

Three Rivers District Council
COVID-19 Rent Arrears Financial Support Scheme 2021/22

Background

On 23 October 2021 the Government announced that it would be granting additional funding to Councils to assist vulnerable renters that are struggling as a result of the pandemic.

The Council has been awarded a £59,137 grant. The purpose of this exceptional one-off payment is to support low-income renters with COVID-19 related rent arrears to avoid eviction or find a new home where necessary in order to prevent homelessness, with the Council being able to target funding to those who need it most and help them get back on their feet.

The condition of the funding is that the grant is ring-fenced for homelessness to target those most in need and to ensure the Council is resourced to take action to prevent homelessness and continue to implement the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017.

The Government expects that the grant is used to maximise upstream homelessness prevention for low-income private renters in COVID-19 related rent arrears in particular.

The grant cannot be used for temporary accommodation.

Process

All customers can contact the Housing Options Team if they are homeless or threatened with homelessness; a homeless application can be made online at www.threerivers.homeconnections.org.uk.

Customers who are threatened with homelessness, due to arrears that have accrued due to the pandemic, will be considered for this Scheme.

Customers must have had financial hardship due to the Covid-19 pandemic that meant that customers have not been able to pay their rent, e.g. Customers will:

- have struggled to pay their rent or rent arrears due to Covid-19
- live in and hold a tenancy for a property in TRDC (which is not temporary accommodation)
- not have been able to fully pay their rent during the period when they went into arrears because of Covid-19.

Customers will not be able to get a grant if they have not experienced financial hardship due to Covid-19 and deliberately not paid their rent to their landlord or agent.

Customers will need to complete an online homeless application form and provide the following information:

- Completed income and expenditure form for the household
- Copies of bank statements
- Rent statements from the landlord
- Copies of wage slips/benefit entitlement
- Copy of tenancy agreement/landlord details
- Copy of a valid notice to vacate their home
- Reason for accrual of arrears

Customers will be expected to provide information on their income, how customers have been affected by the pandemic, and how this has affected their ability to pay their rent. The Council will also contact the customer's landlord or agent who will be asked to provide a written statement confirming that the customer is a tenant of theirs and that the customer is in rent arrears and by how much. The Council reserves the right to ask for additional information to assist in making a decision.

Once all required information has been provided, the case will be considered by the Housing Options Manager. Consideration will be given to the reason for the accrual of arrears, the continuing affordability of the property and the term remaining on the tenancy or the grant of a new tenancy if arrears are cleared. The Housing Options Manager can approve grants up to £2,000. Customers with arrears above £2,000 will be reviewed by the Head of Housing Services.

Grants will be paid direct to the Landlord to clear the arrears.

There is no right to review the decision, whether to award a sum to a customer under the Scheme or the amount of any such award that may be made to a customer under the Scheme or otherwise, made by the Housing Options Manager or Head of Housing Services.

Customers will only be considered for this Scheme whilst there is still grant money available. When the grant money of £59,137 has been spent or allocated, there will not be any continuing liability on the Council and the Scheme will be at an end.

Customers who receive a grant will be referred to Citizens Advice for financial advice to ensure that they do not accumulate further rent arrears in the future.