

Background Information and Analysis

1. Scope of current DDF support

- 1.1. The DDF provides ECPs and EPGs to Derbyshire residents experiencing financial hardship.
- 1.2. ECPs are cash payments which people can apply for when they are unable to meet an urgent need for food, heating or emergency travel due to a disaster or crisis; and/or where there is immediate and serious risk to the health and safety of the applicant or their family.

Cash payments are typically processed within 1 or 2 working days and awards can be collected on the same day from the Post Office. ECPs are currently limited to three awards in a 12 month period.

In the DDF policy, ECPs are of the value £54 for a single person, plus £10 for other affected members of the household, however, funding from the Government (HSF) has temporarily allowed these to be uplifted to £64 for a single person and £20 for other affected members of the household.

- 1.3. EPGs are usually awarded in the form of goods delivered to the home or a payment made directly to a supplier (for example a landlord or removal company).

To be eligible people must be in receipt of means tested benefits (with a small number of exceptions).

EPGs can help people who need help to:

- return to the community after a time in care,
- remain living at home or in the community rather than going into care,
- settle in the community as part of a resettlement programme, including following domestic abuse
- ease exceptional pressure,
- or meet certain travelling expenses.

2. Application Process

DDF applications are taken over the phone by Call Derbyshire and are passed to a team of case assessors to be considered.

The DDF Team has assessed over 280,000 applications in ten years of operation.

Applications are accepted online from professionals and work is being scoped to move forward with an online offer for residents as part of the hosted Mosaic service, to reduce pressure on Call Derbyshire and waiting times for residents.

3. **Emergency Cash Payments – 2022/23 data**

- 3.1. 32,756 awards for ECPs were made in 2022/23 totalling £2.83m. This was considerably higher than previous years due to the implementation of HSF. This additional funding allowed for awards to be made in a greater range of household circumstances, an increase in award value and an increase in the number of awards that could be made.
- 3.2. The profile of ECP applicants is predominately working age, the most frequent groups are single men (30.5% of ECP applications) and single parents (32.5% of ECP applications). An estimated 30% of ECP applications are from someone who has a disability or health condition.
- 3.3. The most common reasons for applying are due to either a new claim for benefits or a problem with an existing benefit claim, altogether 26.3% of ECP applications. In 66% of those applications, the applicant is claiming Universal Credit.

The second most common reason for applying for an ECP is due to increased costs and the rising cost of living. This is where an applicant has been in receipt of their usual income but rising costs have meant that they are not left with enough money to adequately cover the need for food and heating. “Increased costs” accounted for 19.7% of applications in 2022/23.

4. **Exceptional Pressure Grants- 2022/23 data**

- 4.1. 658 Exceptional Pressure Grants EPGs were awarded in 2022/23 totalling £0.54m
- 4.2. The pressure grant applicant profile differs from the ECP applicant profile in that there are more single parents (37.3% of EPG applications) and more applicants who are disabled or have a health condition (43% of EPG applications). Care leavers, people with drug or alcohol issues, people who are homeless or sofa surfing and people who have recently left prison are over-represented in EPG applicants compared to population as a whole. 64% of EPG applicants are vulnerable in some way.

5. **Alternative provision**

- 5.1. There is limited alternative provision to ECPs in Derbyshire, other than direct provision of food through food banks. However, the foodbank network in Derbyshire is not comprehensive and has grown up in specific localities from a grassroots response to local need, The Fund collaborates with local foodbanks where appropriate, and where the foodbanks have capacity.
- 5.2. There are more alternative provisions to EPGs, such as Budgeting Loans and Advances through the Department of Work and Pensions, Credit Union Loans, furniture re-use projects and charity funding. These may not be as comprehensive as DDF provision.

Few applicants to the DDF are able to access alternative provision and when surveyed, 42% of applicants who did not receive an award when they applied, did not solve their problem in another way.

The Fund works closely with the Public Health Affordable Credit Project to support unsuccessful applicants to the Fund to access loans via Credit Unions if appropriate, other ethical lenders and to access other forms of advice and support.