Pendle Borough Council

Housing Payment Policy

Crisis & Resilience Fund

01st April 2026

(Formerly Known as the Discretionary Housing Payment Policy)

Version Control

Version	Version Date	Revised By	Description
6	January 2018	TQ / SW	Revision
7	April 2026	TQ / SW	Legislation changes

Crisis Resilience Fund (CRF) Housing Payment Policy

Effective from 1 April 2026

1. Introduction

From 1 April 2026, Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) will no longer be administered under the Discretionary Financial Assistance Regulations 2001 or the DHP (Grants) Order 2001. All discretionary housing-related support will now be delivered through the Crisis Resilience Fund (CRF).

CRF Housing Payments form part of a broader framework designed to provide financial assistance during periods of crisis, prevent homelessness, and promote long-term financial resilience.

2. Purpose of the Scheme

The purpose of CRF Housing Payments is to:

- Alleviate poverty and financial hardship
- Assist individuals with housing costs as part of wider crisis support
- Prevent homelessness and sustain tenancies
- Keep families together and safeguard vulnerable people
- Encourage and sustain people in employment
- Support customers impacted by welfare reforms or sudden changes in circumstances
- Provide help during personal crises or difficult life events

3. Who Can Claim?

The Council will consider making a CRF Housing Payment to claimants who meet the qualifying criteria, subject to budget limitations.

Claims can be considered where the customer:

A. Has a shortfall between rent and Housing Benefit / Universal Credit housing costs, and:

- Is entitled to Housing Benefit or the housing costs element of Universal Credit

- Has a rental liability
- Requires further financial assistance with housing costs

OR

B. Is threatened with homelessness within 56 days or needs to move to more affordable accommodation because they can no longer sustain their current tenancy.

Payments will generally be made to meet current needs rather than past debts.
Awards may be paid to the claimant, landlord, or agent, depending on circumstances.

Housing Needs Referral Requirement

To ensure consistency with the Council's procedure for a one-off CRF Housing Payment award (including rent in advance and deposits), all applications that indicate the applicant may be threatened with homelessness within 56 days, or may need to move to more affordable accommodation, will be referred to Housing Needs.

Housing Needs will undertake checks in relation to:

- Whether the applicant is at risk of homelessness within 56 days and/or requires a move to more affordable accommodation because they can no longer sustain their current tenancy.
- Whether there is any evidence that the applicant may have contributed to becoming threatened with homelessness through their own actions.

These checks form part of the Council's decision-making process and must be completed before an award can be made.

4. Types of Support Under CRF

Priority will be given to cases that prevent homelessness and safeguard vulnerable households. Support may include:

- Rent shortfalls – normally awarded for a time-limited period (typically 3–6 months) to prevent homelessness while sustainable accommodation is secured.
- Rent in advance or deposits required to obtain alternative accommodation.

5. Assessment Criteria

When considering an application, the Council will assess:

- Risk of eviction and homelessness
- Impact on family stability, education, and health
- Vulnerability factors (age, disability, special needs, pregnancy)
- Household income and expenditure, including savings
- Reasonable use of disregarded income (excluding disability-related benefits)

6. Exclusions

CRF Housing Payments cannot cover:

- Shortfalls caused by Housing Benefit overpayment recovery
- Rent increases due to arrears
- Sanctions-related reductions in benefit
- Suspended Housing Benefit
- More than one home

7. Award Levels and Duration

- Maximum award: difference between full rent liability and Housing Benefit/UC housing element
- Typically, short-term (3–6 months) to allow crisis resolution
- For deposits/rent in advance: capped at four weeks' Local Housing Allowance unless exceptional circumstances apply

8. Administration of CRF Housing Payments

The Benefits Service will administer CRF Housing Payments on behalf of the Council. The process will ensure fairness, transparency, and efficiency.

Application Process:

- A standard CRF Housing Payment claim form will be issued for all applications.
- Claimants must return the completed form within one month of issue; otherwise, any award will only be considered from the date the form is received.

- Applications must be made by the benefit claimant and jointly in the case of couples.

Evidence Requirements:

- The Council may request reasonable evidence to support an application, which should be provided within one month.
- If evidence is not provided, the application will still be considered, but unsubstantiated statements may be disregarded.
- The Council reserves the right to verify information with third parties or other organisations.

Payment Arrangements:

- Awards will be paid via BACS, directly to a bank account, within standard payment cycles.
- Payments may be made to the claimant, landlord, or agent, depending on circumstances.

Notification and Reviews:

- Claimants will receive written notification of the decision, including reasons and details of the review process.
- Claimants must inform the Council of any relevant changes in circumstances.
- Awards will be reviewed periodically and in line with any changes to Housing Benefit or Universal Credit entitlement.

9. Period of Award:

- Awards will generally be short-term (3–6 months) and should be seen as emergency support.
- End dates may align with the financial year, expected changes in circumstances, or benefit entitlement.
- Customers may reapply after an award expires.

10. Backdating:

- Reasonable requests for backdating will be considered where Housing Benefit or Universal Credit was payable during the period.

11. Overpayments:

- The Council will seek recovery of all overpaid CRF Housing Payments.

- Discretion may be applied not to recover overpayments caused by official error or where recovery would cause serious hardship.
- Recovery cannot be made from ongoing Housing Benefit; instead, repayment will be requested via sundry debt invoice.

12. Process Monitoring:

- The Council will periodically review the CRF Housing Payment process for effectiveness and efficiency.