

PayPoint launches cash voucher scheme for local government

Welwyn Garden City, 11 July 2013: PayPoint, the UK's leading retail payments and services network, has launched a new voucher scheme – 'Quick Credit Vouchers' – to help local authorities manage cash payments to residents in need of emergency funds. Through a specially designed web portal, council staff can create and manage the vouchers, which are sent to those in need of crisis payments for redemption at a local PayPoint outlet.

PayPoint's innovative solution is breaking new ground in the public sector and will streamline local council payment services, putting control in the hands of the authorities that are better placed to assess individual cases. The technology offers new levels of efficiency and visibility that was previously unattainable.

Since the beginning of April, authorised council employees have been tasked with assessing each request on its own merit before deciding whether a payment is applicable. If the request is valid, the details are entered into the portal, which then issues a voucher which can be printed and posted to the claimant, emailed or sent via SMS to a mobile phone. The recipients then redeem their voucher at any one of the 25,000 neighbourhood shops in the UK with PayPoint terminals and receive their funds instantly. Vouchers can also be issued for energy credits which are redeemable only against a gas or electricity top-up.

Following the decision to give local councils the responsibility for distributing emergency funds, the Quick Credit Voucher scheme enables approved payments to be made to individuals, while removing the need for a cash office to be located onsite. It also offers a faster and safer method than issuing cheques. Through the system, local councils are able to run reports on individual staff members using the portal and have full visibility of the status of all vouchers to check whether they have been correctly issued, redeemed, expired or rejected.

The scheme is set with a limit of £100 attached to each voucher (£49 for energy credits), as well as a limit on the number of vouchers each member of staff is able to issue per day. To ensure there is no misuse of the system, only assigned supervisors have the authority to approve the raised vouchers. Once the voucher has been redeemed, it is automatically set as 'void' and cannot be used again.

Although the portal was created for those in need of emergency funds (for example, residents on benefits in need of urgent cash to pay an energy bill), it can also be used to issue payments such as council tax refunds.

Judith Johnson at Milton Keynes Council commented: "Following the introduction of welfare provision in local councils, we required a tool that would help us administer the funds and effectively serve our community. We receive urgent requests from individuals who are in need of emergency funds and PayPoint offered us a fast and secure way for issuing the necessary payments and vouchers after applications had been assessed. The innovative system is easy to use, saving us valuable time and money and avoiding the need for us to hold cash or gift vouchers."

Andrew Goddard, Retail Director at PayPoint UK & Ireland, added: "We are delighted to be able to help local councils around the country simplify their emergency payments process. It is our role to

ensure that everyone has access to the right funds at all times and this is especially important in emergency cases. Our 25,000 retailers are close to residents' homes and are open early to late, seven days a week, making accessing these payments safe, easy and convenient for the most vulnerable members of society.

"22 local authorities went live with the portal in April and more than 50 are now using the portal, with many more signing up every week."

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