



COVID 19 TENANT GRANT FUND

GUIDANCE FOR LANDLORDS AND TENANT APPLICANTS

The purpose of the Tenant Grant Fund is to mitigate the short to medium term financial challenges being experienced by tenants adversely impacted by restrictions and regulations introduced since March 2020, to control the spread of COVID-19.

This fund enables local authorities to prevent homelessness and sustain tenancies by directly reducing, alleviating or paying off rent arrears altogether where a tenant is either in the social or private rented sectors, and has faced difficulties due to Coronavirus.

The main focus of the grant funding is to support those most at risk of homelessness, in circumstances where tenancies can be saved through such intervention. By contributing to the payment of rent arrears, this funding may also assist the landlord and tenant in reaching a repayment agreement as part of the pre-action requirements process.

The grant fund is flexible, it can be used alongside other existing tools and financial support such as Discretionary Housing Payments (DHPs), benefits checks etc., and it can cover a proportion, or all, of a tenant's rent arrears.

Who is eligible?

Argyll and Bute Council can use this funding to provide direct financial support to tenants via landlords as long as it is specifically for the purposes of paying rent arrears arising from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, to help prevent homelessness. Argyll and Bute Council must ensure that the following applies:

- The grant fund is used specifically to help repay rent arrears that have arisen due to the Coronavirus pandemic between 23 March 2020 and 9 August 2021;
- Arrears before 23 March 2020 cannot be covered;
- Arrears after 9 August 2021 can only be covered in exceptional circumstances, where the local authority is satisfied that arrears relate to continued impact of the pandemic restrictions.
- The grant should be paid directly to the landlord in order to avoid any implications for a tenant who is in receipt of other forms of financial support and on the strict condition that the landlord credits the tenant's rent account with that amount.
- Landlords must demonstrate that they are complying with the pre-action requirements for rent arrears and agree not to progress a repossession on the basis of Covid related rent arrears where a grant is paid and the tenant meets all future agreed rent and repayment obligations.
- The grant should be targeted at vulnerable individuals/households who would become homeless or do not have alternative sources of support.

- On receiving a section 11 notification from a landlord of intent to evict, or direct contact from a landlord or letting agent concerned about a tenant in rent arrears, Argyll and Bute Council will explore whether the grant could prevent eviction.
- Where the landlord or letting agent contacts Argyll and Bute Council regarding a tenant in rent arrears, Argyll and Bute Council will evaluate the situation and consider if pre-action requirements have already been followed and whether the tenant is engaging with the landlord. Consideration should be given to all existing sources of funding available (i.e. Discretionary Housing Payments etc), income maximisation checks and encouraging dialogue between the tenant and landlord to come to a suitable arrangement. Early intervention by Argyll and Bute Council, as an independent third party, particularly where a tenant is not engaging may help to restart dialogue and identify a resolution.
- Any grant award to a landlord will be a one-off award, and only cover a period of under 12 months.

Ongoing proceedings for eviction or repayment of rent arrears:

Where a private landlord has an ongoing application to the First-tier Tribunal for Scotland (Housing and Property Chamber) and is applying for consideration for a grant award, they could request for the Tribunal to sist (pause) the application until the outcome of the grant is decided. This will be a matter for the Tribunal to consider.

Should a grant award be made, the private landlord should withdraw any ongoing application with the Tribunal, as the rent arrears which were the subject of eviction or repayment proceedings would be reduced or repaid in full. Adjourning proceedings would allow time to determine whether the arrears can be paid off in full by the grant or, if arrears are only reduced, it may allow time to determine if a sustainable repayment plan can be agreed for the remainder of the arrears. An obligation on the private landlord to seek an immediate adjournment of eviction proceedings and debt recovery proceedings will be included within the “in principle” offer of grant. Should the landlord accept this, they would be expected to notify the Tribunal IMMEDIATELY, so that proceedings are not progressed following payment of the grant.

Where an award is made to a Housing Association landlord, the Landlord must not seek or obtain an eviction order on grounds of rent arrears which accrued between 23 March 2020 and 9 August 2021.

Monitoring and reporting requirements:

Landlords receiving payments will be required to advise Argyll and Bute Council how many tenancies were sustained as a direct result of the grant being paid.



How to apply:

Tenants and landlords can apply for the Covid 19 Tenant Grant Fund. Third parties can also apply on behalf of tenants. After you make contact with us, we'll write to the tenant and landlord to confirm the facts. Then an "in principle" offer of funding will be made to the tenant and the landlord. If the tenant and landlord both sign to accept the offer, the payment will be made direct to the landlord. Both tenant and landlord will receive written notification when the award has been made.

To apply contact us at housingservices@argyll-bute.gov.uk or Tel 01631 572180.

We will require:

- Tenants name, address and email address
- Landlords name, address and email address
- Private landlords should provide their landlord registration number
- How much is owed
- Dates the arrears accrued with rent statements
- Proof of a tenancy, for example a copy of the tenancy agreement
- Information telling us how arrears have been accrued due to the coronavirus pandemic

We'll then get in touch with all parties and progress the grant claim.