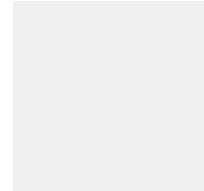


Payments Made Under Section 17



This chapter was added to the manual in February 2017.

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1. Introduction

1.1 Section 17 of the Children Act 1989

Section 17 of the Children Act 1989 (S.17) gives local authorities the power to provide accommodation and financial support to families with 'children in need', even if they have no recourse to public funds.

A child is defined as being in need if:

- S/he is unlikely to achieve or maintain, or to have the opportunity of achieving or maintaining, a reasonable standard of health or development without the provision for her/him of services by a local authority (under this part of the Act); or
- Her/his health or development is likely to be significantly impaired or further impaired, without the provision of such services; or
- S/he is disabled.

1.2 Compliance with Financial Regulation

Payments made from the Section 17 budget must conform to Walsall's procedures for financial and administrative arrangements and will only be made where an assessment indicates that a child or

family is in need, and financial assistance is the only appropriate way of safeguarding and promoting their welfare within the family.

2. Requests for Financial Assistance

2.1 Non Emergency Payments

The circumstances of the family will determine the nature of the assistance given within the parameters of the following procedures. Where the family indicate the likelihood of a cash payment being misused by an adult in the family to the detriment of the child, for example where there are concerns that cash may be spent on alcohol or drugs, alternative must be considered.

These include:

- The purchase by a Social Worker or Family Support Officer of specific necessary items, such as nappies or fuel payments for heating or lighting;
- The provision of shopping vouchers/local orders specifying the goods for which they may be exchanged and stipulating the shop/s to be used. Only certain retailers accept local authority local orders/shopping vouchers;
- Travel warrants detailing who, when and where the recipient (and party) may travel.

Therefore, in line with the above, on receipt of a request for Section 17 assistance the responsible Social Worker must firstly complete an assessment of need and establish that all alternative options for assistance have been explored.

These include: -

- Department for Works and Pensions;
- Food Banks;
- Local Charities;
- Frank Buttle (Trust);
- Safe Families – (white goods).

There are a range of local charities that should also be considered. They can be found here:

[Charities - Walsall Council Website](#)

Where 3 requests are made for financial assistance within a 6 month period a financial assessment must be completed.

2.2 Emergency Payments

If following the assessment of need immediate support is required the social worker must discuss the case with a Team Manager and if agreed complete a WSS80 form for authorisation. The Team

Manager must determine whether ongoing support is required and if so the period of that support whilst the alternative options (outlined above) are explored.

2.3 Level of Financial Payment

Section 17 payments should not exceed that of the current benefit rate.

2.4 Review

A review by the TM and social worker is required if a Section 17 payment continues for a period of 4 weeks to determine whether ongoing support is still required or an alternative financial source can be identified.

3. Authorisation

The Duty Manager / Team Manager may authorise single Section 17 payments not exceeding £200.

- Major items of expenditure, e.g. beds;
- Payments made as part of an agreed family support package (however such payments must not be used as income maintenance measures);
- Payments to families with no recourse to public funds (as whilst they are eligible for Section 17 payments, payments must be separately coded so they can be clearly identified).

The Group Manager's authorisation is required for all:

- Ongoing or regular payments, the use of which should be extremely rare.

The person authorising the expenditure should sign the WSS80 form, indicating her/his agreement to the preferred method of payment.