



**North Yorkshire**  
County Council

# North Yorkshire Local Assistance Fund



## What is it?

The North Yorkshire Local Assistance Fund (“the Fund”) provides support for vulnerable adults to move into or remain in the community, and for families under exceptional pressure to stay together.

Awards are made in the form of goods, not cash. Items requested must be essential and critical to your needs or those of your family. They include essential items of household furniture and equipment, beds and bedding, food vouchers, clothing vouchers, utility top-ups, and other essential items.



## Can I apply?

You can apply if:

1. You are 16 years old or over; and
2. You live in, or are moving to North Yorkshire (including if you are leaving an institution and resettling in North Yorkshire); and
3. You are in receipt of specific means-tested benefits or you have a household income below the low income threshold (£16,105) and have less than £1,000 in capital; and
4. You have exhausted all other forms of support; and
5. You are receiving support from an Authorised Agent for one or more of the following vulnerability criteria:
  - Homeless
  - Learning / physical disability
  - Mental health problems
  - Recently released from prison
  - Victim of domestic abuse
  - Carer
  - Drug or alcohol dependency
  - Couple and single parents with children and people caring for children, who are under exceptional pressure. Exceptional pressure may be the result of acute domestic difficulties or an unforeseen emergency. An award would normally be made to help members of a family to stay together.

## How are applications made? How often can I apply?

The Fund operates through a network of 'Authorised Agents' – specialist organisations and services in your local area who will want to discuss your needs with you a bit more and talk about the kind of support they may be able to help you access. This may include completing an online application for the Fund for you, if you are eligible for assistance.

In exceptional circumstances, applications can be submitted directly, without the need to attend an agency in the area. For example, this might be because:

- The local agency is unable to urgently access the online application portal.
- There is an access issue, and the applicant simply cannot get to the Authorised Agent, and the Agent is unable to visit the applicant.
- There isn't an Authorised Agent in the area.
- The applicant is eligible to begin receiving support at an Authorised Agent, but the Authorised Agent is unable to begin supporting the applicant within 28 days.

This process is slower though, as applicants will need to make sure they send all the documentary evidence required to support their application, including confirmation of their vulnerability. Online applications through an Authorised Agent are preferred, to make sure we get assistance urgently to people who need it.

### Food or utility top-up

If you have an urgent need for food or utility top-up and you are eligible for support from the Fund, you will be able to apply to the Fund for both of these, if needed, on up to two occasions within a rolling 12 month period.

If you meet all of our basic criteria around age, residency and income, and have an urgent need for food or utility top-up but do not strictly meet one of the vulnerability criteria at point 5 above, then you may still be able to apply for a one-off food voucher and/or a one-off utility top-up as long as you have not previously applied for one in the previous 12 months.

### All other items

You will only be able to apply for a maximum of two items per household in any rolling 12 month period.

You will also be limited to one white good item (e.g. fridge, cooker) per year as part of the maximum two items available.

## How does utility top-up work?

Once your application for utility top-up has been approved you will be sent a pre-credited voucher or code with a set amount to help top up your energy supply. You will be able to receive the voucher by post, email or text. You should specify how you would like to receive your voucher or code when you apply. Vouchers will need to be taken to any PayPoint outlet, such as your local newsagent, along with your gas prepayment card or electricity key. Outlets offering the PayPoint service can be identified with the PayPoint logo in the window. Once the voucher barcode has been scanned against your card or key, this will automatically credit your account with one of the amounts below.

- Individual - **£28**
- Family (more than one adult in the household) - **£45**

You will be required to provide identification to the PayPoint merchant and as such it is important that you make sure that we know the best way of sending the voucher to you. Repeat vouchers cannot be provided in the event that a voucher has been mislaid. Each voucher will only work once and, when redeemed, cannot be used again.

In circumstances where you have a coin meter or require other fuel such as a gas bottle, it may be possible for the Authorised Agent applying on your behalf to request a voucher which can be redeemed for cash at a PayPoint outlet. This will need to be confirmed with the Authorised Agent.

Please note that where a standard voucher is issued by us for a direct top up of gas or electricity accounts, these cannot be exchanged for cash and the PayPoint merchant will be unable to provide you with a cash alternative.





If you desire a utility top-up voucher to be issued by email or text we can guarantee the voucher will be issued within 24 hours providing the application is received before 3:45pm, Monday to Friday. Utility vouchers delivered by post may take a little longer to arrive (up to five days) and it is not recommended to request by post if the need is urgent.

Please note that utility top up vouchers will expire one month after the issue date.

### **What if I apply to the Fund for assistance and I am not happy with the decision?**

You can ask for the decision to be looked at again. Details about how to get the decision reviewed will be provided in the response to your application. Please note that the Fund is discretionary; a successful application in the past may not mean that you are automatically eligible again in the future.

### **Where can I get urgent help if my application is not successful or if I am not eligible?**

Information will be available for those who are not eligible for the Fund or not successful with their application to get other forms of support nationally or locally, appropriate to their need. We have also published a list of other forms of support on our website: <https://www.northyorks.gov.uk/local-assistance-fund>

If you would like to speak to someone about what other forms of support might be available within North Yorkshire you can contact North Yorkshire County Council Customer Services on 01609 780780.

## Where can I get help with other costs that aren't included within the Fund?

The Department for Work and Pensions are responsible for providing a number of payments and advances for those who meet the eligibility criteria. These include:

- Funeral Payments
- Sure Start Maternity Grant
- Winter Fuel and Cold Weather Payments
- Short-term Benefit Advances
- Budgeting Advances

For further information please speak to your local JobCentre Plus office.



### Contact us

**North Yorkshire County Council, County Hall, Northallerton,  
North Yorkshire, DL7 8AD**

Our Customer Service Centre is open Monday to Friday 8.00am - 5.30pm (closed weekends and bank holidays). Tel: **01609 780 780**  
email: **customer.services@northyorks.gov.uk** web: **www.northyorks.gov.uk**

If you would like this information in another language or format please ask us.  
Tel: **01609 780 780** email: **customer.services@northyorks.gov.uk**