



SURREY HEATH BOROUGH COUNCIL

# **SURREY HEATH BOROUGH COUNCIL CRISIS AND RESILIENCE FUND HOUSING PAYMENTS (CRF HP) GUIDANCE**

## Introduction

This document sets out the Surrey Heath Borough Council's approach to administering Crisis and Resilience Fund Housing Payments (CRF HP), CRF HPs provide additional financial support to residents in receipt of Housing Benefit (HB) or the housing element of Universal Credit (UC), to help meet housing costs where further financial assistance is deemed necessary.

### Purpose of this Guidance

The purpose of this guidance is to ensure that CRF HPs are administered fairly, consistently, and in accordance with both national regulations and the specific needs of residents in Surrey Heath. It provides information for claimants, council officers, and partner organisations.

## About Crisis and Resilience Fund Housing Payments

### Definition and Scope

CRF HPs are short-term awards made at the discretion of Surrey Heath Borough Council to help with housing costs where Housing Benefit or Universal Credit does not meet all of a claimant's rental liability. CRF HPs cannot be used to cover ineligible charges, or where the claimant is not in receipt of HB or the housing element of UC.

### What Can CRF HPs Cover?

- Shortfalls between housing-related benefits and actual rental costs (e.g., due to the benefit cap, Local Housing Allowance (LHA) shortfall or Removal of the Spare Room Subsidy (Bedroom Tax))
- Other lump sum costs associated with housing needs, such as removal costs or rent arrears due to exceptional circumstances.

CRF HPs may also be considered for backdated periods, provided the claimant was in receipt of HB or the UC housing element during the relevant period.



## What CRF HPs Cannot Cover

- Ineligible service charges (e.g., water, sewerage, furniture acquisition)
- Increases in rent due to outstanding arrears
- Sanctions and reductions in benefit due to non-compliance with DWP requirements
- Periods where HB or the UC housing element is suspended
- Shortfalls caused by the recovery of HB or UC overpayments
- Rent where the claimant is only in receipt of Local Council Tax Support and not HB or the UC housing element

## Eligibility Criteria

- The applicant must be in receipt of Housing Benefit or the housing element of Universal Credit.
- There must be a demonstrable shortfall between the housing-related benefit and the actual housing costs, or a clear need for further financial assistance with housing costs.
- Owner-occupiers are not eligible unless they have a shared ownership property with a rental liability.

Each application will be considered on its individual merits, taking into account the applicant's financial circumstances and any other relevant factors.

## Application Process

### How to Apply

Applications for CRF HPs must be made to Surrey Heath Borough Council. The council provides various means for application, including online forms, paper applications, and support is available from Citizens Advice Surrey Heath for assistance with completion of application forms.

### Information Required

Applicants must provide all information necessary to assess their claim, which may include:



- Details of income, capital (most recent three months bank statements for all accounts held by claimant and partner, if applicable), and expenditure
- Evidence of rental liability
- Any additional information relevant to their housing or financial circumstances

Surrey Heath Borough Council may request further information as needed.

## Applications by Third Parties

A person acting on behalf of the claimant (such as an appointee or support worker) may make an application if it is reasonable in the circumstances, particularly where the claimant is vulnerable.

## Decision and Notification

Once a decision has been made, Surrey Heath Borough Council will notify the applicant in writing or electronically (where agreed). The notification will include the outcome, the amount and duration of any award, and information about the review process.

## Level and Duration of Awards

The amount of CRF HP awarded must not exceed the weekly Housing Benefit or UC housing element. Awards may be made for a specific period or as a one-off payment (for example, to cover removal costs or rent arrears payment). The duration of awards is at the council's discretion, with clear communication to the claimant regarding any end dates and re-application procedures.

## Longer-Term Awards

Where appropriate, longer-term awards may be considered, for example, for disabled residents living in specially adapted accommodation or those with ongoing exceptional needs.



## Payment of CRF HPs

CRF HPs may be paid directly to the claimant, their landlord, or another third party, as deemed appropriate by the council. Payments may be made alongside HB or UC housing element payments, but with a clear audit trail distinguishing CRF HPs from other benefits.

## Change of Circumstances and Stopping Payments

Claimants must inform the council of any changes in their circumstances that may affect their entitlement to CRF HPs. The council may stop payments if:

- The claimant no longer requires further financial assistance
- The payment was made due to error or misrepresentation

Overpayments may be recovered in cases of misrepresentation or error.

## Review Process

If a claimant disagrees with the CRF HP decision, they may request a review. The review will be conducted by a different officer from the original decision-maker. There is no right of appeal to a Social Security Tribunal, but claimants may seek a judicial review or complain to the Local Government Ombudsman in cases of maladministration.



## Priority Groups

Surrey Heath Borough Council will consider prioritising CRF HP awards for:

- Victims of domestic abuse
- Families with children at critical points in their education
- People with disabilities or significant health needs
- Residents affected by the benefit cap, LHA shortfall, or Bedroom Tax shortfall
- Families with kinship care arrangements
- Residents at risk of homelessness
- Other vulnerable groups as identified by the council

Each case will be considered on its own merits.

## Monitoring and Publicity

Surrey Heath Borough Council monitors CRF HP expenditure and reports to the DWP as required. The council publicises the CRF HP scheme through:

- Information on the council website
- Leaflets and posters in council offices
- Advice provided by housing and welfare support teams
- Targeted communications for those most likely to need assistance

The aim is to ensure all eligible residents are aware of the support available.

## Working with Other Local Authorities

Where appropriate, Surrey Heath Borough Council will work with neighbouring councils to support claimants moving between areas, ensuring that CRF HPs are awarded appropriately for eligible residents.



## Legal Considerations

Surrey Heath Borough Council will have regard to relevant DHP legacy case law, including:

- R v. LB Lambeth, ex parte Gargett: Discretionary Housing Payments must not duplicate payments already covered by HB for past housing costs.
- R v. Sandwell MBC, ex parte Hardy: Income from disability-related benefits must be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Awards will only be made within the rules set out in the Discretionary Financial Assistance Regulations 2001.

## Contact Information

For further advice or to make an application, residents should contact:

Surrey Heath Borough Council, Benefits Team

Email: [Revenues@surreyheath.gov.uk](mailto:Revenues@surreyheath.gov.uk)

Phone: 01276 707100

Website: [www.surreyheath.gov.uk](http://www.surreyheath.gov.uk)

## Review of Guidance

This guidance will be reviewed 3 yearly or in response to significant changes in legislation.

