

Cost of Living Assistance Fund (COLAF) Guidance

What is it?

It is a new, local scheme to support residents across the borough facing financial difficulties due to the rising cost of living. It is a one-off grant.

What is the eligibility criteria?

- You are a resident of Basingstoke and Deane, and
- You are either liable for the Council Tax of your home or the utility bills are in your name, and
- You have a household net income of £25,000 or less per year, and
- You have less than £20,000 in capital, and
- You are facing financial difficulties.

What income is counted?

Household income is all your, and your partner's, regular income including earnings and benefits. It does not include any contribution that grown-up children who live with you pay towards their upkeep. It does not include any disability benefits that you receive on behalf of a child.

How do you apply?

You need to fill in a simple application form online. You will be asked your name, address, basic household details, your household income and expenditure and the reason why you are applying.

Can I get help to apply?

You can get anyone you trust to help you fill out the form. They will have to provide their details too. If you are unable to fill out the form and you do not have anyone to help you, please contact the Benefits Team on 01256 844844.

What evidence will you be asked to provide?

In all cases, a full bank statement for the main account that you and your partner's wages or benefits get paid into and that the bills are paid from. If you use more than one bank account, you will need to provide the others too. You will also need to provide evidence of your income or benefits, for example wage slips or benefit award letter.

If you are not liable for the council tax, or if your application is for help with a specific utility bill that has not yet been paid, you will need to provide a copy of the bill.

What can you apply for?

You can apply for a set amount, for example: an unexpected bill, or for the maximum amount, depending on your household income.

Household Income	Maximum Grant
£0-£15,000	£1000
£15,001-£20,000	£500
£20,001-£25,000	£200

The grant is normally paid in cash that you will be able to collect from any Post Office. In some circumstances, you might be also provided with a supermarket voucher. In addition, we may be able to make a payment directly to your utility or energy supplier.

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What evidence will I need to support my application?

- A full bank statement that shows your name, sort-code, address, and account number that shows all your transactions for the last month. It should show your household income coming in and the bills that are paid out. If you use more than one bank account, statements will be required for these too.
- If you are not the person who pays the Council Tax, a utility or energy bill that is in your name.
- Proof of income for you and your Partner
- The bill or evidence of the cost of the service or item that you want help with, if applicable.

You may be contacted and asked to provide additional proof to support your application.

What happens next?

Your application will be processed as quickly as possible.

It will be checked to see whether you meet the eligibility criteria.

You might be contacted for more information or evidence.

The person making the decision will decide if a grant should be awarded, the amount and how it should be paid.

You will be informed of the decision in writing, normally by e-mail, including the reasons why the decision has been made and if a grant has been awarded, how it is intended that it should be used.

The council reserves the right to refuse an application if further information or evidence has been requested but not provided promptly or there is reason to believe that false information or evidence has been provided.

Other considerations

Assistance will be given on a first come, first served basis, until the funding provided has been fully allocated.

Only one grant will be awarded per household within a 12-month period.

The grant is made independently of any other support you may receive from government initiatives and similar schemes run by organisations.

The decision is at the discretion of the person making the decision.

What can I do if I do not agree with the decision?

You should write to us within 10 days of receiving the decision and give the reasons why you do not agree with it. There are no formal appeal rights as this is a discretionary fund however your case will be looked at by another officer to see whether the decision is fair and comparable to other grants being awarded.

How can I contact you?

By email: COLAF@basingstoke.gov.uk