

What you need to know

Worcester City Council will have dedicated staff in place to deal with any queries.

The Council will ensure that high quality, consistent decisions are made on all applications, with agreed service levels and rapid responses.

Applications will be deemed withdrawn if an incomplete application is submitted and further information is not been provided within:

- three working days for Crisis Support
- 21 working days for Settlement Support.

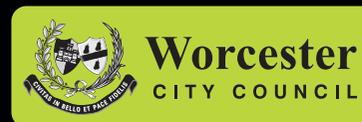
Referrals for Settlement Support can be accepted up to six weeks before items are required.

The Rules

- The scheme is for the benefit of South Worcestershire residents only and is run by Worcester City Council on behalf of Malvern Hills and Wychavon District Councils.
- The operation of the scheme is at the discretion of Worcester City Council and households do not have a statutory right to an award.
- All applications will be assessed in line with the qualifying conditions in the scheme policy and will be subject to the amount of grant available at the time of application.
- **Crisis Support:** a maximum of two applications per 12-month rolling period can be made by each household.
- **Settlement Support:** one application can be made in a three-year period.
- Applications from members of the same household will be treated as repeat applications.
- Applications must be for a crisis situation.
- Applications must be made in normal working hours. There is no out of hours service.
- No cash payments will be issued.

More information:

- **01905 722233**
- **Typetalk: 1800101905 722233**
- **housing@worcester.gov.uk**
- **www.worcester.gov.uk/housing**



Discretionary Welfare Assistance Scheme

From 2 April 2013, the South Worcestershire Discretionary Welfare Assistance Scheme will provide assistance in the form of goods or vouchers to help individuals or families facing exceptionally difficult circumstances or an emergency.

Residents cannot apply directly – a voluntary or statutory agency must apply on their behalf.

This **does not** include customer contact centres at the Hive or the offices of Malvern Hills District Council and Wychavon District Council.

Two forms of support

Crisis Living Support is to meet an unplanned need of a vulnerable person or family in crisis that cannot be met elsewhere, when the health of a member of the household will deteriorate as a result. It provides emergency food, gas and electricity, baby consumables, furniture and white goods.

Settlement Support is to meet the planned need of a vulnerable person coming out of unsettled or supported accommodation or to prevent them entering an institutional setting. It provides furniture and white goods.

How it works

Eligibility criteria will be used to ensure the funds are targeted at the most vulnerable residents with the greatest needs.

The scheme will be used to complement other services across South Worcestershire and will not cover needs more appropriately addressed by other funds or benefits – such as Discretionary Housing Payments or the remaining elements of the Social Fund.

All requests will be considered on an individual basis with due account given to the vulnerability and personal circumstances of each applicant.

No cash payments will be issued; awards will be in the form of goods or vouchers.

Step by step – how to apply

Step one

The applicant must contact a voluntary or statutory agency to act on their behalf - this may be an agency they are already working with.

The agency will complete a quick reference sheet with the applicant before calling the Hub. Applicants will not be able to call directly.

Remember: funding is limited.

Step two

To make an application, the agency must call the Worcestershire Hub on 01905 722233.

THE AGENCY MUST BE ABLE TO CONFIRM THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION IMMEDIATELY:

- Details of the applicant and other household members – i.e. name, address, National Insurance number and Date of Birth (the applicant must be over 16)
- The agency has seen sight of a recent benefit award letter (dated within the last three months)
- The need cannot be met by any other provider (including family and friends)
- The applicant does not have their own resources or savings
- The applicant has a local connection – i.e. they have lived in Worcester, Wychavon or Malvern for at least six months
- The applicant is vulnerable and a refusal of the application would have a negative impact on their health
- Details of why the award is required and what makes the application an exceptional circumstance
- Email address of the applicant, if they have one, in order to send gas and electricity vouchers. If they cannot provide one, the agency's email will be used.

The Hub will also need verbal confirmation that the agency is acting on behalf of, and with the consent of, the applicant.

The Hub will confirm the success or failure of the application during the initial telephone call unless further clarification of the applicant's eligibility is required.

Step three - application accepted

The agency will be told the value of the goods and/or services and how they can be accessed during the initial phone call.

Emergency food and baby consumables – food will be collected from foodbanks in most cases. In some cases, emergency food and baby consumables vouchers will be issued for collection at the applicant's local collection point. The vouchers are valid for seven days and stamped "No cigarettes or alcohol".

Furniture and white goods referrals will be made immediately to a supplier, who will arrange delivery with the applicant/support agency.

Gas and electricity PayPoint vouchers will be emailed to the applicant (or the agency if the applicant does not have an email address) to be printed off and taken to a local store to be redeemed for credit on their key or card meters. The vouchers are valid for four days.

Step three - application declined

The applicant can request a second opinion. The request must be made in writing within seven days of the original decision and reasons for a review of the decision must be given.

A second opinion will be considered by a separate council officer who was not involved in the original decision and the agency will be notified of their decision.

The outcome of the second opinion is final and there is no right to request a review or further appeal.

Applicants can access the service through local support services including:

- **Housing associations**
- **Local support services**
- **Local charities**
- **Health professionals**
- **Housing and homeless support services**