

Work Coach discretion and financial responsibilities

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Discretion

1. Where WC teams have flexibility and [discretion](#) in making awards from FSF, this responsibility must be taken seriously.
2. Each FSF award must be considered on its individual merits. In exercising their discretion, WCs must take into account national and local guidelines and ensure all awards are reasonable and represent good value for money in terms of enhancing employment prospects and reducing the time spent on benefit. Before proposing an award, the WC must first have considered all other possible sources of funding; this includes making a judgement on whether or not the claimant could, in their particular circumstances, reasonably be expected to fund the purchase themselves.
3. When considering making an FSF award, WCs are encouraged to apply what might be termed a 'tabloid test' - essentially, if the nature of the award **you** made was portrayed in the press as being 'a waste of taxpayers money', could **you** give an explanation for **your actions** that would stand up to public scrutiny? Applying the 'tabloid test' will also help WCs in relation to discharging their financial responsibilities (see below).

Financial responsibilities

5. When making a discretionary award, WCs must be mindful of the fact that they are awarding taxpayer's money. In this regard, the DWP standards of behaviour include:

- correct procedures are followed in all matters to ensure responsible use of public money
- employees must ensure money, property and other funds are properly safeguarded and not used inappropriately.

6. Failure to follow departmental standards / policy could lead to disciplinary action being taken against the individual(s) concerned.

7. Discretionary spend is subject to local [management checks](#), and Internal Audit may undertake a detailed review of activities / payments at any time.

8. To fully meet the 'standards of behaviour', steps must be taken to [identify FSF overpayments](#) and recoup the money. Key to identifying overpayments / inappropriate payments is ensuring awards are fully supported by robust, relevant documentation (e.g. receipts, invoices etc).

9. WC teams must have an understanding of the different payment methods available for FSF and, where they have a choice, select the most appropriate option. Awarding cash in advance (where this is an option) carries the greatest risk of all and should, therefore, only be used where there is no viable alternative and only in very exceptional circumstances, for example, it's the last resort. The [Making a payment](#) chapter of FSF guidance gives information about payment options and the [subject specific chapters](#) indicate which payment methods are appropriate.

