applicant's eligibility against the criteria and you are satisfied they meet this. Vouchers may only be redeemed in store and not online. Specified supermarkets are: Asda, Aldi, Morrisons, Tesco and Sainsbury's. Please select which is most suitable for your client on the application form. The value of the voucher will be dictated by the number of people in the household. Vouchers will be allocated at the rate of £25 per household member, up to a maximum of £100 for households of four people or more.

Vouchers will either be emailed to the client directly, to you if it needs to be printed, or sent in the post direct to the client if neither of the two previous options are possible.

Fuel vouchers

Fuel vouchers will be securely held and distributed by specified issuing gateway partners. (For issuing partners, please email localwelfareassistance@suffolk.gov.uk for information).

Information for specified issuing gateway partners

Fuel vouchers may only be issued once you have checked the applicant's eligibility against the criteria, and you are satisfied they meet this. There is no need to wait for a decision from the LWAS team, but an application form **must** be completed in every case where a fuel voucher is issued, and the fuel voucher number must be referenced on the application form.

Processing applications

Applications must be made online [via the online LWAS application form](#).

All applications will be assessed within 5 days and you will receive an email confirming the decision. If the application is successful, the LWAS team will notify an identified household item provider with the details of the applicant and the item(s) the applicant has requested, for them to arrange delivery directly with the applicant by telephone.

Our providers use a mix of donated, used, and new items depending on availability and what the item is. Cookers or washing machines will include installation.

Key steps

- Check eligibility
- Complete and submit the application form, making sure that the applicant is aware their information will be shared with the LWAS team and household item delivery providers
- Refer to LD Rope Trust or other charitable provision for additional items such as carpets, clothes etc. (see [Appendix 1](#))

- Make applicant aware that applications are processed within 5 days and in the order of receipt by the LWAS mailbox

Appendices:

1. [List of other charitable provision for additional items](#)
2. [List of essential items; for single person without children, and families with children](#)
3. [Financial and budgeting support provision](#)

Appendix 1

Other charitable provision for additional items (such as carpets, clothes etc.)

- 1) **DWP budgeting loans**
These are what remains of the statutory DWP Social Fund scheme and are interest free loans of between £100 and £812 available to some people receiving certain means tested benefits. They are repayable from those benefits normally within two years.
- 2) **LD Rope Third Charitable Settlement**
Covers East Suffolk (including Ipswich and Lowestoft). Referrals from agencies working with individuals. Funds available for help with accommodation, appliances, furnishing, clothing, equipment, education items etc
- 3) **John Dorkin Charity**
Specific area of East Ipswich. Criteria being those "who are in conditions of need, hardship and distress by making grants of money or providing or paying for items, services or facilities, calculated to reduce the need, hardship and distress of such persons". Essential household items, education items etc
- 4) **Brame's Relief In Need Charity**
Specific to Ipswich. Gives donations to help people in need.
- 5) **The Straited Circumstances (1961) Fund** (via Ogilvie Trust – Woodbridge)
It may give grants for beds and bedding, cookers, refrigerators, freezers, washing machines and clothing. The primary aim is to assist those with a household member suffering from incontinence or other medical condition; grants for household items may be awarded where there is a genuine need. Most awards are between £100 and £200. Applications must be made through a social worker, community nurse or similar professional agency and payment is made direct to that agency.
- 6) **Daundy Trust**
Specific area of Ipswich. Small monetary gifts within the parish of St Matthew, Triangle and All Saints. The prevention or relief of poverty – children, young people or the elderly.
- 7) **Smith and Pinching Trust**
The objects of the charity are to relieve cases of need, hardship or distress of persons, to further the education (including social and physical training) of persons, to further the religious and other charitable work of all Christian denominations or any charitable purposes for the general benefit of inhabitants in any part of Norfolk, Suffolk, Cambridgeshire, Essex and Hertfordshire.
- 8) **Glasspool Trust**
We are one of the few national charities making grants to individuals which has no restrictions on the type of beneficiary we can support. We provide timely, small, one-off grants to individuals and families, including appliances, clothing, household items, flooring, educational computer equipment/TV licence. Equipment and adaptations applications will still be considered but within the budgetary constraints identified above. We invite applications from referral agencies on behalf of individuals.

9) **East Suffolk Council hardship fund**

Responding to hardship needs of identified individuals and families. Not currently publicising the availability of this grant. Identified items are purchased for those in need.

10) **British Red Cross**

The British Red Cross are providing financial support to help the most vulnerable financially impacted by the covid-19 crisis. The British Red Cross Hardship Fund provides short term financial help for individuals who can't afford essentials such as food and toiletries, somewhere safe to sleep, and access to a telephone and the internet. Money will be delivered on a pre-paid card by either a one-off payment of £120 or a three-month grant of £360 which will be paid in three monthly instalments of £120. Families with children or other dependants can receive up to three grants, for a total of £1,080 over the three months. Those in need will be registered for assistance by the Red Cross's network of Referral Partner organisations which include Local Authorities, charities, and other groups working with vulnerable people. <https://hardshipfund.redcross.org.uk/>

Appendix 2

List of essential household items/white goods

Single person/ couple without children – essential

- Cooker (may be table-top cooker where appropriate)
- Microwave
- Fridge
- Fridge freezer
- Washing machine
- Armchair
- Sofa
- Table & Chairs
- Chest of drawers
- Single Bedframe
- Single Mattress
- Double Bedframe (only if couple) specify reason double needed if single person
- Double Mattress (only if couple) specify reason double needed if single person
- Crockery, Cutlery, Pots & pans, kitchen utensils

Families with children – essential

- Cooker
- Microwave
- Fridge/Fridge freezer
- Freezer
- Washing machine
- Armchair
- Sofa
- Table & Chairs
- Chest of drawers
- Single Bedframe
- Single Mattress
- Double Bedframe
- Double Mattress
- Cot
- Crockery, Cutlery, Pots & pans, kitchen utensils

The types of items that are not provided by the LWAS include

- TV
- Hi-fi/stereo
- Computer
- Internet connection
- Bicycle
- Carpets
- Clothes, shoes, toys

Appendix 3

Financial and budgeting support provision

In addition to any budgeting advice that you provide, you may also choose to refer to the [Suffolk Advice and Support Service](#) 0800 068 3131.

Christians Against Poverty Suffolk Coastal Debt Centre can also provide financial and budgeting support provision. Further information can be found at capdebthelp.org Clients can self-refer by calling 0800 328 0006 where they can speak to the CAP Headquarters in Bradford. The 'Set up Team' will then book an appointment with the client with one of the local CAP Debt Centres in their area.