



# Athlete Exceptional Support Fund Guidance

## Purpose of the Fund

The Athlete Exceptional Support Fund (the “**Fund**”) provides one-off, short term financial support for athletes facing an extraordinary or unexpected situation that significantly affects their ability to participate fully in the requirements of their performance programme.

For this Fund, UK Sport defines “*extraordinary*” as ‘a circumstance, challenge or situation that is outside of the normal or expected routine, circumstance or expected costs of being on a high-performance programme’.

The Fund is not designed to cover ongoing or routine costs. It aims to provide immediate relief while more sustainable, longer-term arrangements are put in place by the athlete and/or the athlete’s performance programme.

Typical awards will not exceed £800, although UK Sport may approve higher amounts at its sole discretion.

We strongly encourage any athlete who may be experiencing financial challenges to openly discuss their situation with someone in their sport, to see what support is available including help navigating their current circumstances or situation. We would also encourage athletes to seek support from either a Performance Lifestyle Practitioner, their performance programme, or the British Elite Athletes Association (BEAA) to check their eligibility or make an application.

Use the following link to access the application form: [Athlete Exceptional Support Fund Application Form](#)

## Eligibility Criteria

The fund is open to all athletes who:

- Are currently in receipt of a UK Sport Athlete Performance Award at any level; and

Athletes aged under 18 may apply, however a parent or legal guardian must review and approve the application and accept responsibility for the use of any funds awarded.

Athletes are not eligible where they:

- Are on a programme break (including maternity leave);
- Are suspended by their National Governing Body (“**NGB**”); or
- Have been informed that they are transitioning away from their performance programme.

Athletes who are currently under investigation should disclose this information to UK Sport and their application will be reviewed by UK Sport on a case-by-case basis.

A list of costs that are eligible for consideration and those which are ineligible are set out in Appendix A.

Applications based only on ineligible costs will not be supported.

## Application Windows

Applications are reviewed monthly. The deadlines and corresponding decision / payment dates are published below. Any application received after a deadline is automatically moved to the following review window. Exceptions will not be made for late applications so please ensure you are aware of the dates below or check with us by emailing [athlete.support@uksport.gov.uk](mailto:athlete.support@uksport.gov.uk)

Application submission deadline	Decision communicated and payment date
Window 1 – 4 January 2026	23 January 2026
Window 2 – 25 January 2026	25 February 2026
Window 3 – 22 February 2026	25 March 2026
Window 4 – 7 April 2026 (taking into consideration Easter bank holidays)	8 May 2026
Window 5 – 26 April 2026	22 May 2026
Window 6 – 28 June 2026	24 July 2026
Window 7 – 26 July 2026	25 August 2026
Window 8 – 31 August 2026	25 September 2026
Window 9 – 27 September 2026	23 October 2026
Window 10 – 1 November 2026	25 November 2026
Window 11 – 22 November 2026 (taking into consideration Christmas bank holidays)	23 December 2026

## How to Apply

Athletes must submit an application by completing the online application form. The application requires:

- A short income and expenditure declaration (bank statements are not required);
- Evidence of the cost or financial commitment where support is requested (e.g. screenshot, receipt, contract);
- A description of the circumstance and its impact on the athlete's engagement with their performance programme.

Where evidence cannot be provided, the athlete must explain why. This may result in a delayed decision and payment date.

Athletes may seek support completing the application form from their performance programme, a Performance Lifestyle Practitioner or the BEAA.

Receipt of the submission will be acknowledged within five working days.

## Assessment and Decision-Making Process

Once submitted:

- UK Sport will review the application and in certain circumstances may seek further information / verification.
- Applications involving performance-related costs will be shared with the performance programme for validation.
- Applications describing personal or sensitive circumstances will be treated confidentially and will not be shared with the performance programme unless the athlete consents or there is a wellbeing concern.

A panel will assess the applications. Outcomes may include:

- Approval,

- Partial approval,
- Decline (with feedback),
- Request for further information.

A decision will be provided via email within 30 days of the application window deadline. Payments for approved applications will be issued within 14 days.

If an athlete's application is approved or partially approved for funding, the athlete will be required to submit receipts within 60 days of funding payment. If UK Sport does not receive the required receipts or other documentation within 60 days, it reserves the right to deduct the value of this award from the athlete's APA. For the avoidance of doubt, UK Sport may seek repayment of funds directly from the athlete where APA deduction is not possible.

Where the athlete is under 18, a parent or legal guardian must co-sign the application and accept responsibility for the conditions of the award, including the use of funds, the return of receipts, and any repayment obligations.

An athlete who receives an approved or partially approved award may not submit another application for 12 months.

UK Sport's decision on awards is final and there is no appeals process.

## General Conditions

1. By applying, the athlete confirms all information provided is accurate.
2. UK Sport may request supporting documents.
3. Any misrepresentation or misconduct by an athlete will adversely affect the athlete's eligibility under the UK Sport Eligibility Policy. This misrepresentation or misconduct may include, but is not limited to, providing false information or engaging in actions that undermine the integrity of the Fund or the reputation of UK Sport and/or the National Lottery.
4. Approved funding must be used for the purpose stated in the application.
5. Once the athlete submits the application, the athlete will automatically be bound by the terms of this UK Sport Guidance document and UK Sport FAQ document (as amended from time to time).
6. UK Sport may amend, pause or terminate the Fund at its discretion.
7. The examples provided throughout this guidance, including those relating to eligible and ineligible costs, are not exhaustive. UK Sport retains full discretion to assess applications and make awarding decisions on a case-by-case basis.
8. UK Sport will process all personal data in accordance with the Data Protection Protocol for Athletes published on the UK Sport [website](#). UK Sport will not use or disclose the supporting evidence without an athlete's prior written consent unless it is required to by law, the information is already in the public domain or where it is required to be shared with other partner organisations and/or the Department of Culture, Media, and Sport, solely to assist in the review of an application.
9. UK Sport reserves the right to inform the athlete's NGB that the athlete has made an application to the Fund. However, UK Sport would encourage applicants to proactively engage with the available support structures within their sports prior to application, referencing this as part of their application.
10. UK Sport takes the offence of fraud (including theft, corruption, and bribery) seriously. Any athlete who receives an award from UK Sport must implement appropriate measures to manage the award responsibly. This includes keeping receipts and maintaining accurate records. Where any instance of fraud, misrepresentation, false statement, or an attempt to defraud, occurs UK Sport will take action, including bringing a case against athlete to the UK Sport Eligibility Panel or reporting to the police.

## **Support and Enquiries**

Athletes may seek guidance from a Performance Lifestyle Practitioner, the BEAA or someone in their sport. Alternatively, athletes can contact the Athlete Support team directly by emailing [athlete.support@uksport.gov.uk](mailto:athlete.support@uksport.gov.uk), enquiries to us may take up to five working days for a response. Please note that UK Sport are not able to make a decision based on an enquiry email, please submit a full application.

# Appendix 1 – Costs that are in eligible and in consideration

## Ineligible Costs

Applications relating solely to the following will be declined.

1. **Competition and Training Costs** - Ongoing costs associated with competitions or training camps; these should be addressed via your APA or through your performance programme, please do speak to your programme point of contact to discuss your competition and training costs.
2. **Expected Equipment Costs** - Routine or anticipated equipment expenses related to the sport, including maintenance and upgrading of equipment or expected wear and tear of equipment.
3. **Additional or Alternative Coaching** - Costs for accessing additional or alternative coaching sessions or services.
4. **Costs Covered by Other Funding** – Examples include expenses that can be covered by the Performance Development Award (PDA) funding.
5. **Therapeutic Services or Equipment** - This includes massage therapy, medical service provision or therapeutic equipment such as massage guns and compression machines for example.
6. **Expected Performance Programme Costs** - Core and expected costs associated with being a performance athlete, such as travel to the daily or usual training environment or nutrition supplements.
7. **Parent/Carer/Guardian Costs** - Travel or accommodation expenses incurred by parents, carers, or guardians. Extraordinary circumstances requiring support will be considered at UK Sport's sole discretion where this impacts the athlete's ability to engage with the performance programme.
8. **Loss of Athlete Performance Award (APA)** - Financial assistance to bridge gaps due to loss or downgrading of the level of APA. This includes circumstances where athletes are means tested out of receiving an APA or who have received a reduced APA. Where circumstances have changed (experiencing a significant reduction in income), athletes are encouraged to request a reassessment of their APA through their Athlete Grants Officer/Advisor.
9. **Relocation for Performance Reasons** - Permanent relocation costs should be covered by APA and are not eligible under this policy. Instances where a significant, temporary and unexpected relocation of the daily training environment is required will be considered at UK Sport's sole discretion.
10. **Savings and Property** - Contributions to savings accounts, ISA's or costs related to purchasing property.
11. **Debt Payments** - Payments toward debts accrued through penalties, fines, interest, or missed regular payments (e.g., accrued utility bills, subscriptions or purchases).

## Costs and Circumstances That May Be Considered

Applications may be considered where the circumstance:

- Is extraordinary and has occurred within the past three months, and
- Has a significant, immediate impact on the athlete's ability to engage with their performance programme.

The following categories may be supported:

1. **Unexpected Performance Requirements\*** - Costs arising from unforeseen additional qualification requirements as part of performance demands for milestone events such as for the Olympic or Paralympic Games.
2. **Unexpected Equipment or Maintenance Costs\*** - Contributions towards or expenses related to significant equipment that cannot be met through performance programme funding and or your APA. Expected wear and tear of equipment will not be considered.
3. **Essential Personnel Support\*** - One off costs for unexpected essential personnel support integral to enabling an athlete to compete or attend training.
4. **Travel or Accommodation Costs\*** - One off contributions towards unexpected or elevated costs for travel or accommodation due to extraordinary circumstances. Instances where a significant, temporary and unexpected relocation of the daily training environment is required will be considered.
5. **Loss of Accommodation** - Support for athletes who lose access to accommodation due to a change in personal circumstance.
6. **Significant and unexpected change in Guardian Financial Circumstances** - Consideration for athletes whose parent, carer, or guardian experiences a sudden change in financial status (such as job loss), especially where they have been contributing significantly to athlete expenses (e.g., providing free or subsidised housing or monthly financial contribution).
7. **Unforeseen Personal or Financial Changes** - Support for athletes facing sudden and significant changes in personal or financial circumstances.
8. **Ongoing Hardship - Additional** discretionary support for athletes experiencing prolonged financial difficulty that impacts their ability to engage with or development on the programme.
9. **Extraordinary Circumstances** - A situation deemed unexpected and extraordinary that has a significant and immediate impact on the athlete's ability to perform or remain in the programme.

\*Applications involving performance-related costs will be discussed and determined in conjunction with the athlete's performance programme.

The above list is an example of the criteria that UK Sport will consider. Investment decisions are made at the sole discretion of UK Sport. In exercising that discretion, UK Sport will take into account the criteria listed above but may also take into account any other factors it considers relevant and apply such relative weight to the various factors as it deems appropriate. UK Sport reserves the right to amend any of the criteria set out within this Guidance and/or suspend or terminate applications for the Fund.

# Appendix 2 – Athlete Exceptional Support Fund Application Form Questions

Please note that this is not an application form. The online form for completion can be accessed here: [Athlete Exceptional Support Fund Application Form](#)

## Applicant Information

1. Full Name
2. Performance Programme (Sport)
3. PRN
4. Email Address or Phone Number
5. Is your performance programme aware of your circumstance?
6. Is your performance programme aware that you are making this application?

## Request Summary

7. We would like to understand your circumstances and how it impacts your ability to engage or fulfil the requirements of your performance programme or plan. Please describe the circumstance, challenge or situation, including how this is outside of the normal or expected routine or cost.
8. How will this funding change or support your current circumstances?
9. Requested Amount?
10. As part of this application, you are required to provide evidence of either the cost of commitment of your intended spend or purchase. Please provide this evidence by emailing [athlete.support@uksport.gov.uk](mailto:athlete.support@uksport.gov.uk) (please ensure that the following is captured in the subject line: AESF evidence, add your PRN). If it is an intended purchase, please provide a screenshot of the item displaying the cost and source, and a website link. If your intended spend or cost relates to a commitment, please provide a bank statement, previous transaction receipt or contract. Please remember this must have been a commitment within the last 3 months. If you are unable to provide evidence, this may slow down your application and our decision.

Tick the relevant box: I have emailed evidence, or I am unable to provide evidence.

## Declaration of Monthly Income and Expenditure

11. Please provide us with your monthly income and expenditure for the following:
  - Monthly Income: APA, Paid Work, Sponsorship, Support from Family and Friends, Other, Total Income)
  - Monthly Expenditure: Accommodation, Bills, Travel, Childcare, Food, Other, Total Expenditure

## Employment and Education Status

12. Current employment status (*please tick that box that applies to you*):
  - Full-time employment, Part-time employment, Casual work, looking for work / recently unemployed, not currently working.
13. Current education status (*please tick that box that applies to you*):

- Full-time formal education (school, college, university), Part-time formal education, Vocational course, short course, not currently in education

## Declaration

14. I am applying for this fund because a circumstance, challenge or situation is impacting my ability to engage with or fulfil the requirements of my performance programme. I confirm that the information provided in this application is accurate and complete to the best of my knowledge. I understand and accept that:

- the Athlete Exceptional Support Fund is discretionary, limited in availability and intended for short-term, unforeseen circumstances;
- UK Sport may request additional information or evidence to support or verify this application;
- if funding is approved, it must only be used for the purpose described in this application, and receipts must be submitted within 60 days of payment;
- UK Sport may recover funding where evidence is not supplied, where conditions are not met, or where information provided is later found to be false or misleading;
- decisions made by UK Sport are final and cannot be appealed;
- only one application may be submitted within a 12-month period following an approved or partially approved award;
- my information may be shared with my performance programme for performance-related applications, as outlined in the guidance; and
- my data will be processed in accordance with UK GDPR and the UK Sport Privacy Policy.

15. Signature provided by typing name

16. **Where the applicant is under 18:**

A parent or legal guardian must complete the section below.

17. Parent/Guardian Declaration (for applicants under 18)

I confirm that I am the parent/legal guardian of the applicant. I have read and understood the Athlete Exceptional Support Fund Guidance and I accept responsibility for ensuring that:

- the information submitted is accurate,
- any funding awarded is used only for its stated purpose,
- receipts or evidence of spend are submitted within 60 days, and
- funds may be recovered if conditions are not met or if information is found to be false or misleading.

18. I consent to UK Sport processing the applicant's personal data and understand that information may be shared for assessment, monitoring or safeguarding purposes in line with UK GDPR.

19. Signature provided by typing name, relationship to the athlete and email address:

20. Date