



VRF - Emergency Fund grant making policy

Introduction

The VRF - Emergency Fund (VRFEF) is a fund established by St Martin-in-the-Fields Charity (registered charity number:1156305). The fund has been established as a swift response to the changing needs of those who are homeless or vulnerably housed due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The VRFEF helps these people through small-sum, rapid response grants to:

- get basic necessities for someone to maintain their day to day living
- overcome some of the practical barriers presented by COVID-19 as a result of social distancing to access support remotely
- prevent eviction or to help people access accommodation.

Who do we aim to support?

The VRFEF aims to support those individuals across the UK who need help with:

- Paying for food, utilities or hygienic supplies – where it will assist to access basic necessities
- Paying for mobile phones, laptops, tablets, internet access, ID – where it will assist to overcome practical barriers to support
- Rent arrears (including a DRO and bankruptcy fees), service charge arrears, or money to pay for a hoarding clean up - where it will prevent eviction.
- A contribution towards a rent deposit, rent in advance, admin fees, ID, moving costs or temporary accommodation - where it will help someone access accommodation.

The number of individuals the VRFEF can support is limited by the amount of funding available for distribution each month. Priority is given to applicants who are lacking basic essentials, currently homeless or are facing imminent threat of homelessness.

How much funding is available from the VRFEF?

The maximum amount available under the VRFEF in respect of each individual requiring our support is limited to £1,550 per 12 month period. This is based on limits of £150 for essential items, £400 for overcoming barriers to support and £1000 for securing accommodation.

Applicants are entitled to apply to the VRFEF for help towards different items but each applicant shall not be entitled to receive more than £1,550 within any 12 month period, except in exceptional circumstances. The 12 month period is calculated from the date an application is received and is not calculated on a calendar year basis.

Who can make an application?

All applications must be submitted on behalf of an individual in need of financial support from the VRF by frontline workers who have registered for an account on our [VRF portal](#) and who are employed in a paid or voluntary capacity by agencies working to alleviate and prevent homelessness. Such agencies include, but are not limited to, charities, housing associations, Citizen's Advice Bureaux or statutory agencies such as the National Probation Service.

How to make an application

Frontline workers will need to apply to [register with the VRF](#) using their work email address (or where relevant a general email address for the agency) and provide details about the agency that employs them. We may carry out the following checks on publicly available resources in order to verify the identity of the agency and check its eligibility:

- checking the Charity Commission's Register of Charity/Scottish Charity Register;
- checking the register of companies at Companies House;
- checking the register of approved social housing providers maintained by the Homes and Communities Agency; and
- checking the agency's website.

We will email frontline workers directly on the work email address they have supplied to confirm completion of their registration and to provide log in details.

Once registered, frontline workers will need to log on to our portal and complete the online application form on behalf of the individual requiring support from the VRFEF. Frontline workers should carefully read our VRFEF terms and conditions, privacy statement and FAQ before commencing and submitting an application.

Frontline workers will need to provide the following basic information on the application form about the individual requiring support:

- Name of individual
- Date of birth
- Employment status
- Household circumstances
- Current accommodation type
- Support needs
- Postcode of current address (as appropriate)
- Purpose of grant

We also request equal opportunities information but support workers are not obliged to provide this information and it is not used to assess grant recipients.

Once the application has been submitted by a frontline worker, we will acknowledge receipt by email.

Decision-making process

We have a maximum monthly budget from which we can award grants. The VRF portal is open for applications Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm (excluding Bank Holidays).

Applications are divided into morning (before 1pm) and afternoon (after 1pm) submissions.

All applications that have been received on any given morning, will be reviewed that afternoon. All afternoon applications will be reviewed on the following working day morning. Applications will be reviewed on their individual merit in accordance with the eligibility criteria set out above.

We endeavour to email frontline workers with our decision within one working day of receipt of the application.

Where an application is successful, BACS payment will be made within one working day of submitting the application.

Appeals and re-submissions

Please note that our decision on whether to grant funding is final. Unfortunately, due to the

high number of applications that we receive and our limited capacity, we are unable to respond to requests for re-considerations and we are unable to process an application that is re-submitted.

Submitting a new application for the same client

We are happy to receive a new application in respect of the same individual, regardless of whether their original application was successful or not, provided that the following condition is satisfied:

- the applicant will not have received more than £1,550 in total of VRFEF funding within the previous 12 months (calculated from the date of their new application);

Evidence of expenditure

Once the funds have been spent, you must provide documentary evidence to the VRF that the funds have been used appropriately. This must be done by uploading it onto your original online application form. Examples of acceptable evidence can be seen [on our website](#).

Equal opportunities

We recognise that the needs of people who are homeless or are at risk of homelessness are diverse and often urgent. We are committed to equality of opportunity and seek to challenge and respond to disadvantage through the VRFEF.

Further information

For further information about the VRFEF, please contact:

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