

Change into Action Funding Guidelines

Background

Change into Action has been created by a consortium of local and regional government, public and voluntary sector organisations, operating as part of the Mayor of the West Midlands Combined Authority's Homelessness Taskforce.

Change into Action has three objectives:

- Providing to the public information about homelessness
- Providing to the public a way in which to give money to support people who are or have been rough sleepers
- Enabling the public to identify and locate rough sleepers so that they can be connected to local support services

It is vital that in raising funds there is a clear and transparent process for managing, prioritising, distributing and reporting on funds.

The Homelessness Taskforce, together with the Change into Action Fund Panel will oversee access to the fund.

1. Conditions of Use

Applications will only be considered from approved Change into Action Delivery Partners, who are working with, and making an application on behalf of an individual rough sleeper in need, an individual who has rough slept recently or an individual who is in imminent danger of rough sleeping.

Decisions on funding will be at the sole discretion of the Change into Action Fund Panel. Where necessary, the Homelessness Taskforce may request further information from the Delivery Partner in order to progress and process a funding application.

The following conditions apply to the use of the Change into Action fund:

- No service user will be asked to repay any amount of the Change into Action fund. The fund must never be used as a loan fund.
- Applications for the same items for the same service user (e.g. a new microwave) will not be funded.
- Repeat applications may be considered, on a case by case basis, if it can be evidenced that the provision of a further payment will prevent homelessness or rough sleeping from occurring.

2. Thresholds and Guide to Funding Available

All applications for funding up to £1,000 will be referred to the Change into Action Fund Panel for a decision. As an indication we work to a guide of £450 maximum towards the furnishing of a 1 bedroom flat.

Applications for amounts above £1,000 will only be considered in very exceptional circumstances. This also applies across multiple applications for the same applicant.

3. Change into Action Key Definitions

Rough Sleeper/Rough Sleeping

For the purposes of clarity, Change into Action seeks to define the term 'rough sleeper/rough sleeping' below using the Government's 2010 definition:

People sleeping, about to bed down (sitting on/in or standing next to their bedding) or actually bedded down in the open air (such as on the streets, in tents, doorways, parks, bus shelters or encampments). People in buildings or other places not designed for habitation (such as stairwells, barns, sheds, car parks, cars, derelict boats, stations, or "bashes").

In terms of clarifying whether a service user 'has recently been rough sleeping', we ask our Delivery Partners to define the date and duration that the service user was rough sleeping. However, we have placed no set limit upon a time frame this may include. The decision to award funding will be solely at the discretion of the Change into Action Fund Panel after thoroughly assessing the application.

4. Change into Action Funding Principles

- I. All means of alternative funding should be explored first, providing evidence where appropriate when making an application for Change into Action funding.
- II. The fund must not be used to replace statutory benefits, government awarded grants or any other payments to which the service user has entitlement.
- III. Change into Action funding will only be granted if there will be a demonstrable positive impact upon the life of a rough sleeper, helping them to transition from the streets.
- IV. The expenditure of Change into Action funding must be reasonable and necessary.
- V. Change into Action funding applications and grants will bear public scrutiny, creating an ethos where involvement, accountability and transparency are welcomed and where challenge is viewed as a crucial and constructive measure of improving outcomes.

5. What can the Change into Action Fund be used for?

This will be dependent on each service user's needs and around their individual case. Examples of uses that may be considered appropriate are listed below.

Please note, this list is not exhaustive.

For example:

- The first £10 on the electricity meter
- Basic kitchen items when moving into self-catering accommodation
- A bedding set for a new flat
- The fee to join an art class that builds confidence and self-esteem
- The first month's gym membership as part of a new life away from the street
- New clothes that fit and express value
- The personal charge for the first two weeks in accommodation
- A rent deposit for a private flat
- A travel card for a month for getting to appointments

Change into Action would strongly encourage a conversation with the individual about what would make a difference in their lives.

6. Fund Administration

The Homelessness Taskforce with support from the Change into Action Fund Panel has responsibility for overseeing the fund and its allocation.

BVSC act as the fund holder and will administer payments to Delivery Partners.

The Change into Action Fund Panel will consist of 3 to 6 members, where a minimum of 3 Panel members will be required to make an award for payment. Panel members may include a member of the business community, a representative from Birmingham City Council and a member of the West Midlands Combined Authority's Homelessness Taskforce.

The Change into Action Fund Panel will fully assess each funding application. Panel members cannot be involved in the decision making if they have a vested or pecuniary interest in the application. If they have an interest they must declare it before the decision is made and withdraw from the decision making process in relation to that application.

A decision by a minimum of 3 Panel members will be required to make an award for payment. The decision will be made by a simple majority.



7. Application Process

Registering to become a Change into Action Delivery Partner

Before any funding applications can be made to Change into Action, your organisation must register as a Change into Action Delivery Partner. You can do this by completing the Delivery Partner Application form which can be found on the Change into Action website.

The Homelessness Taskforce will review your application and notify you once you have been registered as a Delivery Partner. We will aim to process these applications within 5 working days. The Homelessness Taskforce may request additional information from organisations in order to verify the application.

The Delivery Partner Application form will only need to be completed once to allow us to register your organisation as a Delivery Partner.

Submission of Funding Applications

Once your organisation is registered as a Delivery Partner you will receive a link to access the online Change into Action Funding Application form. All applications for funding must be made by completing the online Change into Action Funding Application form.

Any queries about the submission process can be sent to Homelessness@wmca.org.uk

We aim to process funding applications and inform you of a decision within 5 working days. For all applications marked as 'Emergency', we aim to have a decision made within 2 working days. Emergency applications should be clearly marked, by ticking the relevant box on the online form.

Purchase of Goods or Services

The Homelessness Taskforce will contact the Delivery Partner once the Panel has made a decision on their funding application.

Once communication has been received that the application has been successful, the Delivery Partner should purchase the agreed goods/services needed. The Delivery Partner should ensure that they retain all receipts and evidence for the purchases made.

Cash should not be given directly to an individual.

Payment to Delivery Partners

Once the Delivery Partner has purchased the approved goods/services they must provide Change into Action with the following information so that payment can be made to them:

- Receipts for all purchases
- Evidence that payment has been made by the Delivery Partner
- Confirmation that the service user has received the good or services

This information should be forwarded to Homelessness@wmca.org.uk **within 8 weeks** of an application being approved. If you do not submit the required documents for payment within this timeframe Change into Action will close your application and reallocate the funds.

Payments will not be made to Delivery Partners until all evidence of spend is received for an application.

8. Record Keeping

Delivery Partners must record how any monies obtained from the fund have been utilised. These details should be logged in the service user's file or appropriately recorded in some other way.

Receipts must be obtained by the Delivery Partner for all purchases and the original proof of expenditure should be retained by the Delivery Partner.

9. Changes to an Approved Application

If the cost of a service or product on an approved application changes, please notify Homelessness@wmca.org.uk of the reason for the change in cost and the new expected cost.

The Change into Action Funding Panel will consider the revised costs and reasons for these and you will be informed if these can be approved.

10. Impact of Change into Action Funding

Change into Action are keen to hear stories of how our support has made a difference. These can be provided in all sorts of different ways and we would be happy to talk with you about how the public might get to hear about what has been done with their money. Please contact Homelessness@wmca.org.uk for further information.