



Milton Keynes
City Council

Discretionary Financial Assistance Policy.

October 2025

Version 4

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1 Background

The Milton Keynes City Council (MKCC) Discretionary Financial Assistance Policy brings together five different areas of support:

- Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP)
- Local Welfare Provision (LWP)
- Discretionary Council Tax Reduction (DCTR)
- Local Scheme - Disregard of War Pensions
- Council Tax Support for Terminally ill Households

Appendix A provides more detail on each of these areas.

Section 13A of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 (as amended by Section 76 of the Local Government Act 2003), provides the Council with the discretion to reduce liability for Council Tax in relation to individual cases or classes of cases. In terms of classes these may be used where national exemptions and discounts cannot be applied.

In accordance with Section 13A (1) (a) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 (amended), the Council has a Council Tax Support Scheme (CTRS) (which replaced the Council Tax Benefit Scheme) which provides support, through a discount, to those deemed to be in financial need. The Scheme considers the financial and specific circumstances of individuals using applicable amounts, premiums, and income disregards. In Milton Keynes a maximum of 80% of Council Tax can be claimed under the CTRS scheme and 100% for some protected groups.

In accordance with Section 13A (1) (c) a discretionary Council Tax Scheme (DCTRS) is also available to support those with exceptional circumstances. The cost of awarding a discretionary award is fully funded by Milton Keynes City Council.

Each year the Council also receive a grant, with conditional criteria on awards, to support discretionary housing assistance. Another grant, currently the Household Support Fund (to be replaced by a Crisis Support Fund), alongside local revenues funding, supports awards under the Local Welfare Provision in Milton Keynes.

2 Statement of objectives

The aim of the policy is to assist our most vulnerable residents, who cannot access any other support, to sustain their home, health, family, and security.

The assessment of applications is part of a holistic approach to prevent homelessness and help MK citizens who are in a short-term crisis get back on track. This is achieved through the provision of additional financial support and focuses on supporting residents to move towards a sustainable solution.

In addition to considering financial assistance, applicants are signposted to advice and guidance relevant to their needs, linking them with Statutory Services and other relevant organisations. The financial support is a means through which contact and communication with the applicant can be used to assist them and their families with their longer-term wellbeing.

This policy is aimed at assisting citizens who are most at risk as well as those in immediate need.

The policy offers support where individuals or families are at risk of:

- Preventing homelessness or those in temporary accommodation
- Tackling child poverty
- Support for food and fuel due to cost-of-living pressures
- Breakdown of family cohesion / stability (including domestic violence)
- Damage to Health
- Loss of independence
- Unemployment

To target support effectively the focus is likely to be on certain disadvantaged groups, such as young people leaving care in the transition to adult life, people with disabilities or mental health issues.

3 Qualifying criteria for awards

Applicants do not have an automatic right to an award. The decision is entirely at the Council's discretion, and each case will be assessed based on the individual circumstances.

Assessments are made in two ways:

1. A financial assessment of income/ savings, access to assets and essential outgoings, to establish:
 - a. If the applicant is experiencing financial crisis and
 - b. That the support will enable the applicant to reach a long-term solution that is not reliant on discretionary payments or is the only viable long-term solution.

Or

2. A health and welfare assessment based on a person's ability to cope with day-to-day financial matters aimed at alleviating mental health pressures, personal crises, and difficult events.

Awards will not be made where any of the following apply:

- The situation can be resolved by some other legitimate means,
- The applicant is excluded from receiving welfare benefits based on immigration status,
- The situation arose because of benefit fraud,
- The Council deems that the person has been culpably neglectful in relation to their circumstances,
- The Council deems that an award is unlikely to assist in providing a significant and sustainable outcome when support is aimed at sustaining a home.

Due to limited finances and to ensure that awards benefit the Milton Keynes community, Local Welfare Provision funded awards will only be considered if:

- The applicant can demonstrate a settled residence in Milton Keynes or has been placed in housing outside the area by Milton Keynes City Council or, in the case of someone leaving prison or care or is fleeing domestic violence, be about to move into Milton Keynes.

The definition of a settled residence is where a resident can provide evidence to show that they are living permanently or continuously at a particular address, the key elements to evidencing a settled residence are

- Continuity: the resident must have lived at the address for a sustained period, which is no less than 6 months.
- Intention: they intend to remain at the address
- Evidence: they can provide evidence that show they are already residing at the address such as utility bills, bank statements showing the address, evidence of benefits being paid at the address for the sustained period.
- In exceptional situations, an award may be made where the policy's eligibility criterion is not met but an award would comply with the policy's overall aims and are within the law. This may include but is not confined to payments made under powers conferred by section 13A(1)(c) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, which allows a billing authority to reduce the amount of Council Tax chargeable to alleviate financial pressures.

4 Applications

An application needs to be made to access the different types of assistance. The team administering the scheme will access whichever funds are most appropriate for the

customer and more information may be requested. Online forms are available on the Councils website.

Wherever possible, MKCC will link in with trusted partners, who can signpost applicants to the scheme or make applications and recommendations on a person's behalf.

Where the law does not specify that an application must be made, Council Officers may identify cases where a payment would mitigate a risk and no application will be required, except in the cases of DHPs as they require a person to make a claim.

Each applicant may be asked to supply reasonable supporting evidence. This may include, but is not limited to:

- Income & expenditure statements, including details of any savings or capital
- Bank statements
- Utility and household bills
- Medical evidence if relevant

5 Reconsiderations, Reviews and Appeals

A review of a decision or appeal can only be considered on the basis that the decision maker has not correctly applied this policy. Where an applicant is aggrieved by a decision, but the basis of the disagreement is not that the policy was incorrectly applied, there is no grounds for an appeal or review.

Where an applicant does not believe this policy has been applied in relation to a request for a Discretionary Council Tax Reduction, the appeals procedure is as prescribed by Section 16 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, details of which can be found in Appendix A.

Where a decision is in respect of a Discretionary Housing Payment, Local Welfare Provision payment, or War Widows Pension, there is no statutory right to an appeal.

In the interests of fairness, the Council will operate the following internal procedure:

- **Level One Reconsideration:** An applicant (or their representative) can ask for an explanation of decision at any time. They can ask for the original decision to be looked at again if they have additional information that they believe might alter the decision or if they believe that information they have already submitted has been overlooked or misunderstood. This reconsideration will normally be dealt with by the original decision maker.
- **Level Two Review:** If the applicant (or their representative) believes that the decision maker has not correctly applied this policy, they can ask for their concerns to be examined by a more senior officer. The second officer will look at the reasons for the decision, whether it complies with this policy and decide if any changes should be made to the decision.

An applicant also has the right to take the matter up with a local Councillor who can also consider if the policy has been correctly applied.

A request for a reconsideration or review will not be a complaint and will therefore not follow the Council's complaint procedure.

Complaints involving the quality of service will be dealt with separately under the council's complaints procedure. The officer handling the complaint will not reconsider or review the outcome of the application.

6 Fraud, error, and overpayments

Any overpayment created because of the discretionary support listed within this policy can be recovered if it is deemed by the Council to be made because of a misrepresentation or failure to disclose a material fact either intentionally or otherwise. If the council suspects that fraud may have occurred, the matter will be investigated as appropriate, and this could lead to criminal proceedings.

7 Equalities statement

Milton Keynes City Council is committed to equality and fairness. Equality is about ensuring that people are treated fairly, given fair chances and to ensure equality of opportunity for all within the district; especially equality of access to the services we provide across different members of our communities. It is also about ensuring that people receive fair outcomes in the standard of service they receive from the Council. This incorporates everyone, regardless of their race, gender, age religion or belief, sexual orientation, marital or civil partnership status and/or disability in line with the principles set out in the Equalities Act 2010.

Contact details:

Discretionary Housing Payments

DHPBenefits@milton-keynes.gov.uk

T: 01908 253040

Local Welfare Provision

lwp@milton-keynes.gov.uk

T: 01908 253040

Appendix A

Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP)

A Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP) is a special payment made to individuals who need extra help with their housing costs (rent).

DHPs are not part of the normal Housing Benefit scheme. They are funded by Central Government on a yearly basis and the money available is limited. For this reason, the Council will only grant help to people who have special circumstances which make it difficult for them to pay their rent.

A resident can apply for Discretionary Financial Assistance if they are entitled to Housing Benefit or the Housing element of Universal Credit (UC). Applications cannot be made before entitlement to one of these benefits has been notified.

The Council can consider helping with home moves if this is essential, for example to reduce outgoings, take up a definite offer of employment or because of a risk of being made homeless, a Discretionary Housing Payment may be able to help with:

- deposits
- a contribution towards other costs associated with a housing need such as removal costs

When considering whether we can help with the move the Council will also consider the suitability of the accommodation, looking at factors such as the size and location of the property, the reasons for moving and the cost of the accommodation.

Determining an application

In most instances a request for a Discretionary award will be made by or on behalf of the resident. However, an online application may not be needed in all cases, and it is possible that officers may identify a potential case from information already known or support an application via other methods deemed appropriate.

All cases will be considered, to determine if there are grounds for granting a Discretionary award or whether it should be refused. A standard affordability assessment will be carried out by the Welfare Assistance team.

The applicant will be notified in writing of a decision, and the notice will include reasons for the decision.

If an award is granted, the notice will include the amount and the period for which it is granted.

Amount of Support

The award will be assessed and only support shortfalls up to the level of the rent and eligible service charges payable.

The amount to be awarded is entirely at the Council's discretion.

Award Period

The discretionary award will be granted for a specific period and only for the financial year in which the application is made. The award will terminate when either the applicant is no longer entitled or at the end of the financial year, whichever is the sooner.

The support is intended to assist over the short term only until circumstances change or a more sustainable tenancy is found.

How to claim

[Discretionary Housing Payments \(DHP\) | Milton Keynes City Council](#)

Local Welfare Provision (LWP) payments

Milton Keynes Council provides a Local Welfare Provision scheme (LWP) which aims to:

- Prevent serious risk to health, wellbeing or safety
- Provide essential support in the event of an emergency
- Help people to be part of the community

An award will normally be a one-off payment, normally in goods or services, as a short-term fix to prevent a long-term problem.

Criteria

The Council will consider whether an application meets the criteria for Local Welfare Provision and if there are still funds available.

Residents can apply if they meet all the following criteria, you are:

- At least 16 years old
- A settled Milton Keynes resident or have been placed out of the area by Milton Keynes Council, or moving into Milton Keynes after leaving prison, care or is fleeing domestic violence.
- A British citizen. If not a British citizen, must be in receipt of benefits, or immigration status allows access public funds

- Unable to obtain help from another source
- Without support there could be a serious risk to family's health or safety

If a full-time student, you will only be able to make an application if in receipt of benefits.

Items that can be provided

LWP normally assists with only the following items (although this list is not exhaustive):

- Beds based on number of residents (double beds only provided to couples otherwise a single bed will be provided).
- Cookers (electric only due to installation and safety checks) or microwave but not both.
- Small Fridge Freezer (under the counter).
- Washing machine for families with children of school age or a medical need.
- Flooring where there is a medical need or in one room where there is a young child who is crawling. Only lino or carpet is provided. We cannot provide laminate flooring.

Determining an application

In most instances a request for a Discretionary award will be made by or on behalf of the resident. However, an online application may not be needed in all cases, and it is possible that officers may identify a potential case from information already known.

All cases will be considered, to determine if there are grounds for granting a Discretionary award or whether it should be refused. A standard affordability assessment will be carried out by the Welfare Assistance team.

The applicant will be notified in writing of a decision, and the notice will include reasons for the decision.

If an award is granted, the notice will include the amount and / or the item that has been awarded.

Amount of Support

The award will be assessed based on a financial assessment of the customer, alongside a review of their emergency support requirements. Support will be provided based on their immediate need and the specific type of assistance to support that need.

LWP will not be used to support shortfalls in rent.

The amount to be awarded is entirely at the Council's discretion.

Award Period

The discretionary award will be granted for a specific item(s) and usually only once in any financial year in which the application is made, unless the resident can demonstrate a new or continued crisis need.

The support is intended to assist over the short term only until circumstances change or a more sustainable situation is found.

How to claim

[What is Local Welfare Provision \(LWP\)? | Milton Keynes City Council](#)

Discretionary Council Tax Reduction (DCTRS)

The Council will consider applications for those experiencing Hardship under Section 13A of the Local Government Finance Act 1992. This scheme is managed as the Discretionary Council Tax support scheme (DCTRS) which supports those on low incomes or those suffering hardship.

13A Reductions by billing authority

(c) in any case, may be reduced to such extent (or, if the amount has been reduced under paragraph (a) or (b), such further extent) as the billing authority for the area in which the dwelling is situated thinks fit.

Determining an application

In most instances a request for a Discretionary award will be made by or on behalf of the resident. However, an online application may not be needed in all cases, and it is possible that officers may identify a potential case from information already known.

All cases will be considered, to determine if there are grounds for granting a Discretionary Discount or whether it should be refused. A standard affordability assessment will be carried out by the Welfare Assistance team.

The applicant will be notified in writing of a decision, and the notice will include reasons for the decision.

If an award is granted, the notice will include the amount and the period for which it is granted.

Amount of relief

The award will be calculated against the daily Council Tax liability after deducting any other reliefs, discounts or Council Tax support and will not exceed that figure.

The amount to be awarded is entirely at the Council's discretion and can be 0-100%.

Award Period

The discretionary award will be granted for a specific period and only for the financial year in which the application is made. The award will terminate when either the applicant is no longer entitled or at the end of the financial year, whichever is the sooner.

The discount is intended to assist with the Council Tax liability for the short term only.

How to claim

If you are in receipt of Council Tax Support (CTRS) – [Discretionary Council Tax Reduction Scheme \(DCTRS\) | Milton Keynes City Council](#)

If you are not in receipt of Council Tax Reduction - [Discretionary Hardship Award | Milton Keynes City Council](#)

War Disablement Pensions and Payments

The Housing Benefit Regulations and the Council Tax Reduction Schemes (Prescribed Requirements) (England) Regulations 2012, currently require the Council to disregard £10 from any current payments of war disablement and war widows' pensions.

Sections 134 and 139 of the Social Security Administration Act 1992 provide the Council with the discretion to modify the Housing Benefit scheme by disregarding a further amount, or all, of specified war disablement pensions and payments. The Council will disregard in full war widow and war disablement pensions when calculating entitlement to Housing Benefit and a Council Tax Reduction. These payments include:

- War disablement pension
- War widow's/widower's pension

And / or:

- Guaranteed Income Payments (GIPs) under the Armed Forces and Reserve Forces
- Compensation Scheme (AFRCS) payments
- Service Attributable Pension (SAP) injury or illness attributable to service on or before April 1975

- any comparable payment paid by the government of a country outside Great Britain
- a pension paid under the law of the Federal Republic of Germany or Austria to victims of National Socialist persecution.

NB but **not** pre-1973 War Widow's Special Payments, which are disregarded in full.

Any amount included within the pension for attendance/mobility allowance is also disregarded in full.

These disregards are applied at the point of assessment, and no separate application is required.

Council Tax Support for Terminally ill Households

Support of 100% of Council Tax will be awarded for any household that is impacted by a terminal illness diagnosis, and where special rules are met (confirmed via SR1 form), will be awarded and the support is available to **all households** and residential properties in all Council Tax Bands A – H regardless of existing entitlement to benefits.

Determining an application

To be eligible for support a form SR1 (Special Rules 1 – confirming a terminal illness and life expectancy of less than 12 months) will be required. Information on SR1's can be found at [What is an SR1 medical report form for benefits? | Marie Curie](#).

This support will apply to any defined household member resident in the property where Council Tax is liable to be paid.

Eligible household members with a confirmed diagnosis via a completed SR1 form (See Annex C) to the Council means –

- Applicant,
- Partner,
- Dependent child,
- Direct relatives living in the household (Non-Dependant Adults)

Support is only available against an occupied main home (for example second homes in Milton Keynes remain liable for Council Tax and any associated premiums.)

Amount of relief

Where discounts or exemptions or Council Tax Support is already in payment, a top up of support will be applied to 100% of the Council Tax charge over a period not exceeding 12 months from the date of diagnosis.

Award Period

The term of award is to support the immediate period following the date in which the patient is thought to meet the Special Rules (confirmed via the SR1 form) for a period not exceeding 12 months.

If death occurs before the end of the 12-month term the support will continue until the end of the 12-month period, or the date liability ends at the property (for example when a property is let or sold) within the period of award.

Where discounts or exemptions or Council Tax Support is already in payment, a top up of support will be applied to 100% of the Council Tax charge over a period not exceeding 12 months from the date which the patient is thought to meet the Special Rules.

Where an award creates a credit on the account a refund will / can be made to the person named as liable for Council Tax at the property.

Backdating

If the applicant or a member of their household has been diagnosed with a terminal illness within the last 12 months, the Council will backdate your award to the confirmed Special Rule date. This support will apply for a period of up to 12 months.

For any applications for a past period where the Special Rules date has exceeded the 12 months we will award 12 months support from the date the SR1 form is received.

How to claim

[Cost of living support | Milton Keynes City Council](#)

