

Guidance Notes

Safe sleeping (including prams/pushchairs/strollers), home safety equipment to support families (County Durham households with children 0-5 years) facing financial difficulties.

The aim of the fund

In County Durham, we are increasingly finding families that are struggling to cope with the rising cost of living, and this can result in unsafe practices of sleeping arrangements for babies and a lack of basic safety equipment when children become mobile.

To support families with these costs Durham County Council (DCC) are providing a 'Start for Life Fund'.

DCC Children and Young Peoples Service (Social Inclusion Team) will coordinate and administer this fund ensuring that our most vulnerable families (with children 0-5 years) who are facing financial difficulties have access to safe sleeping and home safety equipment to keep children warm, safe and secure.

How to apply

We welcome applications submitted by a professional working with the family. The Family must be living in County Durham with children aged 0-5. Applications received directly from families will not be considered.

Online application forms can be found at [SFLF Application](#) (and click "Or, continue without an account").

Financial Hardship

Professionals that apply for the fund must be able to confirm the reason(s) that the household they are supporting is in financial hardship, this could include:

- Job loss
- Relationship breakdown
- Unexpected bill / increase in utility costs
- Unmanageable levels of debts
- Fleeing domestic abuse
- Unexpected house move e.g. eviction
- Delay in benefits payment
- Illness/disability
- Serious risk to health and safety of resident
- Death of a family member
- Resettlement back into the community
- Sudden misfortune involving the destruction/ loss of property or belongings e.g. house fire, flood
- Not receiving any monies from DWP, sanction, disallowance or waiting for UC payment.

What can we fund?

The items requested should be based on need identified.

Home Safety Items

- Safety gate
- Fireguard
- Bed guard
- Bath & Room Thermometer Pack
- Blind Cleats (pack)
- Home Safety Pack (door latches, corner cushions etc)
- Lockable Storage Boxes (1 per household)

The Start for Life Fund now provides lockable storage boxes, to help families safely store medicines and vape liquids at home. The focus is on supporting families with children under 5, but also on helping people get into the habit of locking these items away early, so it just becomes part of everyday routine as children grow.

Safe Sleeping Items (NB cot beds and bunk beds are not approved items for supply)

- Cot and mattress
- Cot/Moses basket bedding pack
- Essential bedding pack (single)
- Pushchair / stroller (double)
- Moses basket and mattress
- Single bed base and mattress
- Pushchair / stroller (single).

How much funding is available per household?

- Grants are typically awarded on the basis of need rather than a monetary value.
- Purchasing of items will be subject to available funding.
- Only 1 application per household, additional items cannot be “added” once funding has been approved.
- Households receiving previous funding cannot reapply for the items already awarded.

How are goods purchased?

DCC CYPS Social Inclusion Team has a contract in place for the direct supply of these items from East Durham Partnership and County Durham Furniture Help Scheme. The grant includes delivery.

Unfortunately, we are unable to assist with household preference, households will be unable to choose their own items/colour.

What happens when a grant has been authorised?

When a grant is authorised the Social Inclusion Team will send an authorisation email to the lead applicant and will inform the lead applicant of the next steps.

Evaluation

To allow us to evidence the impact of the Start for Life Fund we need to collect feedback from each household. Evaluations will be issued with the grant confirmation. This is to be completed within four weeks of receipt, this is a mandatory requirement as part of the Start for Life Fund agreement. Failure to respond may result in the decline of future applications.

Please send all queries to:

SFLF@durham.gov.uk

Additional Information – Help with your Money

Please note Start for Life grants are NOT “Crisis” grants, if you require further support please go to:

[Help with your money - Durham County Council](#)

Healthy Start

With Healthy Start, you get free prepaid card that is topped up each week to spend on milk, fresh, frozen, and tinned fruit and vegetables, fresh, dried, and tinned pulses, and infant formula milk. You can also get free vitamins.

[Apply for Healthy Start - Durham County Council](#)