



North Yorkshire Local Assistance Fund
Update bulletin for agencies
February 2014



This bulletin provides a summary of key issues and information for authorised agencies and other partners in relation to the North Yorkshire Local Assistance Fund (NYLAF).

If you have any queries or feedback about this bulletin or the NYLAF then please contact nylaf@northyorks.gov.uk

General Bulletin

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Utility top-up

As stated in November's quarterly bulletin, provision for utility top-up is now in place. This provides £28 for single applicants and £45 for families. As per our current food provision - customers who don't meet a target category but are more broadly vulnerable and who meet our other basic criteria for NYLAF can apply for a one-off voucher.

Update on order times – If a customer (or agent) rings NYCC Customer services before 2pm for postal orders and 3:45pm for email orders Monday to Friday to request utility top-up then this can be processed and delivered within 24 hours.

Reminder about oil

The NYLAF unfortunately does not have the funds available to support people requesting oil as a mean of power. However, we can offer an electricity meter top-up as an alternative should this be suitable.

Customers ringing the Customer Service Centre can find out about their nearest oil club and can be helped with information on alternatives.

Electric heaters

As an alternative for those applicants who require oil to heat their homes these applicants will now be able to apply for an electric heater along with utility top-up instead. These heaters will only be available to people who require oil to heat their home and so will not be a 'standard' award of the NYLAF. Heaters will be available upon request only.

Food parcels

From the beginning of March 2014 the provision of food parcels will come to an end. Food parcels will no longer be available; instead they will be replaced by food vouchers. When requesting a food voucher it is important to note that the applicant should state which supermarket they would like the voucher for. The applicant has a choice between Asda, Tesco, Sainsbury's and Morrisons. The chosen supermarket must be stated in the comments box on the application form. For those applicants who aren't within reach of one of the four supermarkets an alternative solution is in place.

A food voucher will contain enough credit to enable the applicant to purchase at least a five day supply of food. The amount of the food voucher is dependent on how many people/the size of the family it is for.

If a customer (or agent) rings NYCC Customer Services before 12 noon, Monday to Friday to request a food voucher then this can be processed and delivered within 24 hours. If a call is

received after 12 noon then NYCC will still put the call through to Charis to process but Charis cannot guarantee that the voucher will be delivered within the 24 hour timeframe.

Rent bonds

As of the 1st February 2014 the NYLAF ceased to provide rent bonds. This was due to consideration being paid to each district council's facility to provide rent in advance, rent bonds and other housing related costs.

Online form changes

Refer to November's bulletin.

Information sharing protocol

The information sharing protocol has now been sent out to all agencies. This enables authorised agencies to contact Charis Grants to find out whether a client who is eligible for support from the NYLAF has made an application within the last 12 months and as such whether there is any entitlement remaining. This is hoped to be particularly useful in instances where a client is receiving support from various agencies. Please be aware this is an optional procedure and is not to be used for every client only for those who you think may have already applied to the NYLAF.

If you would like to be part of this information sharing protocol please email nylaf@northyorks.gov.uk with your agency name and a telephone number for the agency.

Pressures on NYLAF spend for the remainder of 2013/14

The NYLAF is now consistently hitting its monthly spend limit and has actually overspent in three of the previous four months. We were only able to do this as there was some surplus funding available as a result of the slightly slow start to the scheme at the beginning of the financial year. This surplus is getting smaller and will not be available heading into the next financial year. As a result we and Charis Grants will need to manage the NYLAF rigorously to ensure that the most critical cases get the support they need. This will mean that there are likely to be more incidences of applications rejected where a slightly weaker case is made.

Due to financial pressures we have had to take the decision to restrict applications to one white good only. This means an applicant will still be eligible to apply for three awards but extra care should be taking when prioritising these awards on the application form as just one white good will be awarded. This will affect those applicants who are applying for more than one white good. For those requesting three items, but only one white good there application will not be effected.

Future Funding

For the next financial year 2014/15 the NYLAF will receive the same amount of funding as this financial year 2013/14. However, for the following year 2015/16 the funding from central government has been incorporated into the general council grant and so the same amount of funding is not guaranteed as the grant from central government will not be increased to incorporate this.

Reminder on applying under set vulnerability category

Each authorised agency is a specialist in their field and a specialist in a certain vulnerability category. This means agencies should be dealing with clients of this vulnerability. This should be reflected in applications to the NYLAF and it is expected each agency will apply to the NYLAF on behalf of their clients under this specialised vulnerability category.

Using the NYLAF

This is a reminder that the NYLAF is there to be used after all other avenues have been explored. The NYLAF is primarily an emergency fund which is to be used in the event of an unexpected crisis.

Website, leaflet and list of provided items

I would like to remind you all that an up to date leaflet about the NYLAF and a full list of items provided by the NYLAF can be found via our website at www.northyorks.gov.uk/nylaf

Enquiries: nylaf@northyorks.gov.uk

Public information: www.northyorks.gov.uk/nylaf

Partner updates: www.nypartnerships.org.uk/nylaf