



Coventry City
Council

Coventry City Council
Community Support Grant Policy

Last updated April 2024

1. Purpose and principles

The purpose of this policy is to specify how Coventry City Council Benefits Service will operate the Community Support Grant (CSG) scheme and to outline the factors that will be considered when deciding if a CSG payment can be awarded.

The main purpose of the scheme will be to support vulnerable people experiencing financial difficulties. The award is intended to support a return to or allow a person to remain in the community.

It is delivered on a grant-based system and will not require customers to repay any award made to them.

Each case will be treated strictly on its merits and all customers will receive equal and fair treatment within a transparent process taking full account of the Council's responsibilities under all relevant government legislation, for example the Human Rights Act and Equality Act 2010.

This scheme is not intended to replicate or take over the responsibility of statutory agencies.

The Benefits Service is committed to working with other Council departments, the local voluntary sector, registered social landlords and other stakeholders in the city to maximise entitlement to all available state benefits, charitable funds, and grants, this will be reflected in the administration of the CSG scheme.

Customers will be referred to other relevant departments if applicable, such as Housing, Adult Social Care or Children's Social Care. In addition, details of any other sources of funding will be provided to the applicant where appropriate.

2. Funding

Funding for the CSG scheme is part of the Local Government Settlement and is subject to local decisions as part of Annual Budget Setting.

3. Considerations for an award

- The scheme is purely discretionary; a customer does not have a statutory right to an award.
- No cash awards will be made. Awards will be made by way of goods which will be ordered directly by the Council and delivered to the customer.
- The amount that can be paid out by the council in any financial year will be determined by the amount of funding agreed. Once the fund has been exhausted for the respective financial year, there will be no further awards.

4. Objectives of the scheme

- The Council will consider making a Community Support Grant to all customers who meet the qualifying criteria as specified within the scheme.
- The Service will treat all applications on their individual merits, and will seek through the operation of this policy to support vulnerable people and those in financial difficulty to resettle in the community.

5. Who can claim a Community Support Grant

A Community Support Grant (CSG) will be considered for vulnerable people in financial crisis, for a range of expenses including white goods and essential furniture. The award is intended to support a return to, or allow a person to remain in the community, or to ease exceptional pressure on families.

Customers will be referred to other relevant departments if applicable, such as Customer Services, Housing, Adult Social Care or Children's Services. In addition, details of any other sources of funding will be provided to the applicant where appropriate.

An applicant must be:

- A resident of Coventry. However, consideration will be given to those fleeing domestic violence or resettling to the City.
- A person in receipt of, or be expected to receive, Income Support, Income Based Jobseekers Allowance, Income Related Employment Support Allowance, Universal Credit, or any type of Pension Credit

It must be established for all awards that the need cannot be met from another source. Savings will be considered as funds available to the customer to meet their immediate needs.

6. Eligibility Criteria

Applicants may receive a CSG if they are:

- receiving Universal Credit, Income Support, Income Based Jobseekers Allowance, Income Related Employment Support Allowance or any type of Pension Credit;

AND

- leaving accommodation in which they received support, care or supervision and supervision and expect to be discharged within 6 weeks and be expected to receive one of the benefits indicated above. Not only must the customer be leaving such an establishment, but also establishing themselves in the community. Both the time spent in the accommodation and the level of individual care and supervision provided will be taken into consideration when making a decision.

A CSG may also be made if this will help a customer to stay in the community rather than enter accommodation to receive care, support, or supervision. One of the factors considered is how immediate the likelihood is of going into such accommodation, and whether the item(s) requested would prevent this happening. Some examples are where a Community Support Grant may help to:

- improve an applicant's existing living conditions.
- enable them to move to accommodation which is more suitable.
- move nearer to someone who can offer them support.
- To help the applicant (or family member / carer) to set up home as part of a planned resettlement programme (following an unsettled way of life).

CSGs are intended primarily to help people live as independent a life as possible in Coventry. A CSG may be awarded to applicants who:

- have been living in the community in accommodation which does not provide a sufficient level of care or supervision.
- are being housed in permanent accommodation (or temporary accommodation which will lead to permanent accommodation) as a part of a programme of resettlement.

People who have been without a settled way of life may have been:

- using a night shelter
- staying in a hostel
- sleeping on the streets or in a makeshift shelter on the streets using an emergency winter shelter
- using a temporary supported lodging scheme
- staying in temporary accommodation provided by the Home Office pending a decision on their application for asylum in this country.
- using a combination of these

CSGs can help with costs to ease exceptional pressures for a customer, or/and their family. Some examples of situations that may give rise to exceptional pressure are:

- there is, or has been, a breakdown of relationships within the family, (including domestic violence)
- domestic upheaval because of unforeseen circumstances such as house fire, flooding or other disaster.

OR

- To assist with travel expenses to visit a relative who is terminally ill or a relative's funeral or to visit a child who is living with another parent pending a court decision.

The above is not an exhaustive list.

How to Apply

An application for a Support Grant can be made online via the Council's web site. If you are not able to use the website, the team will be able to assist you making an application by telephone.

Application made by customer

For customers the following process will be followed:

- Customer completes and submits application form, either on-line or by phone
- When the application is received by the Benefit Service, it will be assessed. If the form is incomplete or further information is required, the team will call or write to the customer for the necessary information.
- Once all relevant information has been collected, the Benefits Service will aim to write to the customer with details of the decision and details of the review process within 14 days.
- If successful, goods will be awarded in line with the customer's needs.

Application made by Service Provider

For service providers the following process will be followed:

- Customer contacts the service provider asking for assistance. Service providers complete their internal assessments and identifies that the customer may be eligible for Community Support Grant.
- Service provider supports customer to complete the Community Support Grant application and submits this to Coventry City Council's Benefits Service.
- When the application is received by the Benefits Service it will be assessed. If the form is incomplete or further supporting evidence is required, the team will call or write to the service provider or the customer for the necessary information.
- Once all relevant information has been collected, the Benefits Service will aim to write to the customer with details of the decision and details of the review process within 14 days.
- If successful, goods will be awarded in line with the customer's needs.

7. Supporting Information

- The Benefits Service may request any reasonable evidence in support of an application for a CSG. In order to speed up the process we will in the first instance request this information by phone.
- The customer will be asked to provide the evidence within 5 working days of a request being made although this will be extended in appropriate circumstances.
- The Benefits Service reserves the right to verify any information or evidence provided by the customer in appropriate circumstances. Any such request will be essential to the decision-making process. If information is sourced from a support worker either

the evidence will be scanned in or notes made against the customer's record for transparency purposes.

- If the customer is unable to or does not provide the required evidence, the Benefits Service will make its decision based on the information available.
- The Benefits Service will seek to maximise the customer's income by checking the availability of state benefits and other sources of financial assistance that may be available to the customer upon application.
- Information provided will be used to process applications for Community Support Grants and this information may be shared with other council departments in order to check information, protect public funds and to identify any other help the applicant may be entitled to.
- The information provided may be shared with other organisations that handle public funds and for cross system and cross authority comparison for the detection and prevention of crime as allowed by law.

8. Items included in the scheme that may be awarded

When deciding what items to award, consideration will be given to the customers circumstances and household size. Items included in the below list may be awarded:

- Sofa
- Armchair
- Bed(s)
- Cot(s)
- Mattresses
- Bedding
- Cooker
- Fridge Freezer
- Washing Machine – in households with children, or where a medical condition is identified.

9. Award values

Each case will be assessed on individual circumstances, and items awarded will be based on need. Delivery and installation costs will be included.

10. Deciding a Community Support Grant

The Benefit Service will consider the full circumstances before deciding whether to award a CSG. In deciding whether to award a CSG, the following will be considered:

- The circumstances of the customer and their household, such as financial, medical, and social. For example:
 - If the award would prevent homelessness
 - If the customer is a care leaver
 - If the customer is fleeing domestic abuse
 - If the customer is an ex-offender looking to resettle in the community
- The income and expenditure of the customer and their household will be considered when deciding an award. For example:
 - Any income, savings and investments held by the customer and their household

- which could be used to help their financial situation,
- Whether other family members external to the household help in anyway
- Whether the customer and their household could reduce expenditure on non-essential items,
- Whether the customer and their household are entitled to other welfare benefits but are not claiming them.

11. Method of award

- The Benefits Service will award a CSG by the direct ordering of goods.
- Items will be delivered to the property address on the date specified.
- No alternative cash payment will be made.

12. Notification

If a customer's application is unsuccessful, the Benefits Service will set out the reasons why this decision was made and explain the right of review. Notifications will include details of where a claimant may seek further assistance.

Where the application is successful, the Benefits Section will advise:

- What has been awarded,
- How, when and to whom the goods will be delivered,
- The right to request a review and how further assistance can be obtained.

13. Reviews

A customer (or their appointee or agent) can ask for a reconsideration of a decision if they can demonstrate there has been:

- a factual error based on the decision made or
- an oversight on a significant piece of evidence or
- where new evidence has come to light which was not provided with the original application.

In these circumstances, the customer must provide the relevant details to the Council within one calendar month of the CSG decision being issued to the customer.

- When a request is made, the Council will conduct a review of the decision and contact the customer in writing within 10 working days of the review request being received to advise whether the decision will be amended, and if so, details of the award. All reviews will be considered by another officer not involved in the original decision.
- If the customer remains dissatisfied, the customer has the right to register a formal complaint through the Council's Complaint Procedure or to contact the Local Government Ombudsman to investigate a claim of maladministration.

14. Monitoring arrangements and managing the Community Support Grant fund

The Benefits Service will undertake monitoring of the number, amount and period of CSG awards in relation to the available CSG budget. The purpose is to ensure there are sufficient funds to meet demands on the CSG budget throughout the financial year. Once the fund has been exhausted for the respective financial year, there will be no further awards.

The Benefits Service will also monitor cases where a CSG request has been refused to ensure decisions are being made fairly and consistently.

The Council is subject to the general equality duty. This means that steps will be taken to monitor implementation of this policy to ensure no one is subject to disproportionate adverse treatment because they had a protected characteristic.

15. Publicity

The Community Support Grant Scheme will be publicised on the Council's website and the Benefit Service will ensure that all relevant stakeholders and partnership organisations are aware of the scheme.

16. Fraud and Error

Coventry City Council is committed to identification and prevention of fraud and error. Where it is alleged, or considered an application may have been made fraudulently, the matter will be investigated and if fraud is found to have occurred, action will be taken including criminal proceedings where relevant.

17. Accessibility

Hard copies or alternative versions of any document can be made available where necessary to meet an individual's needs. Please contact Coventry City Council, Council House, Earl Street, Coventry, CV1 5RR or telephone the Council directly on 0500 834 333

18. Contacting us in an emergency

If our telephone lines are closed and out of hours emergency the Council's Emergency Duty Team can be contacted:

- If a child is at risk of abuse, harm or neglect, contact the out of hours Emergency Duty Team on 024 7683 3800 or contact the Police on 0845 113 5000
- If an adult is at risk of abuse, harm or danger to themselves or others, contact the Emergency Duty Team on 024 7683 3800 or contact the Police on 0845 113 5000
- If you are homeless or think you are at risk of being homeless call 0500 834333

Version Control

Name	Date updated
G Cowley	09/08/2012
C Storey	10/08/2012
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G Cowley	14/09/2012
G Cowley	23/09/2012
G Cowley	25/10/2012
C Storey	25/10/2012
C Storey	15/11/2012
C Storey	22/11/2012
T Savill	28/11/2012
Health, Social Care and Welfare Reform Scrutiny Board (Scrutiny Board 5)	12/12/2012
Cabinet	08/01/2013
Council	15/01/2013
K Gist	14/03/2016
K Gist	19/09/2017
K Gist	29/05/2018
K Gist	09/04/2019
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