

## Case Study 1: Sarah Mitchell

Sarah Mitchell is a single parent of 3 children (15, 14 and 9). She lives in an unfurnished Housing Association flat which she moved to 3 years ago after being homeless as a result of fleeing domestic violence. She now makes an application for a Community Care Grant for two bedroom carpets, a hall carpet and a stair carpet. In her application form she writes:

*“I moved into my property with the carpets that was left behind by the tenant before me, as I had no money to buy them and I didn’t know that at the time the welfare fund could maybe help me with this. The carpets are all really dirty and smelly and starting to thread and rip through to the floor boards. My children are walking on floor boards in their bedrooms because I have had to rip them up four weeks ago. Their feet are getting dirty and they are getting colds a lot as well. My son has asthma and this is aggravating it. I really can’t live like this anymore. I suffer anxiety and depression and don’t leave the house and am getting tested for bipolar.”*

Ms Mitchell meets the eligibility criteria for an award.

**What is your decision and why? Do you have any further questions you need answered before reaching a decision?**

**Original decision:**

No award as all the items had a low priority. Also comment that family had resilience as they had been established in the community at this address since 2014 and a 'no award' would not hinder them from continuing to do so.

**SPSO Decision:**

Despite being in the property for three years, this was not viewed as a reason for the applicant not meeting the criteria of facing exceptional pressure to maintain a settled home. Due to her situation (mental health, son's illness, isolation) and because there was a clear, current need, she was assessed as meeting this criteria. Bedroom carpets were awarded high priority and hall and stair carpet medium priority.

## Case Study 2: James Geoghan

### Part one

James Geoghan is moving to unfurnished sheltered housing from his furnished private rental because of his poor health. Mr Geoghan has COPD, asthma, polymyalgia, cervical spondylosis and liver fibrosis secondary to alcoholism.

Mr Geoghan has previously been awarded a bed and mattress in 2015.

He now makes an application for a Community Care Grant for a cooker, fridge and washing machine, curtains and a bed base & mattress. In his paper application form he writes:

*“I will not be able to acquire the goods and this will make it difficult to sustain a reasonable way of life.”*

Mr Geoghan meets the eligibility criteria for an award.

**What is your decision and why? Do you have any further questions you need answered before reaching a decision?**

## **Part two**

### **Original decision:**

White goods and curtains awarded. Bed and Mattress not awarded as these items had previously been awarded.

### **Mr Geoghan makes a 1<sup>st</sup> Teir review request**

Mr Geoghan says that the original bed base was thrown away because of a fungal growth because he was living in squalor in his previous flat.

**What is your decision now and why? Has it changed? Why / why not?**

**1st Tier Decision:**

Still no award of bed and mattress. Decision notes state "*Mr G could not use them as was living in squalor. These items were awarded just over 2 years ago and the mattress awarded was orthopaedic so at considerable expense. Only change is moving house.*"

**SPSO Decision:**

Bed and Mattress awarded.

Mr Geoghan was sleeping on a borrowed camp bed despite severe back problems. A no award would have a significantly adverse effect on his health.

The initial decision maker should have contacted Mr Geoghan to ask why he was not able to use the bed and mattress previously awarded. The 1<sup>st</sup> Teir reviewer incorrectly assessed the information provided by Mr Geoghan in his appeal.

### **Case Study 3: Cary Shipley**

Cary Shipley is making an application for a Community Care Grant, requesting a single bed, a single mattress, bunk beds, bedding, an electric cooker, a fridge freezer, crockery, pots and pans and cutlery. Ms Shipley explains that she had experienced significant upheaval in her personal life following a irreconcilable relationship breakdown with her partner, who has bipolar. This had resulted in her leaving the family home and her three children with her ex-partner while she moved back with her elderly parents. Her mental health had been impacted and she has given up full time work. Due to on-going issues with her ex-partner her parents have asked her to leave their home. She has secured her own tenancy but has no items of her own. She wants her children to be able to stay with her at the weekends (their school is not near to her new flat) and without the items requested this is not possible.

Ms Shipley meets the eligibility criteria for an award.

**What is your decision and why? Do you have any further questions you need answered before reaching a decision?**

**Original decision:**

No award as Ms Shipley was not a family under exceptional pressure.

**SPSO Decision:**

Ms Shipley has part time child caring responsibilities and should be considered as a family but in any event she is facing exceptional pressure given the upheaval in her personal life. She was awarded a single bed, a single mattress, bunk beds, bedding, an electric cooker, a fridge freezer, crockery, pots and pans and cutlery.

## **Case Study 4: Grant Meechan**

Grant Meechan, aged 20, is making an application for a Community Care Grant, requesting a single bed, a single mattress and bedding to furnish his new bedroom. Mr Meechan is moving out of his family home into a shared private tenancy as his family home was overcrowded (he shared a bedroom with his three younger siblings). He is moving into a flat with a friend who has Asperger's and has ADHD. Mr Meechan will be acting as his carer.

Mr Meechan meets the eligibility criteria for an award.

**What is your decision and why? Do you have any further questions you need answered before reaching a decision?**

**Original decision:**

No award as Mr Meechan did not meet any of the qualifying criteria. In particular it was noted that he did not meet the 4<sup>th</sup> qualifying criteria (to enable qualifying individuals to maintain a settled home in a situation where that individual, or another individual in the same household, is facing exceptional pressure).

**SPSO Decision:**

Bed, bedding and mattress awarded.

The cumulative effect of the pressures that contributed to Mr Meechan moving to his own property along with the anticipated pressures caused by being a young person in his first tenancy while having caring responsibilities amount to exceptional pressure and he does meet qualifying criteria 4:

“To enable qualifying individuals to maintain a settled home in a situation where that individual, or another individual in the same household, is facing exceptional pressure”.

The requested items were awarded a low priority.