

Home Office Flexible Fund FAQs

What is the fund?

From week commencing 30th September 2024, survivors of domestic abuse – anyone over the age of 16 years old, regardless of gender and sexual orientation and including those with no recourse to public funds (NRPF) – who do not have the financial means to leave their abusers will be able to apply for a one-off payment of up to £500 (the ‘Flee fund’) via one of over 470 support services, for essential items such as groceries, nappies or support with new accommodation to help them and their children flee to safety.

Survivors can also apply for a further one-off payment (the ‘Future fund’) of up to £2,500 to help secure a stable, independent future, such as putting down a deposit for rental accommodation. This could play an important role in preventing homelessness and alleviate some of the financial pressures faced by survivors when thinking about their futures.

The Flexible Fund will be delivered via referrals from a network of local frontline services in England and Wales including organisations, helplines and caseworkers who have a specialist understanding of domestic abuse.

For the statutory definition of domestic abuse please see:

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2021/17/part/1/enacted>

Why is the fund needed?

Women’s Aid research has found that almost three-quarters of women subjected to domestic abuse are finding it harder to leave as a result of the high cost of living. Two-thirds of survivors also said that abusers are using the cost of living increase as a tool for coercive control, including to justify further restricting their access to money.

This fund is intended to support survivors of domestic abuse to leave the perpetrator and help to secure their future.

Who is eligible for the Flee Fund?

Any survivor of domestic abuse (over the age of 16 years old) who has experienced one or more of the following in the last 12 months:

- Financial barrier to leaving shared home with perpetrator
- Financial barrier to separating from (fleeing) a perpetrator
- Financial barrier to caring for their children or caring for family members)
- Unable to access benefits or waiting for benefits after fleeing abuse
- No access to benefits because of immigration status AND ability to flee can be increased by financial support relating to one or more of the following:
 - Transportation costs relating to escaping abuse (taxi, bus fare, etc.)

- Accommodation related costs relating to moving to new accommodation (e.g., renting a van)
- Furnishings (e.g., white goods, carpet)
- Deposit, rent, mortgage
- Essential items (food, clothes, cleaning products)
- Securing property (locks, CCTV)
- Energy and utility bills
- Additional needs related to children
- Specialist support based on individual need (e.g., religious items, medical items/needs, translation costs, specialist equipment).
- Debt

Who is eligible for the Future fund?

Any survivor of domestic abuse (over the age of 16 years old) regardless of gender and sexual orientation and including those with no recourse to public funds who has experienced one or more of the following in the last 36 months:

- Financial barrier to future planning to securing independence/stability while accessing a domestic abuse service
- Financial barrier to caring for their children or other family members
- Unable to access benefits or waiting for benefits whilst moving on
- No access to benefits because of immigration status AND funds will support one or more of the following:
 - Accommodation related costs relating to moving to new accommodation (e.g., renting van).
 - Accommodation costs relating to staying in the current property by making security upgrade (camera, lockers, change of keys, etc.)
 - Furnishings (e.g. white goods, carpet)
 - Deposit, rent, mortgage
 - Essential Items (e.g. food, clothes, cleaning products)
 - Energy and utility bills
 - Additional needs related to children
 - Specialist support based on individual need (e.g., religious items/needs, medical items/needs, translation costs, specialist equipment)
 - Debt

Why are only specific organisations able to refer survivors?

For Women's Aid to be able to administer the fund, it is currently only available to survivors through a referral from:

- one of our approximately 175 member organisations
- members of Welsh Women's Aid member organisations in Wales
- services listed on Routes to Support
- Home Office agreed delivery partners.

To ensure that any risk of further abuse is minimised (e.g. economic abuse) and to verify the needs of survivors, a specialist domestic abuse practitioner must refer survivors to the fund. Survivors cannot apply to the fund directly.

We have strong research and evaluation mechanisms in place that will help us to assess the reach of the fund. This will help us secure further insight into survivors' needs and to support the Home Office on potential future funding.

I am concerned about the demographic reach of the fund. What steps have/are being taken to ensure equity of access?

We are committed to responding to the needs of black and minoritised survivors, who we know are disproportionately affected by abuse. The Home Office has worked closely with Women's Aid to review the eligible services and mapped against known specialist 'by and for' services to understand possible reach, as well as engaging with specialist 'by and for' services who were not part of previous funding. We will be monitoring this throughout the funds' dissemination, and capturing data on the distribution of funds as part of learning for future funding. This includes capturing data through our delivery partners.

Is the fund means-tested?

No, the fund is based on individual survivor need.

Will there be further funding after 28th Feb 2025?

This will be confirmed in due course.

About applications

How much can a survivor apply for?

Payments are flexible based on individual need and circumstances. Flee fund payments are from £250-£500 in increments of £50 and Future fund payments are £500-£2500 in increments of £250.

When can applications be submitted?

The Flee fund will be open for applications 10am-3pm Tuesdays and Thursdays.

The Future fund will be open for applications 10am-3pm Wednesdays.

What will the application process be?

The service or caseworker will submit an application on behalf of the survivor to the national fund. The application form will take approximately 10 minutes and be a simple series of questions about the referrer, demographics of the survivor for monitoring purposes, and their eligibility for the fund.

Which areas are ‘higher cost living areas’ and ‘specialist needs’ for the Future Fund?

As the organisation working directly with the survivor, you are well placed to identify what financial needs the survivor has. We ask that you outline costs in your application such as specialist equipment, rent, deposit and furnishing to support our review of the application.

Can a survivor apply more than once?

Survivors who applied previously for the Flee fund can apply for the Future fund this time round.

Survivors are also able to apply once for both the Flee and Future funds although it is noted that the funds are targeted at different stages in a survivor’s journey so it would not be expected they would apply for both at the same time or in quick succession. This iteration is open for a longer period and therefore it is possible that survivors who required Flee fund money at the start of the funding period, may be ready for the Future fund funding towards the end of the period.

Limits on accessing flee/future should remain. i.e. they can only access each pot once. So someone who has accessed Flee cannot do so again but they could access Future or Advocacy. If they’ve accessed Future they could access Flee. Services will rely on their expertise to advise survivors on what is appropriate in terms of need.

Does the referring organisation need to be working with a survivor to make an application?

The referring organisation needs to be assured that the information they are sharing about the survivor’s needs and eligibility is accurate and that they are able to make the payment directly to the survivor.

Who can make applications?

Member organisations of Women's Aid or Welsh Women's Aid, organisations listed on the Routes to Support directory and named delivery partners. A full list can be found on our website. All eligible organisations will receive the application form links prior to 16th September.

Can I apply for funding to support future survivors my organisation will work with?

Applications must be for named individuals and amounts applied for reflective of their individual circumstances and need.

How long does it take to approve an application?

We aim to approve applications within three working days, although there may be occasions where we need to contact you for further information.

Can applications be made for children?

Applications can be made by all adult survivors and their children

Can survivors with No Recourse Public Funds access the fund?

Yes, however, the fund cannot be used for legal fees. Please be aware if it is used for legal fees, it may impact their status and other government arrangements.

Can we have a list of the questions on the form so it can be completed with survivor outside of the application opening hours and then entered when applications open?

We will be providing a list of the questions which can be used to help prepare for completing the online referral form. Please note that we will not be able to accept applications sent in by email or post and all applications must come through the online application form.

What is the cap for each organisation and does it apply to the whole organisation or different services within it?

As funds are limited, there is a cap/upper limit to the number of applications each service can apply for each month. The cap for each organisation recognises the following:

- That the size/income of service is not always an indicator of number of survivors supported by a service.
- The reach of our specialist delivery partners in the communities/demographics they cover
- The size/geographical spread is a factor

- That smaller and by and for Black and Minoritised services may be small in income size but have higher numbers of survivors/survivors with multiple barriers to support

Please contact our Flexible Fund Management Team by emailing emergencyfund@womensaid.org.uk to confirm your organisation's allocation.

Will all referring organisations be guaranteed their referrals for the Flee Fund and Future Fund?

There is no guaranteed allocation for any organisation and applications will be reviewed based on survivor need and available funding.

About payments and invoicing

Do funds go to the applying organisation or the survivor?

Funds will go to the applying organisation.

Why do we have to pay the survivor and then claim the money back?

The essence of this fund is being able to get the money to survivors as soon as possible, this means that we ask you to pay the survivor as soon as their application is approved. Due to the number of services that will make applications to this fund, we cannot administratively dispense this fund to services upon each application or make payments in advance of application. We will run fortnightly payments via BACS.

How can we pay survivors?

It is up to the referring service to agree the most appropriate and safe method of transferring funds to the survivor through cash, bank transfer or voucher.

Will receiving money from the fund affect the survivor's benefits?

The Home Office has worked closely with the Department for Work and Pensions to ensure minimal impact. However, we cannot guarantee that receipt of the fund will not interfere with any existing benefits. We have allowed the grant to be disseminated by the service in the form that best meets the needs of a survivor, including in voucher form. The service will take this decision based on its own assessment of the survivor's needs and financial circumstances.

About reporting

What evidence do you need to see of what the survivor uses the fund for?

We do not need to see receipts or evidence of spend but may ask to discuss this with you as part of our learning about the fund. We do require you to provide us with the date the survivor received the funds so we can monitor this and streamline the process if required for future funds and is a Home Office requirement.