**Home Energy Support Fund**

1. **Introduction**

The premise of the scheme is not to clear a person’s fuel debts, but to assist people who are having difficulty paying for their domestic fuel during the winter months, effectively to assist them in feeling able to turn the heating on.

The scheme consists of a number of elements:

* Funds have been made available through Cheshire East Council to help people who are struggling with debts, which include domestic fuel liabilities. This amount is added to by local people making voluntary donations.
* Qualification for the scheme will be local people who are experiencing a short term crisis that is causing financial hardship; this could be loss of a job, suspension of welfare benefit or a relationship breakdown, rather than ongoing issues relating to covering living costs from a “maximised” income.

The scheme will serve to help clients with fuel debts who have a billing account with their utility company, as well as those with a prepayment meter.

1. **Qualification**

To qualify for assistance from this scheme, the client must meet the following criteria:

1. Be a resident of Cheshire East
2. Be experiencing financial difficulties which include ability to pay their domestic fuel bills
3. This financial difficulty must be the result of a short-term hardship causing a suspension of any regular income, again examples of this could be the loss of employment and delay in welfare benefit payment; the suspension of welfare benefits or relationship breakdown. This may also include clients who are awaiting an intervention such as Debt Relief Order.
4. Be able to demonstrate that they have contracted with a utility company for domestic fuel within their home in Cheshire East and where possible provide valid bills or statements from that company.
5. Be prepared to engage with Citizens Advice Cheshire East (CACE) and Citizens Advice Cheshire North (CACN) regarding better value with fuel costs
6. **Fuel debt where there is a billing account**

Partners will identify clients who would benefit from financial assistance to pay fuel debts.

1. Client has a fuel debt on an account and an inability to pay this debt.
2. Referral Form to be signed by the client
3. After domestic fuel debts are identified as an issue, referral details to be forwarded to CACN using the referral from below.

This is to be sent to jill.walsh@citizensadvicecn.org.uk

1. CACN will make BACS payment to utility company and record this on client’s case notes
2. Separate tracking record of payments made will be updated
3. Payment will be limited to a maximum of £49
4. Only one payment will be made in any 12 month period
5. **Lack of Fuel for client on a pre-payment meter\***

Partners will identify clients who would benefit from financial assistance to pay fuel bills. Payments for clients with smart prepayment meters will be made online. Vouchers will be issued for clients with traditional prepayment meters.

1. When a client is identified as meeting the criteria for financial assistance, an amount to cover the cost of heating their home will be allocated to a maximum of £49.
2. After domestic fuel debts are identified as an issue, details of client’s utility provider would be forwarded to CACN using the referral from below. The referrer will establish from the client’s fuel provider whether there is provision for payments to be made by BACS or if the client requires a voucher. This is to be sent to jill.walsh@citizensadvicecn.org.uk
3. CACN will then update the client’s case notes that payment has been made.
4. **Other types of fuel**

For fuel such as bottle gas, oil and coal, where the criteria as outlined above is met, BACS payments to fuel providers will be made.

1. **Exclusions**

Cash payments to individual clients cannot be made under any circumstances

Only the named fuel account holder may access this scheme

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**Referral Form for the Home Energy Support Fund**

| Client’s Name |  |
| --- | --- |
| Date of birth |  |
| Postcode |  |
| MobileTelephone Number |  |
| Email address |  |
| Utility Company |  |
| Utility Reference   * Customer number for bank transfers. * Top up card number for smart prepayment meters |  |
| Utility company bank details if credit meter | Sort Code:  Account: |
| Type of fuel, gas or electricity |  |
| Prepayment or credit meter |  |
| Smart Meter? Yes or No |  |
| Type of payment   * Bank transfer for Direct Debit customers * Online guest payment for Smart prepayment meters * Voucher for traditional prepayment meters. |  |
| Organisation making referral |  |
| Referrer’s contact details |  |
| **Referrer confirms that current bill is in client’s name and that they meet the criteria:-**   * Cheshire East Resident   ● Unable to pay their domestic fuel bills  ● In short-term hardship/crisis |  |
| Payment may be made by direct payment to your supplier or via voucher. If we pay by voucher would you prefer a text or email |  |
| We must ask for your authority to act on your behalf when taking action for you. We may need to contact you and the referring agency to help with your application. We need your signed consent to allow us to do this: | |
| Client’s signature |  |
| Date |  |

**Please note that if the form is incomplete it will be returned to the referrer to complete.**

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| **Criteria for Referrers** |  |
| --- | --- |
| Cheshire East Resident |  |
| Short term crisis (please tick) below |  |
| * Short term hardship |  |
| * Suspension of regular income |  |
| * Loss of employment |  |
| * Delay/sanction of welfare benefit |  |
| * Relationship breakdown |  |
| * Awaiting debt intervention, eg DRO |  |
| * Other – please specify |  |
| Can provide evidence of domestic fuel supplier |  |
| Client is liable for the fuel bill |  |
| Agree to engage with CACN or CACE to receive fuel, heating, insulation advice. |  |
| Client has not been referred to HESF within the last 12 months. |  |
| Client understands that payment will be paid to their fuel account and not in cash |  |
| Client signposted to local Citizens Advice for help with debt if required.www.citizensadvicecn.org.uk |  |
| Name of adviser |  |
| Name of organisation |  |
| Signed by client if in person |  |
| Agreed with client if by phone |  |

**While we aim to make payment on the same day please allow up to 5 working days.**