Local Assistance Scheme (LAS)

Frequently Asked Questions

1. Who should complete the LAS application form?
The application form should be completed by the person in need of emergency support/assistance wherever possible. If that person is unable to make the application, someone else can do this on their behalf, for example, an appointee, carer, or support worker/staff member of an organisation working with the applicant.

2. Is a National Insurance number required?
Yes – a national insurance number is required to process the application and to check the information the applicant has provided about their income and household details with information held on the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) Customer Information System. NI numbers can be found on letters from DWP or on bank statements if benefits are paid into an account. If you do not know your NI number, you will need to visit the Council’s Civic Office in Waterdale, Doncaster to make a LAS application.

3. What types of assistance does the scheme cover?
There are two types of assistance available from the scheme:

- **Daily Living Expenses** to help meet an immediate short-term need for goods or services that has arisen due to an emergency, disaster or unexpected circumstances. This may include direct payments to your gas or electricity supplier or a food parcel.

- **Furniture items and white goods** to help you remain in the community, or move back to the community after a period in supported or unsettled accommodation. A range of standard items can be provided such as beds, bedding, furniture and white goods.

4. What furniture items can be provided?
The following standard items of furniture and white goods can be provided

- Beds
- Bedding
- Tables
- Pans, utensils, crockery and cutlery
- Wardrobes
- Chairs/sofas
- Curtains
- White goods such as cookers, fridges, and washing machines
- Clothes

5. Can I get a cash payment from the scheme?
We do not give cash payments. This is because we need to make sure that the award is used for its intended purpose. Awards to cover Daily Living Expenses should cover all emergency goods and services you would otherwise need cash for, for example food and utility bills.
6. **What are the qualifying conditions for the scheme?**
To be eligible for assistance from the scheme you must:
- Be aged 16 or over and have no other form of immediate financial assistance, for example, family, friends, employer, savings or other available funding; and
- Live in Doncaster or be planning to move to Doncaster following a period in supported, emergency or unsettled accommodation. If you are planning to move to Doncaster, you must have proven links to Doncaster, for example, you must have previously lived here during the last six months or have close family members living here.

In addition, you must also meet one or more of the following criteria:
- Be in receipt of a means-tested benefit (Jobseeker’s Allowance, Income Support, Employment and Support Allowance, the basic level of Universal Credit, Guarantee Pension Credit).
- Be on a low income which would normally mean you are receiving Council Tax Support (even if you don’t receive any of the above means-tested benefits).
- Be temporarily without any income, for example, if you are fleeing domestic violence.

7. **What proof and evidence checks are made?**
We will check the details you have provided on your application with our records, for example, Council Tax records to confirm you are a Doncaster resident, and with records held by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) if you are receiving benefits. We may also ask you for evidence of your crisis or emergency, for example, details of any organisations or agencies you have reported an incident or loss to or who are supporting you.

We may also check Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support records to confirm your financial and household circumstances where this information is not available from DWP records. We may also check other records held by the Council and St Leger Homes of Doncaster to confirm that you have not received assistance from other crisis or emergency schemes for the same purpose.

8. **How long will it take for my application to be dealt with?**
We will normally make a decision on your application within 2 working days. We will contact you by phone, email or letter to let you know whether your application has been successful.

9. **How and when will I receive an award for Daily Living Expenses?**
You will normally receive an award for Daily Living Expenses within 3 days of your application being granted. Food parcels will normally be delivered the next day.

- An ASDA food parcel will be delivered to you containing items to meet the essential nutritional needs of individuals and families (see further information below);
✓ Energy vouchers will be sent to you by E-Mail that can only be used to pay your gas or electricity supplier;
✓ Direct payment to travel operators (e.g. bus companies, train companies, taxis) or travel cards.

Following the award of food assistance, you will receive a text (SMS) message from Asda on your mobile telephone regarding the delivery arrangements. The text message will contain certain important information regarding the award, in particular a PIN number, and the day and time slot that the delivery will be made. You must make sure that you are at home to accept the delivery between the times shown, and please ensure that you retain the text message with the PIN number as the delivery driver will ask you for this information. If you are not in, Asda will not try to deliver the items again and your award will be cancelled. You would then have to make a further application to the Local Assistance Scheme if you still need food assistance.

10. How and when will I receive an award for Furniture Items and White Goods?
You will normally receive an award for furniture items, clothing and white goods within 2 weeks of your application being granted.

You will be sent a prepayment card for furniture items which can be used to purchase the required items from a specified retailer, normally Argos. The prepayment card will only cover the cost of basic items and cannot be used for any other purpose or to purchase items not covered by our scheme.

If you are awarded white goods such as a fridge or cooker, these will be delivered to you by our chosen retailer, normally Co-op Electrical (Co-op). A representative from Co-op will contact you to discuss the choice of appliances available and arrange a convenient date for the delivery of the item(s). Only the items we have awarded you can be supplied by Co-op. They cannot change the appliances requested or substitute one appliance for another type.

If your award is for clothing, a prepayment card for use within multiple stores will be sent to you.

11. Can I have more than one award from the Local Assistance Scheme?
Only one award will be made to you or your household within a 12 month rolling period unless there are exceptional circumstances. This is because we only have a limited amount of funding for the scheme.

12. Will I have to repay the value of the goods or items awarded?
Awards from the Local Assistance Scheme are given as a grant, not a loan. This means you will not be asked to repay the money to us. However, the Council, acting at its sole discretion, may require you to repay an amount equal to the value of any goods provided to you in the event that you sell or dispose of the goods within 6 months of receipt.
13. **Will I have to do anything in return for an award?**
   In return for an award, where appropriate, you will be expected to work with the Council to resolve any major financial issues by engaging with relevant agencies. Examples would be debt advice, welfare benefits advice and savings advice via external providers such as South Yorkshire Credit Union. Failure to engage with the Council may result in the refusal of any further application to the Local Assistance Scheme.

14. **How will the Council deal with fraudulent applications?**
   Doncaster Council is committed to the fight against fraud in all its forms. An applicant who fraudulently claims or attempts to fraudulently claim a Local Assistance Scheme award by falsely declaring their circumstances, providing false statements or evidence in support of their application, may have committed an offence under the Fraud Act 2006. Where it is alleged or suspected that such a fraud may have been committed, the matter will be investigated. If an offence is found to have occurred, action will be taken including, if appropriate, criminal proceedings.

15. **How do I apply?**
   Applications to the Local Assistance Scheme must be made online by using the form on the Council’s website: [www.doncaster.gov.uk/las](http://www.doncaster.gov.uk/las)

   It is very important that you give full details about your situation when you apply so that we can make sure we take everything into account when we make a decision.

16. **Can I appeal if my application is refused?**
   Your application will be considered based on our scheme criteria (see ‘What are the qualifying conditions for the scheme?’ on page 1), the information you have given in your application and the budget we have available. If your application is refused, you can ask us to look at it again. You will need to give reasons why you feel the decision should be reviewed and, where appropriate, provide additional information to support your request. The decision will be reviewed by a different officer to the one who made the original decision. There will be no further right of appeal, however, you will have the right to make a complaint through the Council’s complaints procedure.

17. **How do you use the information I provide in my application?**
   For details about how we use the information you give us when you make an application to the Local Assistance Scheme, please refer to the Privacy Notice on our website at: [http://www.doncaster.gov.uk/privacy](http://www.doncaster.gov.uk/privacy)

18. **Where else can I get help?**
   You can find information about other local organisations that can help people who are facing emergency or crisis situations on our website at: [www.doncaster.gov.uk/las](http://www.doncaster.gov.uk/las)

   If you do not think you will qualify for help from the Local Assistance Scheme or, if you apply and your application is unsuccessful, please contact one or more of these organisations depending on your circumstances.