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# Crisis and Resilience Fund Housing Payment Policy

**Guidelines for the operation of the Housing  
Payment element of the Crisis and Resilience  
Fund.**

23 March 2026

Review date: 23 March 2027

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## **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 In July 2001 the Discretionary Housing Payment Scheme was introduced giving Councils' powers to make a Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP) to top up Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit.
- 1.2 The DHP policy was revised to reflect changes to the benefits system introduced by the Welfare Reform Act 2012; this includes the introduction of Universal Credit, the size criteria and the benefit cap.
- 1.3 From April 2013 Council Tax Benefit was replaced by a localised Council Tax Reduction (CTR) scheme and from that date, awards of DHP no longer covered help with paying Council Tax. From April 2019, the Council has instead made provision for the award of Exceptional Hardship Payments (EHPs) to support those facing exceptional hardship in paying their Council Tax. Information about EHPs can be found on the Council's website: [www.oldham.gov.uk](http://www.oldham.gov.uk)
- 1.4 Our policy has been developed based on the Discretionary Housing Payments Good Practice Guide (updated May 2022) issued by the Department for Work and Pensions.
- 1.5 From 1 April 2026, DHP will be replaced by Housing Payment (HP) as part of the Crisis and Resilience Fund (CRF). The HP will closely replicate existing DHP guidelines and will adopt a phased transition over the 3-year funding period.
- 1.6 All officers involved in the consideration and processing of HP applications will adhere to this policy.

## **2. Purpose of the Scheme**

- 2.1 The purpose of this policy is to specify how Oldham Council will operate the HP scheme and indicate some of the factors that will be considered when assessing if a HP can be made. Each case will be treated strictly on its merits, and all residents will be treated equally and fairly.
  - 2.2 The HP Government contributions are specified by Government, and this budget will be allocated to support those most in need, including those affected by Welfare Reform.
  - 2.3 Oldham Council will consider making a HP to residents who meet the qualifying criteria as specified in this policy. Oldham Council will seek through the operation of this policy to:
    - alleviate poverty
    - encourage and sustain people in employment
    - sustain tenancies and prevent homelessness
    - support vulnerable young people in the transition to adult life
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- encourage Oldham residents to obtain and sustain employment
  - safeguard residents in their homes
  - help those who are trying to help themselves
  - keep families together
  - support vulnerable or elderly in the local community
  - help claimants through personal crises and difficult events
  - promote good educational outcomes for children and young people
  - support those affected by welfare reform
  - support care leavers up to the age of 25

### **3. Principles of the scheme**

3.1 The main features of the HP scheme are that:

- HP's are not payments of Housing Benefit (HB)
- there must be entitlement to the minimum amount of HB or Universal Credit including the housing element for rental costs (UCHE), for any period that a HP is awarded.
- the operation of the scheme is for Oldham Council to determine
- it is a discretionary scheme
- a resident does not have a statutory right to a payment
- the amount that can be paid by Oldham Council in any financial year is cash-limited by the Secretary of State and may be reduced, or increased in subsequent years
- the support should be seen as short term. However, in some instances the award can be used to provide longer-term support.

3.2 HP's cannot be used to;

- pay ineligible service charges
- minimise the effect of DWP sanctions
- make payment when HB/UCHE is suspended or
- when a resident does not have a minimum entitlement of HB or UCHE

N.B. The housing costs to which the HP relates do not have to be the housing costs of the property for which the benefit is awarded. For example, HP can be used for a rent deposit or rent in advance for a property that the claimant is yet to move into, if the applicant is already entitled to HB or UCHE for their present home.

### **4. The Application Process**

4.1 A request for a HP is made by the completion of an online application form which is available from the council website [www.oldham.gov.uk/HP](http://www.oldham.gov.uk/HP). Assistance to complete an application will be provided by telephone and with assisted support at the Customer Service Centre at Spindles.

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- 4.2 The claimant will be required to submit the e-form to the Council. The Council will request further information as required and/or verify any information or evidence provided. The Evidence must be provided within one month of the request, although this can be extended in appropriate circumstances. If the resident is unable to or does not provide the required evidence, the Council will still consider the application based on the information it does hold such as on the HB database and/or DWP systems.
- 4.3 Oldham Council will first explore options available to the claimant and will liaise with the homelessness prevention team in order to negotiate with the landlord a more affordable rent (where it is appropriate to do so.)
- 4.4 Oldham Council will use HP as a gateway to further support by using referral pathways to build financial resilience and reduce crisis need by making referrals to internal services and external advice agencies that can provide advice and information on managing finances and personal budgeting, where this could assist in providing a long-term financial solution.
- 4.5 Oldham Council will also undertake proactive exercises to determine specific categories of claimant who may be eligible for a HP. These cases may be awarded a HP without completing an application form.

## **5 Deciding whether to award a HP**

- 5.1 In deciding whether to award a HP, the Council will consider:
- the shortfall between HB/UCHE and rent liability;
  - any steps taken by the resident to reduce their rent liability, such as seeking to take on more affordable accommodation
  - the financial circumstances of the resident, any partner, their dependents and other occupiers of their household
  - the income and expenditure of the resident
  - resident, any partner, their dependents and other occupiers of their household
  - any savings or capital the resident or any partner, their dependents and other occupiers of their household may hold
  - the level of indebtedness of the resident and their family;
  - any medical issues, or other special needs, of the resident, partner or dependents, or other members of their household;
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- the nature of the circumstances of the resident, for example where the resident has moved house in order to find more affordable accommodation and the fares to their place of work are now considerably higher;
  - whether the circumstances of the resident are such that a HP would not alleviate the problems of the resident within a reasonable period (say 12 months);
  - the Local Housing Allowance rates.
  - the effect of the April 2013 Size Criteria changes for Social Housing Tenants; Priority will be given to those who:
    - have had a property significantly adapted to meet disablement needs
    - need additional space because of their disability
    - are taking the necessary steps to either downsize or take on a boarder/lodger, (but see circumstances when a HP will not be awarded at 8.1 below)
  - the effect of the Benefit Cap changes to Housing Benefit. Priority will be given to those who can demonstrate that they are;
    - taking the necessary steps to help themselves and are working towards getting a job or additional income to meet the loss in HB/UCHE
    - taking the necessary steps to move to cheaper alternative accommodation, but see circumstances when a HP will not be awarded in 6.1 below
  - any other special circumstances the Council are aware of
  - the possible impact on the Council of not making such an award, e.g., the resident becoming homeless, fuel poverty, child poverty etc., and the costs associated with this
  - the amount available in the HP budget (the Council's overall cash limit is determined by the Government);

5.2 The Council will decide how much to award based on all the circumstances. This will be any amount between the rental liability and the amount of benefit already awarded by the Council.

5.3 An award of HP does not guarantee that a further award will be made at a later date even if the resident's circumstances have not changed.

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## **6 Circumstances when a HP will not be awarded**

- 6.1 When a HP application is received from a resident who cannot demonstrate that they are taking the necessary steps to help themselves i.e., they have not approached or are not in continual engagement with relevant bodies that will help support them.
- 6.2 When a HP application is received from a resident who is not considered to be a settled resident in Oldham i.e., is not living and claiming HB/UCHE in the boundary area for the borough.
- 6.3 When a HP application is received from a resident that shows the overall income exceeds the outgoings or where the application shows there is unreasonable expenditure.

## **7 Period of Award**

- 7.1 The Council will decide the length of time for which a HP will be awarded based on the evidence supplied and the facts known.
- 7.2 The start date of an award will normally be:
- the Monday following the date the application for HP is received, or
  - the date on which entitlement to HB or UCHE commenced (providing the application for HP is received within one calendar month of the claim for HB/UCHE being decided), whichever is the earlier or the most appropriate.
  - The Council will not usually award a HP for a period exceeding 26 weeks. HP are intended as short-term assistance and the claimant will be expected to make clear attempts to improve their financial and housing circumstances during any award. In exceptional circumstances the Council will consider an indefinite award or until such a time the resident's circumstances change.
  - Claimants may make subsequent applications once their initial award has expired or if their circumstances have changed or worsened if their original application has been previously refused. There is no guarantee that future applications will result in a HP award or at the same level of award, but each case will be treated on its own merits.
  - The Council will consider any reasonable request for backdating an award, but this consideration will normally be limited to the current financial year.
- 7.3 All awards will be dependent on the funding available to the Council.
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## **8 Payment of One-Off Lump Sums**

- 8.1 The Council will consider all reasonable requests for one off lump sum payments for example for; rent deposit, help with removal costs and rent in advance but usually only where benefit is not being paid direct to the landlord.
- 8.2 Any one-off lump sum payment for rent in advance and rent deposit will usually be restricted to a maximum that is equal to one-month contractual rent.
- 8.3 HP can be awarded for a rent deposit or rent in advance for a property that the claimant is yet to move into if they are already entitled to HB or UC at their present home.
- 8.4 When awarding HP for a rent deposit or rent in advance, it must be established that:
- the property is affordable for the tenant; and
  - the tenant has a valid reason to move; and
  - the deposit or rent in advance is reasonable; and
  - The move is within the borough.
- 8.5 It must be established with the claimant whether they:
- are due to have a deposit or rent in advance in respect of their existing tenancy returned to them; or
  - have received assistance from another department within the Council with a rent deposit (such as a rent deposit guarantee scheme or similar).

## **9. Change of Circumstances**

- 9.1 The claimant must inform the Council if there has been a change in the claimant's circumstances.

## **10. Notification**

- 10.1 Oldham Council will notify the resident of the outcome of their request within fourteen days of making a decision.

Where the application is successful, Oldham Council will inform the resident of:

- the weekly amount of the award;
  - the period of the award;
  - the reason for the award;
  - the method of payment;
  - the conditionality (requirement to undertake take certain activities), where appropriate;
  - the need to report changes of circumstances;
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Where the request for a HP is unsuccessful Oldham Council will explain the reasons why the decision was made and explain their rights for a review of the decision.

## **11. Payment of a HP**

11.1 The Council will decide the most appropriate person to pay based on the circumstances of each case. This includes:

- the resident;
- their partner;
- an appointee;
- their landlord (or an agent of the landlord);
- any third party to whom it might be appropriate to make payment.

11.2 The Council will pay an award of HP by electronic transfer

11.3 Payment frequency will normally be made in line with the HB/UCHE award.

## **12. Overpayments**

12.1 The Council will seek to recover any HP found to be overpaid. Normally this will involve issuing an invoice to the resident or the person to whom the award was paid.

12.2 The Council will not normally seek recovery for any overpayment of HP caused through our error.

12.3 A decision that a HP is overpaid will be notified by decision letter. The claimant may request a review of the decision based upon the grounds that:

- the calculation of the overpayment is incorrect
- the overpayment should not be recoverable as it was caused by Council error.

## **13. Fraud**

13.1 Oldham Council is committed to the fight against fraud in all its forms. Where the Benefits Service suspects that such a fraud may have occurred, the matter will be investigated as appropriate, and this may lead to criminal proceedings being instigated. Any resident who tries to fraudulently claim a HP might have committed an offence under the Theft Act (2006).

## **14. Review of a Decision**

14.1 Oldham Council can review a HP decision in the event of a dispute, either at the time of the initial rejection or after a cancellation or recovery.

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14.2 A HP decision cannot be appealed to a Housing Benefit Tribunal. However, the claimant may take any disputes to the local government ombudsman, where there is an allegation of maladministration.

## **15. Publicity**

15.1 Oldham Council will publicise the scheme internally and externally through the Council's website and the use of partner organisations working with all interested parties to achieve this. A copy of this policy statement will be available on the Council's website.

## **16. Monitoring**

- Oldham Council will retain overall responsibility for the monitoring of HP awards against HP budget, to ensure the scheme is administered in accordance with Council policy and within Government and Council budget.
- HP may be delivered by other organisations on behalf of Oldham Council.

## **17. Further assistance and information**

- Residents will be signposted and referred to other organisations which can provide assistance and support.
- Information will be available at [http://www.oldham.gov.uk/info/100001/benefits\\_and\\_money](http://www.oldham.gov.uk/info/100001/benefits_and_money)

## **18. Policy Review**

- 18.1 The Council reserves the right to review and revise the policy at any time based on information gained as a result of operating the scheme.
- 18.2 The HP Policy forms part of the Cabinet Paper outlining the Oldham Crisis and Resilience Fund Scheme. Changes to HP scheme mid-year are delegated to the Executive Director of Resources in consultation with the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance, Corporate Services and Sustainability.
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