

Crisis and Resilience Fund (CRF) Housing Payment Policy April 2026

Introduction

1.1. The Crisis and Resilience Fund (CRF) Housing Payment scheme is designed to provide financial assistance to recipients of Housing Benefit and Universal Credit where the housing costs element is included in their award. It is payable where additional help with housing costs is needed and awards are made under the Discretionary Financial Assistance Regulations 2001, which gives Local Authorities broad discretion on the amount of money paid out and the way the scheme is administered.

1.2. The government has provided additional funding in recent years to enable local authorities to provide transitional support to customers affected by size criteria in the social housing sector, the benefit cap and changes to Local Housing Allowance, but it is entirely at the Council's discretion as to the amounts spent in each area.

2. What CRF Housing Payments Cover

2.1. CRF Housing Payments are intended to support people who are receiving Housing Benefit or Universal Credit within Lewisham and need additional support to cover housing-related costs.

Housing-related costs are: rental liability as defined in Housing Benefit and Universal Credit legislation; lump sum payments for deposits or rent in advance where the applicant is moving to accommodation either inside or outside of the borough; and removal costs where the applicant is moving to accommodation either inside or outside of the borough.

2.2. Lump sum payments will be considered to help claimants where their current tenancy is unsustainable and they need to move to more affordable accommodation. In order to receive a lump sum payment, the claimant must be receiving Housing Benefit or Universal Credit (that includes a Housing Costs element) at their current address in Lewisham.

2.3. What CRF Housing Payments do not cover: service or rental charges ineligible for Housing Benefit and Council Tax liability.

3. Principles Governing the Award of CRF Housing Payments

3.1. There is no statutory right to a CRF Housing Payment as the scheme is discretionary.

3.2. The Council has formulated this policy having regard to the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) Crisis and Resilience Fund (CRF) Guidance for Local Authorities in England

(1 April 2026 to 31 March 2029), including Housing Payment guidance and any subsequent updates issued by DWP.

3.3. We do not exceed the grant provided by the Government for CRF Housing Payments, i.e. we will not top up the grant from the Council's own funds, which are needed to provide other essential services.

3.4. Within the above constraints, the Council's broad aim is to support people affected by welfare reform with a view to preventing homelessness; supporting people to secure paid employment; supporting people to secure sustainable and affordable accommodation; supporting people who out of necessity are temporarily occupying accommodation which is unaffordable from their benefits; and supporting people who are in unaffordable tenancies but cannot move due to health, disability or child protection reasons.

3.5. CRF Housing Payments will not normally be used to provide long-term support for individuals and will be used to provide short-term support to allow people to resolve financial difficulties and move to a financially sustainable position.

3.6. The Council may require claimants to demonstrate that their housing costs are unaffordable having regard to all of their sources of income and savings.

3.7. CRF Housing Payment claimants will be expected to take personal action to mitigate the impact of welfare reforms on them.

3.8. The Council may require claimants to demonstrate that they have taken such action before awarding a CRF Housing Payment.

3.9. Claimants with particular vulnerabilities and pressing reasons why they cannot quickly move to a financially sustainable position are more likely to be awarded a CRF Housing Payment and for longer periods.

3.10. The Council may require such claimants to demonstrate that there are particular barriers preventing them from moving to a financially sustainable position before awarding a CRF Housing Payment.

3.11. The Council will take into account evidence that the cost to the Council of available alternatives would be greater than the cost of awarding a CRF Housing Payment.

3.12. As a general rule, a CRF Housing Payment intended to address a shortfall due to the benefit cap will be limited to no more than 6 months.

3.13. As a general rule, a CRF Housing Payment intended to address a shortfall due to other temporary hardship will be limited to no more than 3 months.

3.14. Where a particular need for a CRF Housing Payment has been demonstrated, the Council is not obliged to award a CRF Housing Payment to cover the full shortfall.

3.15. The above principles will be applied flexibly and the merits of the individual application will be considered having regard to all relevant information.

4. Applications

4.1. Applications should be made using the London Borough of Lewisham CRF Housing Payment application form, but any application for a CRF Housing Payment made in writing will be accepted and further information requested if necessary. We will accept applications from the tenant, their representative or the landlord.

5. Method of Payment

5.1. The Benefits Service will decide on the most appropriate person to pay and the method and time of payments based on the particular circumstances of each case. Where a CRF Housing Payment is awarded in respect of council rental liability, it will be credited to the relevant housing rent account and where a CRF Housing Payment is awarded as a lump sum payment for rent in advance or a deposit, payment will be made direct to the landlord.

6. Disputes

6.1. If the applicant disagrees with a CRF Housing Payment decision they must put this in writing giving their reasons.

6.2. The decision will be looked at again by a different person to the one who made the original decision.

6.3. CRF Housing Payments are not Housing Benefit or Universal Credit and therefore applicants cannot appeal to the Independent Tribunal. They can apply for a judicial review of the decision in the High Court but legal advice should be sought in the first instance.