

PART C

LOCAL WELFARE ASSISTANCE

TRAFFORD ASSIST

Trafford Assist is the Council's Local Welfare Assistance Scheme (previously the Social Fund administered by the DWP). The scheme has been designed to offer emergency assistance and positive intervention to help households to move forward in the future.

The award depends on the customer's individual circumstances. The scheme has been designed to help residents:

- meet immediate short-term needs in an emergency or as a result of a disaster;
- return to or remain in the community and help them to live independently in their own home;
- To meet essential travelling expenses e.g. to attend a funeral of a close relative

1 What does Trafford Assist provide?

Trafford Assist uses a voucher system to provide:

- Food parcels – based on a family size and are designed to feed a family for 3 days
- Essential furniture / white goods
- Voucher system for emergency gas / electric top ups.

2 What is taken into account when deciding to make a Trafford Assist award?

Exchequer Services will consider making an award under Trafford Assist to all residents who meet the qualifying criteria set out in this policy. We will treat each case strictly on its merits and all customers will receive equal and fair treatment.

Through this policy we will seek to:

- relieve poverty;
- support Care Leavers;

- encourage Trafford Council residents to get help through positive intervention;
- help those who are trying to help themselves;
- keep families together;
- support the vulnerable in the local community;
- Help customers through personal crises and difficult events
- support disabled residents within Trafford to live independently within their own home;

Trafford Assist should be seen in the majority of cases as one off emergency fund. It is not and should not be considered as a general top up of benefit or income

Although repeat claims will be considered the customer will be required to engage with providers for support and assistance **before** an award is made.

No more than 3 applications within a 12 month period will be awarded, per breakdown of awards below.

Exchequer Services is committed to working with the local voluntary sector, social landlords and other interested parties in the Borough.

3 Who can apply?

The eligibility criteria for the scheme are as follows:

- **Residency requirements**

Must have UK residency

The Applicant must live in Trafford or expecting to live in Trafford in the next 6 weeks and can provide evidence of this from an agency.

- **Age requirements**

16 years or over

- **Applications for Furniture items**

For the first application for a furniture award within the scheme, there is no requirement to complete an income and expenditure form if an applicant is on one of the following state means tested benefits –

Employment Support Allowance Income Related

Income Support

Jobseekers Allowance Income Based

Guaranteed Pension Credit

If an applicant is not in receipt of the above or they are making a 2nd application within a 24 months' period they will be required to submit an Income and Expenditure form.

All applications for furniture items will require a visit to verify that the item is needed **before** the application is considered, unless the application form has been submitted by an internal service area.

Awards will not be made for the same furniture item within a 24 month period.

- **Applications for a Food voucher**

For the first application for a food award within the scheme, there is no requirement to complete an income and expenditure form due to the urgency of the situation.

If an applicant is making a 2nd application within a 12 month period and in receipt of the benefits stated above then an Income and Expenditure form is not required.

If an applicant is making a 2nd application within a 12 month period and they are not in receipt of the benefits stated above they will be required to submit an Income and Expenditure form.

Food awards will be based on family size and date that customer will next receive any money.

- **Applications for a Fuel voucher**

For the first application for a fuel award within the scheme, there is no requirement to complete an income and expenditure form due to the urgency of the situation.

If an applicant is making a 2nd application within a 12 month period and in receipt of the benefits stated above then an Income and Expenditure form is not required.

If an applicant is making a 2nd application within a 12 month period and they are not in receipt of a pass-ported benefit they will be required to submit an Income and Expenditure form.

The amount of the fuel voucher is £20 per award, increasing to £30 from 1st November – 1st March inclusive.

- **Applications for a Travel Voucher**

For the first application for a travel award within the scheme, there is no requirement to complete an Income and Expenditure form due to the urgency of the situation.

Proof of reason for travel will not be required where the need is for travel costs up to £10.00.

Proof of reason for travel will be required where the cost of travel exceeds £10.00.

If an applicant is making a 2nd application within a 12 month period and in receipt of the benefits above then an Income and Expenditure form is not required.

If an applicant is making a 2nd application within a 12 month period and they are not in receipt of the benefits above they will be required to submit an Income and Expenditure form.

- **How to make a claim**

- A claim under Trafford Assist should be made electronically using the e-form provided. Assistance will be provided to those customers who may not be comfortable or who experience difficulty with applying online.
- On request the customer must supply any relevant supporting evidence.
- Exchequer Services may ask for any evidence in support of an application.
- If the customer fails to provide additional evidence requested, we will refuse the customers application.
- Exchequer Services reserves the right to verify any information or evidence provided by the customer in appropriate circumstances.
- If you are already receiving support from other agencies or charities then the fund cannot duplicate this provision. In the following circumstances a formal application form will not be required:

Where the request is received from an internal team within Trafford Council i.e. Stronger Families, Social Workers, Care Leavers, Revenues and Benefits etc. and there is enough personal and financial

data (as determined by the qualifying criteria within the Trafford Assist scheme) already held by the Council to make an award

- **Method of Payment**

Exchequer Services will pay awards as detailed below, note is a no cash scheme;

- Food parcel to be collected
- Fuel – via voucher or SMS redeemable at local pay point outlet
- Furniture or white goods – order placed and delivery arranged direct by provider.
- Travel - via voucher or SMS redeemable at local pay point outlet

Reviews and Appeals

A Trafford Assist award is not a payment of benefit and is therefore not subject to the statutory appeals mechanism. A customer (or their appointee or agent) who disagrees with a Trafford Assist decision may dispute the decision. The Council must receive a request for a review within one week of being notified of the decision. An Officer of the Council will review the decision; this will not be the Officer who made the original decision.

Where the customer is still not satisfied, they will be entitled to a final review which must be made in writing within one week of the date notified of the outcome of the review.

An Exchequer Services Team Leader will conduct this final review and the decision made will be reported in writing to the customer. This decision is binding and may only be challenged through judicial review or by complaint to the Local Government Ombudsman.

The Council is committed to the fight against fraud in all its forms and has a zero tolerance fraud policy. A customer who tries to fraudulently claim a Local Welfare Assistance (Trafford Assist) award by falsely declaring their circumstances, providing a false statement or evidence in support of their application, may have committed a criminal offence. Where fraud is suspected, the Council will investigate and this may lead to criminal proceedings.

Exchequer Services reserve the right to seek recovery of a previously paid award under Trafford Assist via any recovery method available to them.

