

DWP Social Fund

Information Guide 14: For Residents and Advisers

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www.wolverhampton.gov.uk

DWP Social Fund

A person may claim a Social Fund loan or grant from the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) to cover the cost of specific items.

A. Budgeting Loan:

A 'Budgeting Loan' may be claimed for:

- furniture/household equipment
- clothing and footwear
- home repairs and improvements
- removal expenses
- rent in advance
- expenses relating to looking for work or re-entering work
- travel expenses
- a funeral expense (but see also below)

In addition, a Budgeting Loan may be awarded to meet hire purchase and other debts relating to any of the above items.

The maximum Budgeting Loan payable is £348.00 for a single person, £464.00 for a couple without children and £812.00 for a lone parent or couple with a child(ren). The minimum Budgeting Loan is £100 and the maximum £1,500.

An application for a Budgeting Loan may be made using claim form SF500. The form is available from the DWP (Telephone: 0345 603 6967).



To qualify the claimant (and/or their partner) must have been receiving a 'qualifying benefit' (see below) for at least six months (gaps of 28 days are ignored) prior to the date of claim. Any eligible Budgeting Loan amount would be reduced by the amount of savings the claimant (and/or their partner) has above £1,000 (£2,000 if the claimant or their partner is aged 62 or over).

The DWP will look to recover the loan through weekly deductions from benefit. The maximum weekly repayment amount is 20% of the persons benefit. The maximum repayment period would be 104 weeks.

B. Sure Start Maternity Grant:

A 'Sure Start Maternity Grant' (SSMG) may be claimed for maternity needs where the claimant or their partner (or a daughter for whom they receive Child Benefit) is pregnant or has given birth within the last 3 months (including still births after 24 weeks of pregnancy).

The amount of any SSMG is £500 for each expected child. An application for a SSMG may be made using claim form SF100. The form is available from the DWP (Telephone: 0345 603 6967).

A claim may be made at any time from 11 weeks before the expected date of childbirth until three months after the actual date of birth providing the claimant (or their partner) is getting a 'qualifying benefit' (see below) at the time of claim. The amount awarded is not affected by the savings the person (and/or their partner) has.



Do note that new rules now mean that a person may not qualify for a SSMG if they already have a child aged under 16. If there is already a child under 16 and now twins/triplets are expected/born, then an award will be made for all the expected children less one. If a person is claiming for a young daughter for whom they receive Child Benefit, then a SSMG will be payable providing the daughter does not already have a child. People who are adopting a child aged under 12 months may also claim a SSMG in a similar way.

Do seek further advice and information as necessary. An application for a SSMG may be made using claim form SF100 (with a MAT B1 before the birth or the birth certificate after the birth).

C. Funeral Expenses Payment:

A 'Funeral Expenses Payment' may be claimed for expenses associated with a funeral where the claimant (or their partner) may be treated as being 'eligible' to claim and it is 'reasonable' to treat them as being 'responsible' for the costs of the funeral.



A person may be treated as both 'eligible' and 'responsible' if they were the partner of the deceased when s/he died or the deceased was a child for whom they (or their partner) were getting Child Benefit. A claim may also be made by a parent, son or daughter or another 'close relative' (or a 'close friend') providing that it is accepted that it is 'reasonable' for them to be 'responsible' for the funeral expenses. In this situation, the rules can be complex so please do seek further information and advice.

An application for a Funeral Expenses Payment may be made using claim form SF200. The form is available from the DWP (Telephone: 0345 603 6967).

A claim may be made any time from the date of death to three months (six months from 2.4.2018) from the date of the funeral (Note: Not three months from the date of death). A claim may only be made for certain items associated with the cost of a funeral or cremation. There is a limit of £700 on the cost of the undertaker's fees, cost of a coffin, religious costs, flowers and transport.

The amount is intended to cover the cost of a simple funeral. It is frequently the case that the amount allowed falls short of the actual cost of the funeral.

Qualifying Benefit: A 'qualifying Benefit' is Income Support, Income-related ESA, Income-based JSA, Pension Credit (Guarantee Credit) or Pension Credit (Savings Credit). In the case of a claim for a Sure Start Maternity Grant it also includes Child Tax Credit (where paid at an amount equal to or greater than the 'family element' of £545 per annum), Working Tax Credit (where the WTC calculation includes an award of the 'disability element' or 'severe disability element') and Universal Credit. In the case of a Funeral Expenses Payment it includes all the aforementioned benefits plus Housing Benefit.

DWP Other Loans

A. Short-term Benefit Advance

A '**Short-term Benefit Advance**' is available where a person is in 'financial need' (see below) because they have claimed benefit but have not yet been paid because of some delay.

This provision only applies in respect of Income Support, Income-based JSA, Contributory-based JSA, Income-related ESA, Contributory ESA, State Retirement Pension, Pension Credit, Carer's Allowance and Universal Credit. The benefits which are not covered include Housing Benefit, Personal Independence Payment, Disability Living Allowance, Attendance Allowance, Child Benefit and Statutory Sick Pay.

There is no right of appeal against a decision which refuses to award a Short-term Benefit Advance. Any payment made will be recovered from a person's benefit within a 3-month period. This may be extended to six months in exceptional circumstances. Anyone seeking a Short-term Benefit Advance should contact the office responsible for the payment of the benefit involved.

Financial Need: Means that there is a likelihood of a 'serious risk of damage to the health or safety' of the claimant or a member of their family because they have not received payment of a recently claimed benefit.

B. Cold Weather Payment:

The DWP can award a 'Cold Weather Payment' where there has been a recognised period of actual (or forecasted) cold weather in the claimant's area and they have a child aged under 5 or they receive Pension Credit (Guarantee Credit) or Pension Credit (Savings Credit). Alternatively, the claimant gets Child Tax Credit, Income Support, Income-based JSA, Income-related ESA or Universal Credit and the award includes the 'disability premium', 'enhanced disability premium', 'severe disability premium' or 'work-related activity component' or a 'disabled child' or 'severely disabled child' element/increase.

No claim should be necessary. The DWP should automatically make payment. However, if a person does not receive a payment when one is due they should contact the DWP.



C. Winter Fuel Payment:

The DWP will award a 'Winter Fuel Payment' where the claimant is of 'Pension Credit Qualifying Age' and not excluded because they are in prison, have been in hospital for more than a year or are receiving Pension Credit and living in a residential care home. The maximum amount paid is subject to age - £200 where aged between 'Pension Credit Qualifying Age' and 79 and £300 where aged 80 or over. Payment is normally made automatically. Winter Fuel Payment Helpline: Telephone: 08459 151515.

Universal Credit

A. Short-term Advance:

Those claiming Universal Credit are able to claim a **'Short-term Advance'** of Universal Credit if they are waiting for their first payment of Universal Credit following their claim and they are in 'financial need' (see below).

A person should talk to their Work Coach at the JobCentre about a Short-term Benefit Advance should they need one. Any award of a Short-term Advance will be recovered by deductions from subsequent payments of Universal Credit.

Financial Need: Means that there is a likelihood of a 'serious risk of damage to the health or safety' of the claimant or a member of their family because they have not received payment of a recently claimed benefit.

B. Budgeting Advance:

Those who have been getting Universal Credit for six months are able to claim a **'Budgeting Advance'** which is a lump sum payment of Universal Credit that must be repaid from any future payments of Universal Credit.

A Budgeting Advance can assist with expenses relating to:

- for furniture/household equipment
- for clothing and footwear
- for essential home repairs and improvements
- for removal expenses
- for rent in advance
- for expenses relating to looking for work or re-entering work
- for travel to work costs
- help with maternity expenses
- help with funeral expenses

The minimum Budgeting Advance which can be awarded is £100. The maximum amount is:

- £348.00 - single and not responsible for a child or young person
- £464.00 - couple and not responsible for a child or young person
- £812.00 - single or couple and have responsibility for a child or young person

The amount of any Budgeting Advance is reduced by the amount of savings/capital the claimant (and/or their partner) has above £1,000.

To qualify for a Budgeting Advance the claimant (or their partner) must (unless the request is 'necessarily related' to employment):

- have been getting Universal Credit (or Income-based JSA, Income-related ESA, Income Support or Pension Credit) for at least six months; and
- not have earnings within the previous six months exceeding £2,600 (single) or £3,600 (couple);
- not have an outstanding Budgeting Advance which has not yet been recovered; and
- be able to repay the Budgeting Advance given their current financial situation taking into account any existing debts and other liabilities



An award of a Budgeting Advance is discretionary. There is no right of appeal against a decision not to award a Budgeting Advance. However, a person can ask for a decision to be reconsidered. A revision of the decision should be requested where there is fresh evidence or information which it is understood was not considered at the time when the original decision was made.

Family Fund

The Family Fund is not part of the DWP. It can provide grants to families getting benefits and/or tax credits with a severely disabled child aged under 18. The aim is to ease the stress on families which arises from the day-to-day care of the child.

The Family Fund can help with:

- holidays
- leisure activities for the family
- a washing machine and/or tumbler drier if extra washing is needed due to the child's disability
- bedding and clothing needed due to extra wear and tear
- a computer for the child
- play equipment related to the child's special needs

Claim forms are available from the Family Fund Trust - Unit 4, Alpha Court, Monks Cross Drive, York YO32 9WN - Telephone: 0845 130 4542. Applications may now also be made online: www.familyfund.org.uk.



Information Guides

The City of Wolverhampton Council's Welfare Rights Service produces the following guides on benefits and welfare reform:

1. Universal Credit
2. Universal Credit - Claims and Payment

3. Universal Credit - The Claimant Commitment
4. Universal Credit - Sanctions and Hardship Payments
5. Universal Credit - Work Capability Assessment - Toolkit
6. Employment and Support Allowance
7. ESA - Work Capability Assessment - Toolkit
8. Personal Independence Payment
9. Personal Independence Payment - Toolkit
10. Form Filling - PIP2 and ESA50/UC50
11. Benefits for Young People
12. The Benefit Cap
13. The Spare Room Subsidy
14. DWP Social Fund
15. Local Welfare Assistance
16. Benefits and People from Abroad
17. JSA Sanctions
18. ESA Sanctions
19. Disputes and Appeals
20. Going to Appeal: First-tier Tribunals
21. Useful Contacts and Websites

If you would like a copy of any of the above Information Guides or you are in need of information and/or advice on a benefits or welfare reform matter, then please contact our Specialist Support Team:

☎ Telephone: (01902) 555351

✉ Email: A&C.WRS@wolverhampton.gov.uk

The details provided in this Information Guide are meant to provide a guide to the DWP Social Fund. The details should not be treated as an authoritative statement of the law. The details may be subject to change by new regulation and/or case law. Do seek further information and advice as necessary.