

Commissioner's Advice to Inspectors

Amounts to Award: CCGs

This advice covers the general principles to be followed when deciding the appropriate amount to award for items as a community care grant.

1. The Order of Consideration

The Inspector should only address the question of how much to award for an item after having first decided the priority of that need, and then having decided that the budget can meet that level of priority.

When deciding the priority of a need the potential amount of an award is not a relevant consideration. At this stage in the decision making process an Inspector is considering the general need rather than the precise item that should be awarded, or the amount that should be awarded. For example, an Inspector will consider the priority of a need for sleeping facilities, rather than whether enough money should be awarded for a single or a double bed.

2. Relevant Considerations when Deciding Award Amounts

When deciding how much to award for an item an Inspector is required by section 140 of the Social Security Contributions and Benefits Act 1992 to:

- have regard to all the circumstances of the case, including the nature, extent and urgency of the need and the state of the budget;
- follow the directions of the Secretary of State; and
- take account of the Secretary of State's guidance.

3. All the Circumstances of the Case

Inspectors should be careful to consider all the circumstances of the case, when deciding how much to award for an item. A wide range of factors may be relevant. For example, the nature, extent and urgency of a need will be important considerations in deciding what type of item would be suitable to meet the particular needs of the applicant.

The limited budget is also an important consideration. Careful scrutiny of award amounts can help to maximise the range of needs that are met; however, awards for poor quality items are likely to be a false economy.

4. The Secretary of State's Directions: Directions 28 and 27

Direction 28 provides that the minimum amount that can be paid as a community care grant is £30, except in the case of travel and daily living expenses where there is no minimum amount. The Inspector should decide on the appropriate amounts to award for the items in question; if the total award would amount to less than £30, no award should be made.

The directions do not set a maximum amount that may be awarded as a grant.

Having decided on an appropriate amount to award, if the applicant has capital above limits set out in Direction 27, the award will be reduced or a payment may be refused. Separate Commissioner's Advice is available on Capital Resources.

5. The Secretary of State's Guidance

The Secretary of State has provided guidance on award amounts at paragraphs 367 to 378 of part 2 of the Social Fund Guide. Inspectors should take account of this guidance when reaching decisions on award amounts. However, the guidance does not cover all situations and is not binding. In some circumstances Inspectors may decide that it is not appropriate to follow the guidance.

The key points from the Secretary of State's guidance may be summarised as follows:

Generally, in order to maximise the range of needs that may be met from the budget, decision makers should base award amounts on the lowest end of prices:

- *available locally*
- *from national high street chain retailers and/or national catalogue outlets*
- *for items that:*
 - *meet the particular needs of the applicant and/or his family; and*
 - *are of reasonable and serviceable quality;*
- *and awards should include enough for delivery and/or fitting, where appropriate.*

Exceptionally, where a budget is under extreme pressure (for example, because it cannot meet all high priority needs) it may be appropriate to base award amounts on prices available from a local supplier, where that supplier is reputable, and the items will meet the needs of the applicant/family and are of guaranteed serviceable quality.

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