

**Report for:**  
**ACTION/**

**Item Number:**

<b>Contains Confidential or Exempt Information</b>	No confidential or exempt information Urgent, pursuant to the following procedures:  Rule 4 of the <a href="#">Access to Information Procedure Rules</a> (meeting called at less than five clear working days' notice) Rule 16 of the Access to Information Procedure Rules (impractical to comply with Forward Plan requirements) Rule 5 of appendix to the Access to Information Procedure Rules (urgent ICMD) Rule 16 of the <a href="#">Scrutiny Procedure Rules</a> (special urgency and exemption from call-in)
<b>Title</b>	Household Support Fund – local eligibility framework and approach
<b>Responsible Officer(s)</b>	Emily Hill, Strategic Director of Corporate Resources
<b>Author(s)</b>	Joanna Pavlides, Assistant Director, Financial Assessments
<b>Portfolio(s)</b>	Decent Living Incomes (Cllr Bassam Mahfouz), and Inclusive Economy (Cllr Steve Donnelly)
<b>For Consideration By</b>	Individual Cabinet Member Decision
<b>Date to be Considered</b>	17/10/2022
<b>Implementation Date if Not Called In</b>	Exempt, pursuant to Rule 16 of the <a href="#">Scrutiny Procedure Rules</a>
<b>Affected Wards</b>	All
<b>Keywords/Index</b>	Cost of living crisis, support, grants, support for vulnerable

**Purpose of Report:**

To seek approval for distribution of the Household Support Fund (HSF) under the conditions laid down by central Government and a local scheme.

Following on from the Government announcement on the extension of Household Support Fund, this report sets out how Ealing Council will allocate and process the grant payments to vulnerable households.

The main purpose of the grant is to support those most in need to help with global inflationary challenges and the significantly rising cost of living.

The report sets out scheme eligibility criteria to distribute the funds to residents together with award mechanisms and application process where necessary.

The Council has already been providing support to vulnerable households under Household Support Fund available between 6 October 2021 and 30 September 2022.

The most recent grant conditions no longer ring fence proportions of the funding to any particular groups of residents; however, they now include mandatory application process for at least some of the funding.

The objective of the Household Support Fund is to provide support to wide range of vulnerable households in most need of support to help with significantly rising living costs through period from 1 October 2022 to 31 March 2023.

## **1. Recommendations**

It is recommended that the Individual Cabinet Member:

- 1.1 Approves the proposed distribution of Household Support Fund to residents who qualify for grant payments under conditions laid down by central government and local scheme guidance.
- 1.2 Authorises the Strategic Director of Corporate Resources, following consultation with the Cabinet Member for Decent Living Incomes and the Cabinet Member for Inclusive Economy and the Director of Legal and Democratic Services, to determine and amend the award criteria as may be appropriate in response to circumstances and further guidance from central government.
- 1.3 Approves temporary expansion of eligibility criteria for Local Welfare Assistance in line with eligibility criteria of Household Support Fund to be applicable until 31 March 2023.

## **2. Reason for Decision**

- 2.1 The cost of living has been increasing since late 2021 and has been caused by high inflation fueled by sharp increases of energy costs. From 1 October 2022, the annual energy bill for typical household will rise to £2,500 – a 27% increase on the current costs. This also means that the cost of energy for households will have doubled over the last 12 months.
- 2.2 As part of the measures to address the raising prices of food and fuel, the DWP is providing further extension of Household Support Fund from 1 October 2022 until 31 March 2023.
- 2.3 The objective of the Household Support Fund is to provide support to vulnerable households in most need of support to help with significantly rising living costs.
- 2.4 Funding has been made available to Local Authorities under the scheme to

continue providing support for households between 1 October 2022 and 31 March 2023.

2.5 Ealing funding allocation under the scheme is £2,658,804.97.

2.6 There is no separate allocation for administration of the scheme and the Council is allowed to use part of this funding towards administration costs as long as these are 'reasonable'.

### **3. Objective, key principles and eligibility criteria of Household Support Grant**

3.1 The objective of the Household Support Fund (HSF) is to provide support to vulnerable households in most need of support to help with significantly rising living costs.

3.2 Funds should be spent or committed before 31 March 2023 and cannot be held over for future use.

3.3 Grant conditions applicable from 1 October 2022 to 31 March 2023 no longer ringfence any specific percentage of funding to individual cohorts and give the Council more flexibility in how the funding should be spent.

3.4 The new requirement is for the Council to operate at least part of the scheme on an application basis, which Ealing Council has been operating since HSF was first introduced.

3.5 The Council has the flexibility and discretion within the scheme to identify which vulnerable households are in most need of support and to apply their own discretion when identifying eligibility.

3.6 The Council can request applications for support or can proactively identify households who may benefit or can take a mixture of the two approaches. There is no requirement to undertake a means test or conduct a benefit check unless this specifically forms part of the Council's local eligibility criteria.

3.7 The awards may include households not currently in receipt of DWP welfare benefits therefore also supporting people in employment or on other income, i.e., pensions.

3.8 Eligible spend includes:

- Energy and water. The Fund should primarily be used to support with energy bills for any form of fuel that is used for the purpose of domestic heating, cooking or lighting, including oil or portable gas cylinders. It can also be used to support with water bills including for drinking, washing, cooking, and sanitary purposes and sewerage.

- Food. The Fund should also primarily be used to provide support with food whether in kind or through vouchers or cash.
- Essentials linked to energy and water. The Fund can be used to provide support with essentials linked to energy and water (including sanitary products, warm clothing, soap, blankets, boiler service/repair, purchase of equipment including fridges, freezers, ovens, etc.), in recognition that a range of costs may arise which directly affect a household's ability to afford or access energy, food and water.
- Wider essentials. The Fund can be used to support with wider essential needs not linked to energy and water should Authorities consider this appropriate in their area. These may include, but are not limited to, support with other bills including broadband or phone bills, clothing, and essential transport-related costs such as repairing a car, buying a bicycle or paying for fuel. This list is not exhaustive.
- Housing Costs. In exceptional cases of genuine emergency where existing housing support schemes do not meet this exceptional need, the Fund can be used to support housing costs.

3.9 The funding cannot be used to provide mortgage support.

3.10 The funding cannot be used to provide advice services including debt advice.

3.11 The funding can be used for reasonable Council's administrative costs such as staff costs, advertising and publicity to raise awareness of the scheme, web page design, printing application forms, small IT changes, for example, to facilitate MI production.

3.12 It is expected that the focus of support should be on food and bills and that support for housing costs should only be given in exceptional cases of genuine emergency. Beyond this, the Council have discretion to determine the most appropriate scheme for their area, based on their understanding of local need and with due regard to equality considerations.

3.13 Any unspent funds after 31 March 2023 will have to be paid back to DWP.

#### **4. Proposals for distribution of Household Support Fund**

4.1 The main purpose of the funding is to provide support with food, utility bills and other essentials including housing costs in emergency situations.

4.2 Council has flexibility in specifying vulnerable groups and the methods for the grant distribution, however, the Council must also have an application based process for individuals to approach the Council for the support.

4.3 It is proposed that the Council distributes the Household Support Fund through 3 main channels:

- Via automatic awards to groups requiring support as identified through Council databases;
- Via Local Welfare Assistance to residents requiring support who cannot be identified through the databases or who require further support (application and referral routes).
- Via voluntary Sector to residents who require further support

4.4 The Council will continue to provide support in the form of a supermarket vouchers to the groups of residents as identified under the previous DWP Household Support Fund. These are:

- Free School Meals (FSM) to eligible children where eligibility is based on low-income criteria. Households with FSM eligibility are households on various DWP benefits such as Income Support, Jobseeker's Allowance, Employment and Support Allowance and Universal Credit either unemployed or with earned income less than £7,400 a year. These groups are likely to experience hardship during the school holidays.
- Families with children under 5 who are in receipt of Housing Benefit or Council Tax Support. These households are either in receipt of DWP benefits or in low paid employment.
- Care Leavers
- Households in receipt of Housing Benefit and/or Council Tax Reduction, who are not in receipt of DWP benefits or Tax Credits and thus not eligible for the Government's cost of living payments, such as: £650 Cost of Living Payments for those on means tested benefits; £150 Disability Cost of Living Payment or One-off £300 Pensioner Cost of Living Payment (through the Winter Fuel Payment)

4.5 The above households can be automatically identified through the Council data and support will be issued automatically without a need of an application form.

4.6 The Council is not able to identify households who may not be eligible for Energy Bills Support Scheme, which will provide £400 credit to individual households via energy providers but who may still be liable for energy bill payments.

4.7 Other vulnerable households will be supported through the Council's Local Welfare Assistance scheme to ensure that those who cannot be easily

identified as in genuine need of support can also access the funding.

- 4.8 Further temporary expansion of eligibility criteria for the LWA scheme is proposed to align them with Household Support grant criteria for the duration of the grant, until 31 March 2023. This will ensure that an adequate provision for support with cash (rather than vouchers) towards food, utility bills and other essentials is in place and that the scheme is accessible to all residents in need of support.
- 4.9 This will also provide support to those who are in need of financial support but could not have been identified by the Council via data matching exercises.
- 4.10 Proposed expanded eligibility criteria for Local Welfare Assistance has been attached in Appendix 3.
- 4.11 Qualifying conditions for LWA will be expanded from the previous conditions set out in October 2013 as follows:

- Local Welfare Assistance will allow referrals from other services and will accept these referrals as a verified application with needs of those referred customers already established by another Council Service such as Social Services, Housing and others.
- Increase maximum crisis payments from 3 to 4 and will also allow further payments to be made at the discretion of the Council for applicants in emergency circumstances.
- Ealing Temporary accommodation tenants who have been placed in out of borough accommodation but remain liable for rent to Ealing Council will be eligible for support under Ealing's Local Welfare Assistance if they are unable to obtain support in the area they live in.
- Those who are employed or self-employed (regardless whether any other DWP benefits are in payment) will be able to apply for Local Welfare Assistance payments as long as their income does not exceed the following income thresholds:

	Single person	Couple
weekly	£230	£379
monthly	£997	£1642

- The maximum income thresholds have been set in line with Minimum Income Standards for 2021 as published in Joseph Rowntree Foundation report on 'Minimum Income Standards for the UK in 2021' (Appendix 5).
- Those with no income, where the lack of income is not an act of an omission or negligence, will also be entitled to LWA if they meet other eligibility criteria.
- List of items, towards which Local Welfare Assistance payment can be made, will be expanded by the following items: blankets, essential

travel expenses including car fuel, cost of gas cylinders, water bills, boiler service and repairs, other essential bills such as telephone and broadband bills.

- Housing costs will also be paid under Local Welfare Assistance in cases of exceptional emergency where an existing benefits or discretionary grants do not meet this exceptional need.

- 4.12 All LWA payments will be made at the Council's discretion and will be subject to available funds.
- 4.13 Maximum payment under the LWA will be £400, however, higher awards to households can be made in exceptional circumstances.
- 4.14 Application process for residents and referral process from Council Services will ensure that the 'genuine' need is met, and ongoing support is available to those who are struggling financially but cannot be identified through the Council's data or who require extra support in addition to the vouchers.
- 4.15 Household Support Fund will be distributed in a form of supermarket vouchers to those identified through the Council databases as eligible for support: families eligible for Free School Meals, families with children under the age of 5 on housing benefit or council tax reduction, care leavers, and households in receipt of housing benefits or council tax reduction who are not in receipt of DWP benefits or Tax Credits.
- 4.16 Supermarket vouchers have been the quickest and the most cost effective way of distributing the grant funding and Hawk Incentives Limited has distributed the vouchers free of charge for the Council.
- 4.17 Where the child's school provided the Council with an email address, the Hawk Incentives Limited will issue an email with a code which could be redeemed by the customer against a supermarket of their choice: Tesco, Aldi, Morrisons, Sainsbury's, Asda, M&S, Waitrose and Aldi.
- 4.18 In small number of cases where the school or the Council do not hold a valid email address, the Council will either issue the code via a text message or else issue a letter with a code and instructions on how to redeem the code.
- 4.19 Where a referral or an application has been made to Local Welfare Assistance, cash payments will be made directly into the individual bank account if the application or referral is successful.
- 4.20 Applications made to Local Welfare Assistance will be verified according to the current procedures and the identity of an applicant, bank details together with 'genuine need' will be verified before any payments are issued.
- 4.21 The Council will distribute supermarket vouchers to help with food and will align the distribution to school holidays dates and at the rate as specified

below:

Group	Date of issue	Duration	estimated volumes	value unit	Total cost	% spend
FSM children	Oct-22	1 week	13,800	£15	£ 204,350.40	7.69%
FSM children	Dec-22	2 weeks	13,800	£40	£ 544,934.40	20.50%
FSM children	Feb-23	1 week	13,800	£15	£ 204,350.40	7.69%
FSM children	Mar-23	2 weeks	13,800	£30	£ 408,700.80	15.37%
Families with children under 5 on HB/CTR	Oct-22	n/a	1,260	£15	£ 18,658.08	0.70%
Families with children under 5 on HB/CTR	Dec-22	n/a	1,260	£40	£ 49,754.88	1.87%
Families with children under 5 on HB/CTR	Feb-23	n/a	1,260	£15	£ 18,658.08	0.70%
Families with children under 5 on HB/CTR	Mar-23	n/a	1,260	£30	£ 37,316.16	1.40%
Care leavers	Oct-22	n/a	310	£15	£ 4,590.48	0.17%
Care leavers	Dec-22	n/a	310	£40	£ 12,241.28	0.46%
Care leavers	Feb-23	n/a	310	£15	£ 4,590.48	0.17%
Care leavers	Mar-23	n/a	310	£30	£ 9,180.96	0.35%
HB/CTR claimants not on DWP benefits or Tax Credits	Nov-22	n/a	2,761	£170.00	£ 463,362.06	17.43%

- 4.22 Voucher payments for October 22, February 23 and March 23 are based on the standard rate of £15 per child per week as previously provided for Free School Meals eligible children. The voucher payments for December will be increased to £20 per week per child. The same level of support will also be provided for other households as identified above.
- 4.23 Awards for households in receipt of housing benefits or council tax reductions who are not in receipt of DWP benefits or tax credits will receive one off voucher payment.
- 4.24 The households receiving automatic awards are also entitled to apply for Local Welfare Assistance payments if they are still experiencing financial hardship.
- 4.25 Voluntary Sector will be given an opportunity to apply for grants to provide support to residents in line with the Household Support Fund eligibility criteria. The support provided via Voluntary Sector will complement the support provided by the Council. It will help to reach out to groups which are hard to engage with. It will also aid in providing support in a different form to what is already available, for example hot meals or food parcels.



## **5. Key Implications**

- 5.1 The expectation is that HSF should be used to support households in the most need – particularly those who may not be eligible for the other support government has recently made available, including the Cost-of-Living Payments.
- 5.2 This may include but is not limited to people who are entitled to but not claiming qualifying benefits, people who are claiming Housing Benefit only, people who begin a claim or return to payment of a benefit after the relevant qualifying date as well as people who have fuel costs but who cannot access the £400 of energy support from the Energy Bill Support Scheme or the equivalence package.
- 5.3 HSF is intended to cover a wide range of low-income households in need including families with children of all ages, pensioners, unpaid carers, care leavers, and people with disabilities.
- 5.4 Energy bills may be of particular concern to low-income households during the period and DWP advises that the Council should prioritise supporting households with the cost of energy.
- 5.5 Support, especially to families with children eligible for free school meals, should be distributed no later than during the week prior to any school holidays commencing. This will ensure families have got funds available around school holidays.
- 5.6 Ealing schools play a crucial role in communicating to parents the availability of vouchers. In small number of cases, they have also assisted parents with voucher redemption. If the vouchers are not distributed in timely manner, the opportunity for the communication with parents and additional support with voucher redemption will be lost until children return to school after their holiday break.
- 5.7 Any unspent funding at the end of the Government scheme in March 2023 will have to be repaid to DWP.
- 5.8 The Council must have a clear rationale or documented policy/framework outlining their approach including how they are defining eligibility and how households access the scheme.
- 5.9 The Council is required to submit Management Information to the DWP who will make payments of the grant upon receipt of this information.
- 5.10 The support under temporarily expanded LWA eligibility criteria will be provided until 31 March 2023. From 1 April 2023, the Council's original LWA policy will apply.

5.11 Since July 2021, Hawk Incentives have been an appointed contractor to distribute HSF vouchers on behalf of the Council.

## 6. Financial

6.1 The Household Support Grant is provided by the DWP and Ealing has been allocated £2,658,804.97. There is no additional cost to the Council related to the distribution of this grant.

6.2 There is no separate administration grant, however, the Council is allowed to use the grant for reasonable admin costs incurred.

6.3 The schedule of payments has been for groups identified as eligible for automatic award of vouchers has been provided in point 4.21.

6.4 The support via Local Welfare Assistance with expanded eligibility criteria and Voluntary Sector will be provided throughout the period until 31 March 2023.

6.5 The breakdown of planned expenditure under the grant allocation between October 22 and 31 March 2023 has been provided below.

<b>HSF Grant expenditure summary</b>		
<b>Grant allocation</b>	<b>£ 2,658,804.97</b>	
<b>Breakdown of expenditure</b>	<b>Amount</b>	<b>% of grant</b>
Admin costs	£ 150,000.00	5.64%
Grant net of admin	£ 2,508,804.97	94.36%
Families with children & care leavers	£ 1,517,326.40	57.07%
HB/CTR claimants not on DWP benefits	£ 463,362.06	17.43%
vol sector grants	£ 100,000.00	3.76%
Other households – applications via LWA awards	£ 428,116.51	16.10%

## 7. Legal

7.1 The Household Support Fund is being classified as Local Welfare Provision (LWP). The HSF funding must only be used to provide support as defined within the grant conditions. To this end the Council is required to develop a local eligibility framework and approach. Officers have set out a proposed approach in Section 4 of this report.

7.2 The Council has signed and returned the relevant section (Annex C) of the DWP/LA Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) and has legal permission

to access DWP's Searchlight portal. This portal provides information on individual citizen's entitlement to (and confirms receipt of) DWP welfare benefits. Therefore, this data can be used to help the Council identify those families and individuals to whom to target this support.

- 7.3 Under the Local Government Act 2003 s.31, a Minister of the Crown may pay a grant to a local authority in England towards expenditure incurred or to be incurred by it. The Council also has the power, under section 1 of the Localism Act 2011, to do anything that individuals generally may do.
- 7.4 Part 3 of the Council Constitution sets out the responsibility and function for central government grants to the portfolio holder for Inclusive Economy and welfare reform to the portfolio holder for Decent Living Incomes.
- 7.5 The report confirms that the Council's section 151 officer is responsible for ensuring that all funding by external bodies is received and properly accounted for in accordance with Council's Financial Regulations.
- 7.6 The council must comply with the principles set out under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 and the Human Rights Act 1988, including the need to protect from discrimination anyone with protected characteristics (age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation).
- 7.7 Where proposals will have equalities implications, an equalities analysis assessment (EAA) is required, and officers have provided an up-to-date assessment.
- 7.8 When making decisions, the council must act reasonably and rationally. It must take into account all relevant information and disregard all irrelevant information.
- 7.9 Consultation would normally be required in relation to the package of proposals within this report. However, given the unexpected and extreme urgency of the situation, it is unlikely in practice that there will be time for consultation to be carried out before implementation is required.
- 7.10 Grant payments must be paid strictly in accordance with the criteria specified by Government and the local scheme. The council will be unable to claim reimbursement for any payments made outside those criteria.

## **8. Value For Money**

- 8.1 Whilst delivering these measures the Council will continue to operate, as it does currently, to ensure effective and efficient use of public monies. In doing so, it will ensure robust financial framework and processes are in place which allow the Council to stand up to any financial scrutiny at later date.

8.2 Strategic Director of Corporate Resources (section 151 officer) will ensure that accurate records are kept of the expenditure undertaken as a result of this grant scheme and will submit required management information to Government to ensure all funding spent has been claimed.

## **9. Sustainability Impact Appraisal**

9.1 N/A

## **10. Risk Management**

10.1 It is important for the Council to ensure spending for delivering this policy is contained within budget and central Government grant provision is available for this. The proposals set out in this report look to put in place suite of financial measures which look to minimise the risk and provide swift financial support to vulnerable households.

## **9. Community Safety**

None

## **10. Links to the 3 Key Priorities for the Borough**

The council's administration has three key priorities for Ealing. They are:

- Creating good jobs
- Tackling climate crisis
- Fighting inequality

## **11. Equalities, Human Rights and Community Cohesion**

11.1 When making decisions the Council must act reasonably and rationally. It must take into account all relevant information and disregard all irrelevant information and consult those affected, taking into account their views before final decisions are made. It must also comply with its legal duties, including those relating to equalities as referred to above.

11.2 Equality Impact Assessment has been reviewed and updated by the Council to consider how the support the Council is providing under the scheme impacts these with characteristics protected under the Equality Act. (Appendix 2). The Equality Impact Assessment shall continue to be kept under review as required.

## **12. Staffing/Workforce and Accommodation implications:**

- 12.1 It is anticipated that up to additional 3 -4 members of staff will be required in anticipation of an increase of inquiries regarding payments, applications received by the LWA scheme and to manage the process of issuing payments.

### **13. Property and Assets**

There are no property implications.

### **14. Any other implications:**

Not applicable

### **15. Consultation**

- 15.1 Consultation would normally be required in relation to the package of proposals within this report. However, given the unexpected and extreme urgency of the situation, it is unlikely in practice that there will be time for consultation to be carried out before implementation is required.

### **16 Timetable for Implementation**

The scheme runs between 1 October 2022 and 31 March 2023.

The vouchers to children eligible for free schools' meals should be distributed prior to half term breaks to make funds available to parents during school holidays.

### **17. Appendices**

Appendix 1: Ealing Household Support Grant Policy

Appendix 2: EAA

Appendix 3. LWA policy – temporary amendments applicable until 31 March 2023

Appendix 4. DWP Final Household Support guidance

### **18. Background Information**

#### **Consultation**

<b>Name of consultee</b>	<b>Post held</b>	<b>Date sent to consultee</b>	<b>Date response received</b>	<b>Comments appear in paragraph:</b>
<b>Internal</b>				

Emily Hill	Strategic Director of Corporate Resources	Continuous	Continuous	Throughout
Helen Harris	Director of Legal and Democratic Services	Continuous	Continuous	Throughout & Legal section
Councillor Bassam Mahfouz	Cabinet Member for Finance and Leisure	Continuous	Continuous	Throughout
Councillor Steve Donnelly	Cabinet Member for inclusive economy	Continuous	Continuous	Throughout
Alison Reynolds	Director of Customer and Transactional Services	Continuous	Continuous	Throughout
Kim Price	Planning and Resources Strategic Lead	Continuous	Continuous	Throughout
Kerry Stevens	Strategic Director of Adults and Public Health	Continuous	Continuous	Throughout

### **Report History**

<b>Decision type:</b>	<b>Urgency item?</b>
Key decision	Yes, pursuant to Rule 15 of the <u>Access to Information Procedure Rules</u> (General exception to forward plan requirements) – as the item was not on the council’s Forward Plan. Also, pursuant to Rule 16 of the <u>Scrutiny Procedure Rules</u> (exemption from call-in) because the decision has been exempted from the usual possibility of call-in.
Report no.:	Joanna Pavlides, Assistant Director Financial Assessments, <a href="mailto:pavlidej@ealing.gov.uk">pavlidej@ealing.gov.uk</a> ; 020 8825 9279

## **HOUSEHOLD SUPPORT FUND – EALING POLICY**

### **1. Introduction**

Household Support Fund has been made available to the Councils in England to support those most in need to help with significantly rising living costs. This funding covers the period 01 October 2022 to 31 March 2023 inclusive. The Council has discretion on exactly how this funding is used within the scope set out in the DWP guidance. The expectation is that it should primarily be used to support households in the most need particularly those who may not be eligible for the Government's Cost of Living Support and also for those who despite the support find themselves vulnerable to the rising prices. Energy bills may be of particular concern to low-income households during the period of the scheme and Local Authorities should especially consider how they can support households with the cost of energy. It can also be used to support households with essential costs related to those items and with wider essential costs. In exceptional cases of genuine emergency, it can additionally be used to support housing costs where existing housing support schemes do not meet this exceptional need.

Ealing allocation under the scheme is £2,658,804.97.

### **2. Objectives and principles of the scheme**

2.1 The objective of the Household Support Fund is to provide support to vulnerable households in most need of support to help with significantly rising living costs.

2.2 Funds should be spent or committed before 31 March 2023 and cannot be held over for future usage.

2.3 When administering this scheme, The Council has followed principles laid out in DWP guidance as below:

- use discretion on how to identify and support those most in need, taking into account a wide range of information;
- use the funding from 1 October 2022 to 31 March 2023 to meet immediate needs and help those who are struggling to afford energy and water bills, food, and other related essentials. Authorities can also use the funding to support households who are struggling to afford wider essentials;
- in exceptional cases of genuine emergency, the funding can additionally be used to support housing costs where existing housing support schemes do not meet this exceptional need, subject to the provisions at paragraph 30 below.
- this includes payments made, or committed to, by the Authority or any person acting on behalf of the Authority, from 1 October 2022 to 31 March 2023.
- work together with third parties, including where necessary and appropriate other local services. This may include social workers, housing and family

support services, and may incorporate intelligence and data from wider children's social care systems to help identify and support individuals, families and households within the scope of The Fund.

2.4 The following guidelines have been issued by DWP on how the funding should be used:

- The Council must operate an application-based service for support to ensure those in need have a route to emergency support which is clearly advertised to residents.
- The Council can also proactively identify households who will benefit from support. Where this is the case, the Council should consider how they can ensure that they are focusing on those in the most need to prevent escalation of problems. There is no requirement for the Council to undertake a means test or conduct a benefit check unless this specifically forms part of the council's local eligibility criteria.
- However, in relation to housing costs, the Council must establish whether other forms of support are available to the household, such as Discretionary Housing Payments (DHPs).

### **3. Eligible spend under HSF:**

Eligible spend includes:

- Energy and water. The Fund should primarily be used to support with energy bills for any form of fuel that is used for the purpose of domestic heating, cooking or lighting, including oil or portable gas cylinders. It can also be used to support with water bills including for drinking, washing, cooking, and sanitary purposes and sewerage.
- Food. The Fund should also primarily be used to provide support with food whether in kind or through vouchers or cash.
- Essentials linked to energy and water. The Fund can be used to provide support with essentials linked to energy and water (including sanitary products, warm clothing, soap, blankets, boiler service/repair, purchase of equipment including fridges, freezers, ovens, etc.), in recognition that a range of costs may arise which directly affect a household's ability to afford or access energy , food and water.



- Wider essentials. The Fund can be used to support with wider essential needs not linked to energy and water should the Council consider this appropriate in their area. These may include, but are not limited to, support with other bills including broadband or phone bills, clothing, and essential transport-related costs such as repairing a car, buying a bicycle or paying for fuel. This list is not exhaustive.
- Housing Costs. In exceptional cases of genuine emergency where existing housing support schemes do not meet this exceptional need, the Fund can be used to support housing costs. Where eligible, ongoing housing support for rent must be provided through the housing cost element of Universal Credit (UC) and Housing Benefit (HB) rather than the Household Support Fund. In addition, eligibility for DHPs must first be considered before emergency housing support is offered through the Household Support Fund. The Council must also first consider whether the claimant is at statutory risk of homelessness and therefore owed a duty of support through the Homelessness Prevention Grant (HPG).
- In exceptional cases of genuine emergency, households in receipt of HB, UC, or DHPs can still receive housing cost support through the Household Support Fund if it is deemed necessary by their Council. However, the Fund should not be used to provide housing support on an ongoing basis or to support unsustainable tenancies.
- Individuals in receipt of some other form of housing support could still qualify for the other elements of the Household Support Fund, such as food, energy, water, essentials linked to energy and water and wider essentials.
- The Fund cannot be used to provide mortgage support, though homeowners could still qualify for the other elements of the Fund (such as energy, food, water, essentials linked to energy and water and wider essentials). Where a homeowner is having difficulty with their mortgage payments, they should contact their lender as soon as possible to discuss their circumstances as lenders will have a set procedure to assist.
- The Fund can exceptionally and in genuine emergency be used to provide support for historic rent arrears built up prior to an existing benefit claim for households already in receipt of Universal Credit and Housing Benefit. This is because these arrears are excluded from the criteria for DHPs. However, support with rent arrears is not the primary intent of the fund and should not be the focus of spend.

#### **4. Individuals with No Recourse to Public Funds**

4.1 The Council can provide a basic safety net support to an individual, regardless of their immigration status, if there is a genuine care need that does not arise solely from destitution, for example if:

- there are community care needs
- they have serious health problems
- there is a risk to a child's wellbeing

4.2 The Council must use their judgement to decide what legal powers and funding can be used to support individuals who are ineligible for public funds or statutory housing assistance.

## **5. Legislation**

This policy is developed in line with DWP guidance noting that as per their guidance. The Household Support Fund is being classified as Local Welfare Provision (LWP) and local authorities (LAs) who have signed and returned the relevant section (Annex C) of the DWP/LA Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) have legal permission to access DWP's Searchlight portal. This portal provides information on individual citizen's entitlement to (and confirms receipt of) DWP welfare benefits. Therefore, this data can be used to help Authorities identify those families and individuals to whom to target this support.

## **6. Qualifying criteria and awards**

6.1 The Council has flexibility to deliver the support in a variety of different ways, including direct cash payments, vouchers, giving meals to those in need or boosting funding for organisations already doing so.

6.2 Council also has the flexibility to identify which vulnerable households are in most need of support and apply their own discretion when identifying eligibility.

6.3 The Council must operate an application-based service for support to ensure those in need have a route to emergency support which is clearly advertised to residents. This requirement will be fulfilled by the Council's local welfare assistance with expanded eligibility criteria.

6.4 In order to maximise the grant for support payments to residents of Ealing and to keep the administration of the grant to minimum, the Council will administer the grant in the following way:

### **6.5 Support for families eligible for FSMs where eligibility is based on low income (excludes universal support).**

The Council will automatically issue awards to parents of children eligible to free school meals where their eligibility is based on low income excludes universal infant free school meals, which are not income related.

The supermarket vouchers will be issued in October 22, December 22, February 23 and March 23. The value of the vouchers issued in October 22, February 23 and March will be £15 per week per child.

The value of the vouchers issued in December 22 will be £20 per week per child.

The Council will use the Free School Meals database to identify those who are eligible.

The Council will then automatically issue supermarket vouchers to families identified as entitled to free school meals to cover period of school holidays to support families with food during the periods when children do not receive school meals.

The vouchers will be distributed electronically by Hawk Incentives Limited. Where this is not possible, The Council will issue vouchers via other means necessary, i.e. text or letter.

London wide agreement has been reached that each borough will support the children attending the schools in the borough. This is to ensure that all children eligible for free school meals are being supported.

### **6.6 Support for families with children under the age of 5:**

The Council will use its Council Tax Reduction and Housing Benefit data to identify households with children under 5 and will issue supermarket vouchers to the value of:

- £15 per household in October 22
- £40 per household in December 22
- £15 per household in February 23
- £30 per household in March 23

The vouchers will be distributed electronically by Hawk Incentives Limited. Where this is not possible, The Council will issue vouchers via other means necessary, i.e. text or letter.

### **6.7 Support for care leavers**

The Council will support its care leavers and will automatically issue supermarket vouchers to the value the value of:

- £15 per household in October 22
- £40 per household in December 22
- £15 per household in February 23
- £30 per household in March 23

**3.1.1 Support for households in receipt of Housing Benefit and/or Council Tax Reduction who are not in receipt of DWP benefits and thus not entitled to DWP cost of living payments.**

The Council will issue a one-off payment to households in receipt of Housing Benefit and/or Council Tax reduction and therefore those who have not been entitled to the Cost-of-Living Payments for those on means tested DWP benefits or Tax Credits;

The Council will use their Housing Benefit and Council Tax Reduction data sets to identify households who have not been eligible for the above payments.

The awards will be issued in supermarket vouchers.

The value of the one-off award will be £170 per identified household.

**6.8 Support for other vulnerable households with or without children, households who do not qualify for automatic vouchers and those who need additional support with other essential items.**

6.8.1 Local Welfare Assistance (LWA) will provide support to other vulnerable households in the borough and will support for families with food, utilities and other essentials including sanitary products, warm clothing, soap, blankets, boiler/service repair; purchase of equipment including fridges, freezers, ovens, etc. This includes households whose rent includes ineligible services related to these items.

There will be two routes for Local Welfare Assistance awards:

Route 1:

Individual customers will be required to make an application for local welfare assistance and the application and LWA eligibility criteria will be expanded until 31 March 2023 to take into account eligibility criteria of the Household Support Grant.

## Route 2:

Referral from another Council Service, in particular, Social Care or Housing where the department identified an individual's genuine need for support with food, utilities and other essentials.

6.8.2 Maximum award of LWA will be capped at £400 per household unless exceptional circumstances warrant a higher award.

6.8.3 Boiler service and repairs under LWA: Where a customer makes an application for a boiler/service repairs, two quotes will be required before the final decision on the award is made. The payments for boiler/service repairs will be capped at maximum of £1,500. Alternatively, the team may refer the case to a handyman scheme under Healthy Homes initiative and if the boiler cannot be repaired, the Healthy Homes may assist the customer in getting a boiler replaced under their scheme.

If the property is rented, it is generally the responsibility of the landlord to carry out boiler repairs and replacements, therefore awards towards boiler repairs will only be considered for owner occupiers.

6.8.4 Housing Costs under LWA: these will only be paid in cases of exceptional emergency where existing housing costs schemes do not meet this exceptional need (eligibility for HB, UC, DHP and Homelessness Prevention Grant needs to be considered in the first instance) and the applicant is at high risk of eviction. Help with housing cost will be provided under the Household Support fund as follows:

- Where an application for LWA has been made for housing costs and the emergency need cannot be covered through any other fund
- Though a referral process directly from the team administering DHP where DHP cannot be awarded but the individual is at risk of eviction
- Through a referral process from another Council department, ie. Housing, Social Services or other

## 6.9 Support provided via voluntary sector

The Council will also provide funding to voluntary sector to support individuals who with eligible items under the Household Support Grant, provided the support does not duplicate the form of support provided by the Council.

Voluntary sector organisations will be responsible for setting out their own eligibility criteria based on the needs of the communities they support.

## **7. Identification of cases and application process**

The Council will identify families eligible for support from its own data and according to eligibility criteria set out in point 6 of the policy.

Residents will also be able to make further application to local welfare assistance for other essential items in line with Local Welfare Assistance policy.

Where possible, other services will be identifying individuals and households with genuine need of support under the Household Support Grant.

## **8. Evidence/verification**

Where possible, the Council will issue payments automatically and no further evidence or verification will be required under the scheme as the identity and other information would have been verified for free school meals and benefit purposes.

The Council will undertake verification of Local Welfare Assistance applications in accordance with existing verification processes for LWA scheme.

## **9. Decisions**

Vouchers will be issued to those identified as eligible through council records.

Vouchers will be distributed electronically. In cases where vouchers cannot be issued electronically, the Council will issue the voucher via post.

Cash via Post Office payments will be issued to those eligible as decided by the Council.

Local Welfare Assistance payments will be issued under the agreed LWA eligibility criteria and timescales.

Notifications of awards will be issued either via email or where an email address is not available, customers will be notified via letter.

## **10. Backdating requests**

There will be no backdating of entitlement to Household Support Fund scheme and only those who meet the eligibility criteria at the time of issuing payments will be issued with awards.

### **11. Fraud**

As the Council is identifying eligible customers from its own records, the risk of fraud is low.

Local Welfare Assistance applicants will have the information verified under the current LWA process.

Blackhawk Network will provide the Council with reports on the codes redeemed which can then be verified against the records of codes issued.

### **12. Publicity**

The Council will make every effort to publicise the scheme through the Council website, schools, social media and other available channels.

### **13. Appeals**

There is no statutory right of appeal to the automatic awards made to recipients identified by the Council as requiring additional support.

Any award will be at the absolute discretion of the Chief Finance Officer, in accordance with the award criteria, and his decision will be final.

Those who make an application for support through Local Welfare Assistance have a right to ask for the decision to be reviewed under the current LWA policy.

### **14. Funding**

Ealing Council's allocation for Household Support Fund is £2,658,804.97. There is no separate grant towards administration costs and some of the grant can be used towards administering the scheme as long as the cost is 'reasonable'. The administration costs can include: staff costs, advertising and publicity, web page design, printing applications and small IT changes to facilitate MI production.

Any unspent funds will have to be paid back to DWP.

### **15. Management Information Returns**

The Council is required to make one Statement of Grant Usage and management information (MI) return. The deadline for completing this return is shown in the table below.

<b>MI return</b>	<b>Reporting period</b>	<b>Deadline</b>
------------------	-------------------------	-----------------

Interim MI return	From: 1 October 2022	To: 31 December 2022	<b>Deadline:</b> 25 January 2023
Final MI return	From: 1 October 2022	To: 31 March 2023	<b>Deadline:</b> 28 April 2023

Completed MI returns should be sent to [lawelfare.pdt@dwp.gov.uk](mailto:lawelfare.pdt@dwp.gov.uk)

Authorities should use the standard MI reporting template provided, which incorporates the Statement of Grant Usage.

The submissions need to be signed off by Chief Finance Officer.



# Equalities Analysis Assessment

## 1. Proposal Summary Information

EAA Title	Household Support Fund
Please describe your proposal?	<p>To seek Cabinet agreement for a programme of activity to be funded from the Household Support Grant</p> <p>The Government has provide Local Authorities with additional funding under Local Welfare Provision payments to support vulnerable residents from 1 October 2022 to 31 March 2023.</p> <p>The scheme is to ensure that vulnerable households get extra support thorough winter with food, utilites, essential clothing and other essentials including housing costs where necessary.</p>
Is it HR Related?	No
Corporate Purpose	<b>Cabinet Report Decision</b>

### 1. What is the Scheme looking to achieve? Who will be affected?

The objective of the Household Support Fund is to provide support to vulnerable households in most need of support to help with significantly rising living costs  
Funds should be spent or committed before 31 March 2023 and cannot be held over for future use.

The Council has the flexibility and discretion within the scheme to identify which vulnerable households are in most need of support and to apply their own discretion when identifying eligibility.

The Council can request applications for support or can proactively identify households who may benefit or can take a mixture of the two approaches. There is no requirement to undertake a means test or conduct a benefit check unless this specifically forms part of the Council's local eligibility criteria.

The Council is also required to distribute at least some of the funding via an application process.

The following groups have been identified as eligible for the local scheme:

Families with children eligible for Free School Meals based on low income criteria

Families with children under the age of 5 on HB/CTR

Care Leavers

Households on Housing Benefit and/or Council Tax Reduction not in receipt of DWP benefits or Tax Credits who may have not been eligible for the Government's cost of living payments.

### 2. What will the impact of your proposal be?

## Equalities Analysis Assessment

*(i.e. Please provide a before and after picture of the service that will be affected by your proposal e.g. how does it currently operate and then how it will operate after your proposal has been implemented. Where possible please be clear on the number of people or size of the community affected)*

This funding will allow the Council to support households with children and other vulnerable households in the borough experiencing, or at risk of experiencing, poverty during the recovery from the Covid19 pandemic. This may include households not currently in receipt of DWP welfare benefits.

Automatic support will be provided to around 14,000 children & young people in the borough who receive means-tested free school meals and families with children under 5 in receipt of CTR or HB.

The scheme will also support other vulnerable adults through existing local welfare assistance and voluntary sector with food, utilities and other essentials.

Each eligible family will receive supermarket vouchers per child which will provide additional support during school holidays.

It is estimated that around 13,800 children (c 8,443 households) eligible for free school meals and additional 1,260 households with children under 5 as identified through CTR and HB records will receive support automatically. It is anticipated that the numbers of children eligible for free school meals will rise by the end of September 2022.

Additional support will also be provided to households in receipt of housing benefit and/or council tax reduction who are not in receipt of DWP benefits of tax credits and therefore not eligible for cost of living payments from DWP.

Care leavers (around 310) will also be eligible to for the automatic support.

Additional funding will be allocated to the existing Local Welfare Assistance scheme which will allow all households in the borough to make an application if they are facing an immediate financial crisis or there is an immediate danger to there or their family's health and safety. Each application will be assessed on its individual merits and according to the expanded Local Welfare eligibility criteria.

Funding is also being available to voluntary sector who will be responsible for designing their own eligibility criteria and will provide support depending on the needs of the community they support.

## 2. Impact on Groups having a Protected Characteristic

**AGE: A person of an age or being within an age group.**

**State whether the impact is positive, negative, a combination of both, or neutral:**

**Describe the Impact**

*(Please be as specific and clear as possible when describing the impact and include any local data i.e. service usage. If this is lacking please include regional or national data or research. Please identify any differential impact on different age groups. Please note if there is no differential impact on people with this characteristic, please state this )*

## Equalities Analysis Assessment

Children, families and individuals who are vulnerable (eligible for benefits or on low income, eligible for free school meals) or find themselves in hardship will be supported through this programme. The programme will help to identify and support those people to ensure they have access to food and fuel, as well as other basics which may be identified such as cooking facilities, bedding or other essentials.

People of pensionable age, who are experiencing hardship, will be able to make an application to local welfare assistance scheme.

Voluntary sector will also offer support to both working age and pensioners. All households experiencing hardship will also have access to support through current Local Welfare Assistance scheme and will be able to receive support with food, utilities and other essential items.

The impact will be positive for all irrespective of age.

### **Alternatives and mitigating actions which have been considered in order to reduce negative effect:**

The alternative to the scheme is to reduce support for children eligible for free school meals and increase local welfare assistance funding or create a separate scheme accessible by application only. Both options would increase administration costs and reduce level of support available to residents. Under such proposals, some of the families would also be at risk of missing out on the support available.

### **Describe the Mitigating Action**

*(Please describe any actions you will take to limit the impact of your proposal on this group. Please be open and forthright, decision makers need to be provided with as clear a picture as possible.)*

Voluntary sector grants and Local Welfare Assistance with expanded eligibility criteria will continue to be available to vulnerable residents and providing support with food, utilities and other essentials .

In order to realise this potential positive impact it is important that service users with protected characteristics (as well as front line workers and volunteers who work with service users who have protected characteristics) are aware of the scheme, who may benefit and how to apply.

**DISABILITY: A person has a disability if s/he has a physical, mental or sensory impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day to day activities<sup>1</sup>.**

**State whether the impact is positive, negative, a combination of both, or neutral:**

### **Describe the Impact**

*(Please be as specific and clear as possible when describing the impact and include any local data i.e. service usage. If this is lacking please include regional or national data or research. Please identify any differential impact on people with different types of disabilities. Please note if there is no differential impact on people with this characteristic, please state this )*

<sup>1</sup> Due regard to meeting the needs of people with disabilities involves taking steps to take account of their disabilities and may involve making reasonable adjustments and prioritizing certain groups of disabled people on the basis that they are particularly affected by the proposal.

## Equalities Analysis Assessment

The definition of disability is based on whether a benefit recipient has a disability marker on their administrative datasets which is added by officer when a customer states they have a disability and provided appropriate evidence.

The analysis of the housing benefit and council tax reduction data shows that around 23% of those with disabilities and carer's allowance will receive support automatically through the voucher scheme. The breakdown of households with and without children on disability benefits and/or in receipt of carer's allowance has been included below:

	With children	Without children	Total
Households with disabilities	1,426	7,760	9,186
Households in receipt of carer's allowance	1,105	540	1,645
Total:	2,531	8,300	10,831

Other households with disabilities will have access to support via Local Welfare Assistance and/or via voluntary sector. The impact will be the positive for all irrespective of disability.

**Alternatives and mitigating actions which have been considered in order to reduce negative effect:** The alternative to the scheme is to reduce support for children eligible for free school meals and increase local welfare assistance funding or create a separate scheme accessible by application only. Both options would increase administration costs and reduce level of support available to residents. Under such proposals, some of the families would also be at risk of missing out on the support available.

### **Describe the Mitigating Action**

Voluntary sector support and Local Welfare Assistance will continue to be available to vulnerable residents and providing support with food, utilities and other essentials .

In order to realise this potential positive impact it is important that service users with protected characteristics (as well as front line workers and volunteers who work with service users who have protected characteristics) are aware of the scheme, who may benefit and how to apply.

**GENDER REASSIGNMENT:** *This is the process of transitioning from one sex to another. This includes persons who consider themselves to be trans, transgender and transsexual.*

**State whether the impact is positive, negative, a combination of both, or neutral:**

### **Describe the Impact**

No data is currently available on the numbers of people with this protected characteristic who are receiving welfare support.

Support under the Household Support Grant will affect people with this protected characteristic positively. The impact will be positive for all irrespective of gender reassignment.

**Alternatives and mitigating actions which have been considered in order to reduce negative effect:**

## Equalities Analysis Assessment

The alternative to the scheme is to reduce support for children eligible for free school meals and increase local welfare assistance funding or create a separate scheme accessible by application only. Both options would increase administration costs and reduce level of support available to residents. Under such proposals, some of the families would also be at risk of missing out on the support available.

### **Describe the Mitigating Action**

Voluntary sector support and Local Welfare Assistance will continue to be available to vulnerable residents and providing support with food, utilities and other essentials .

In order to realise this potential positive impact it is important that service users with protected characteristics (as well as front line workers and volunteers who work with service users who have protected characteristics) are aware of the scheme, who may benefit and how to apply.

**RACE: A group of people defined by their colour, nationality (including citizenship), ethnic or national origins or race.**

**State whether the impact is positive, negative, a combination of both, or neutral:**

### **Describe the Impact**

There is no data relating to how the proposed scheme will impact those falling under the protected characteristic of race. The impact will be positive for all irrespective of race.

**Alternatives and mitigating actions which have been considered in order to reduce negative effect:** The alternative to the scheme is to reduce support for children eligible for free school meals and increase local welfare assistance funding or create a separate scheme accessible by application only. Both options would increase administration costs and reduce level of support available to residents. Under such proposals, some of the families would also be at risk of missing out on the support available.

### **Describe the Mitigating Action**

Voluntary sector support and Local Welfare Assistance will continue to be available to vulnerable residents and providing support with food, utilities and other essentials .

In order to realise this potential positive impact it is important that service users with protected characteristics (as well as front line workers and volunteers who work with service users who have protected characteristics) are aware of the scheme, who may benefit and how to apply.

**RELIGION & BELIEF: Religion means any religion. Belief includes religious and philosophical beliefs including lack of belief (for example, Atheism). Generally, a belief should affect a person's life choices or the way you live for it to be included.**

**State whether the impact is positive, negative, a combination of both, or neutral:**

### **Describe the Impact**

## Equalities Analysis Assessment

The proposed scheme will potentially affect all customers irrespective of religious beliefs or none. The changes are not targeted at anyone holding a specific belief.

There is no data relating to how the proposed scheme will impact those falling under the protected characteristic of race. The impact will be positive for all irrespective of religion and belief.

**Alternatives and mitigating actions which have been considered in order to reduce negative effect:** The alternative to the scheme is to reduce support for children eligible for free school meals and increase local welfare assistance funding or create a separate scheme accessible by application only. Both options would increase administration costs and reduce level of support available to residents. Under such proposals, some of the families would also be at risk of missing out on the support available.

### **Describe the Mitigating Action**

Voluntary sector support and Local Welfare Assistance will continue to be available to vulnerable residents and providing support with food, utilities and other essentials .

In order to realise this potential positive impact it is important that service users with protected characteristics (as well as front line workers and volunteers who work with service users who have protected characteristics) are aware of the scheme, who may benefit and how to apply.

**SEX: Someone being a man or a woman.**

**State whether the impact is positive, negative, a combination of both, or neutral:**

### **Describe the Impact**

*(Please be as specific and clear as possible when describing the impact and include any local data i.e. service usage. If this is lacking please include regional or national data or research. Please note if there is no differential impact on a persons gender, please state this )*

The proposed scheme will positively affect all customers irrespective of sex. The impact will be the same for all irrespective of sex.

**Alternatives and mitigating actions which have been considered in order to reduce negative effect:** The alternative to the scheme is to reduce support for children eligible for free school meals and increase local welfare assistance funding or create a separate scheme accessible by application only. Both options would increase administration costs and reduce level of support available to residents. Under such proposals, some of the families would also be at risk of missing out on the support available.

### **Describe the Mitigating Action**

*(Please describe any actions you will take to limit the impact of your proposal on this group. Please be open and forthright, decision makers need to be provided with as clear a picture as possible.)*

Voluntary sector support and Local Welfare Assistance will continue to be available to vulnerable residents and providing support with food, utilities and other essentials .

## Equalities Analysis Assessment

In order to realise this potential positive impact it is important that service users with protected characteristics (as well as front line workers and volunteers who work with service users who have protected characteristics) are aware of the scheme, who may benefit and how to apply.

**SEXUAL ORIENTATION:** *A person's sexual attraction towards his or her own sex, the opposite sex or to both sexes, covering including all LGBTQ+ groups.*

**State whether the impact is positive, negative, a combination of both, or neutral:**

**Describe the Impact**

No data is currently available on the numbers of people with this protected characteristic who are receiving welfare support. Therefore, all the proposed elements could affect people with this protected characteristic positively. The impact will be the same for all irrespective of sexual orientation.

**Alternatives and mitigating actions which have been considered in order to reduce negative effect:**

The alternative to the scheme is to reduce support for children eligible for free school meals and increase local welfare assistance funding or create a separate scheme accessible by application only. Both options would increase administration costs and reduce level of support available to residents. Under such proposals, some of the families would also be at risk of missing out on the support available.

**Describe the Mitigating Action**

Voluntary sector support and Local Welfare Assistance will continue to be available to vulnerable residents and providing support with food, utilities and other essentials .

In order to realise this potential positive impact it is important that service users with protected characteristics (as well as front line workers and volunteers who work with service users who have protected characteristics) are aware of the scheme, who may benefit and how to apply.

**PREGNANCY & MATERNITY:** *Description: Pregnancy: Being pregnant. Maternity: The period after giving birth - linked to maternity leave in the employment context. In the non-work context, protection against maternity discrimination is for 26 weeks after giving birth, including as a result of breastfeeding.*

**State whether the impact is positive, negative, a combination of both, or neutral:**

**Describe the Impact**

*(Please be as specific and clear as possible when describing the impact and include any local data i.e. service usage. If this is lacking please include regional or national data or research. Please note if there is no differential impact on people with this characteristic, please state this )*

The benefit service holds information on pregnancy and maternity on its administrative systems where it is the primary reason for the incapacity. It cannot therefore be used to accurately assess the equality impacts.

The impact will be the same for all irrespective of pregnancy or maternity, as the criteria is related to children of school age and children under 5 and providing additional financial support.

## Equalities Analysis Assessment

<b>Alternatives and mitigating actions which have been considered in order to reduce negative effect:</b>
<b>Describe the Mitigating Action</b>
<p><i>(Please describe any actions you will take to limit the impact of your proposal on this group. Please be open and forthright, decision makers need to be provided with as clear a picture as possible.)</i></p> <p>Voluntary sector support and Local Welfare Assistance will continue to be available irrespective of whether the proposed scheme is chosen. By increasing the funding Ealing Local Welfare Assistance Fund, it is anticipated that people with protected characteristics will not be negatively impacted by the changes</p> <p>In order to realise this potential positive impact it is important that service users with protected characteristics (as well as front line workers and volunteers who work with service users who have protected characteristics) are aware of the scheme, who may benefit and how to apply.</p>

<p><b>MARRIAGE &amp; CIVIL PARTNERSHIP:</b> <i>Marriage: A union between a man and a woman, or of the same sex, which is legally recognised in the UK as a marriage</i></p> <p><i>Civil partnership: Civil partners must be treated the same as married couples on a range of legal matters.</i></p>
<b>State whether the impact is positive, negative, a combination of both, or neutral:</b>
<b>Describe the Impact</b>
<p>The proposed scheme will potentially affect all customers irrespective of marriage. The impact will be the same for all irrespective of marriage or civil partnership. There will be a positive impact to all households as the scheme provide additional financial support to vulnerable families.</p>
<b>Alternatives and mitigating actions which have been considered in order to reduce negative effect:</b>
<p>The alternative to the scheme is to reduce support for children eligible for free school meals and increase local welfare assistance funding or create a separate scheme accessible by application only. Both options would increase administration costs and reduce level of support available to residents. Under such proposals, some of the families would also be at risk of missing out on the support available.</p>
<b>Describe the Mitigating Action</b>
<p><i>(Please describe any actions you will take to limit the impact of your proposal on this group. Please be open and forthright, decision makers need to be provided with as clear a picture as possible.)</i></p> <p>Voluntary sector support and Local Welfare Assistance will continue to be available to vulnerable residents and providing support with food, utilities and other essentials .</p> <p>In order to realise this potential positive impact it is important that service users with protected characteristics (as well as front line workers and volunteers who work with service users who have protected characteristics) are aware of the scheme, who may benefit and how to apply. A communication plan to promote the support being provided has been prepared, with support for</p>



## Equalities Analysis Assessment

residents in applying from the contact centre and community hubs. The voluntary sector and schools will also be engaged to promote the scheme.

### 3. Human Rights<sup>2</sup>

**4a. Does your proposal impact on Human Rights as defined by the Human Rights Act 1998?**

No

*(If yes, please describe the effect and any mitigating action you have considered.)*

**4b. Does your proposal impact on the rights of children as defined by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child?**

No

*(If yes, please describe the effect and any mitigating action you have considered.)*

**4c. Does your proposal impact on the rights of persons with disabilities as defined by the UN Convention on the rights of persons with disabilities?**

No

*(If yes, please describe the effect and any mitigating action you have considered.)*

### 4. Conclusion

*(Please provide a brief overview/summary of your analysis in light of the protected characteristics. Please describe the overall impact of your proposal where possible and mitigating actions undertaken by other areas of the Council or by local partners)*

The impact will be the same for all groups having a Protected Characteristic. The Household Support Fund scheme builds on support provided to vulnerable households in the borough. Where possible, the Council has used its data to identify any households eligible for the support.

Additional households not identified through the data available can still apply to the Council for the support following the Local Welfare Assistance route.

**4a. What evidence, data sources and intelligence did you use to assess the potential impact/effect of your proposal? Please note the systems/processes you used to collect the data that has helped inform your proposal. Please list the file paths and/or relevant web links to the information you have described.**

*(Please list all sources here: i.e. local consultation, residents' survey, census etc.)*

<sup>2</sup> For further guidance please refer to the Human Rights & URNC Guidance on the Council Equalities [web page](#).

## Equalities Analysis Assessment

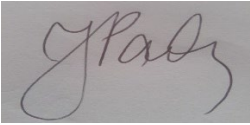
Where available, Housing Benefit & Council Tax Reduction data extracted from Northgate system.

### 5. Action Planning: *(What are the next steps for the proposal please list i.e. when it comes into effect, when mitigating actions linked to the protected characteristics above will take place, how you will measure impact etc.)*

Action	Outcomes	Success Measures	Timescales/ Milestones	Lead Officer <i>(Contact Details)</i>
Awareness of Local Welfare Assistance Scheme	Easing financial hardship	Cases will be reviewed on a case to case basis.	Local Welfare Assistance will be available through 2022/23.	Kulbinder Thakur 020 8825 6479

**Additional Comments:**

### 6. Sign off: *(All EAA's must be signed off once completed)*

Completing Officer Sign Off:	Service Director Sign Off:	<i>HR related proposal (Signed off by directorate HR officer)</i>
Signed: J. Pavlides 	Signed:	Signed:
Name (Block Capitals):	Name (Block Capitals):	Name (Block Capitals):

## Equalities Analysis Assessment

Joanna Pavlides Date: 3/10/22	Alison Reynolds Date:	Date:
For EAA's relating to Cabinet decisions: received by Committee Section for publication by (date):		

### **Appendix 1: Legal obligations under Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010:**

- As a public authority we must have due regard to the need to:
  - a) Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
  - b) Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
  - c) Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
- The protected characteristics are: AGE, DISABILITY, GENDER REASSIGNMENT, RACE, RELIGION & BELIEF, SEX, SEXUAL ORIENTATION, PREGNANCY & MATERNITY, MARRIAGE & CIVIL PARTNERSHIP
- Having due regard to advancing equality of opportunity between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not, involves considering the need to:
  - a) Remove or minimising disadvantages suffered by persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are connected to that characteristic
  - b) Take steps to meet the needs of persons who share a relevant characteristic that are different from the needs of the persons who do not share it.
  - c) Encourage persons who share a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity in which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.
- Having due regard to fostering good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not, involves showing that you are tackling prejudice and promoting understanding.
- Complying with the duties may involve treating some people more favourably than others; but this should not be taken as permitting conduct that would be otherwise prohibited under the Act.

## **Local Welfare Assistance**

### **Eligibility Criteria**

**Expanded for the purpose of distributing Household Support between 1 Oct 2022 and 31 March 2023**

## **1. Applications for Local Welfare Assistance**

### **a) Date of application**

The date of a written application for the Local Welfare Assistance is the date it is received in Housing Benefits office, provided the application is in writing and:

- on Ealing Council's approved form and completed in accordance with instructions on the form **or**
- if an application is made on behalf of a person, by someone other than an appointee, that person must give their consent in writing to the application being made on their behalf

### **b) evidence and defective applications**

It is the applicant's responsibility to provide all the evidence necessary to determine an application. Sometimes it may be necessary to seek further information or clarify an aspect of the application. Ealing Council will resolve this by either:

- contacting the applicant
- contacting a third party
- requesting further supporting evidence
- checking Departmental records or
- arranging for clarification to be provided at a pre-award visit

Evidence can be documentary, verbal or physical. It may be derived from such sources as:

- the current application form
- supporting documents and correspondence
- telephone or interview records
- a record of observations on visit
- previous applications
- computer systems
- local knowledge

Evidence may be provided by, for example:

- applicants and/or their representatives
- social workers
- probation officers

- medical doctors
- housing departments
- landlords

- visiting officers
- Decision makers/Reviewing officers
- Police evidence
- Evidence from insurance companies

If the applicant or third party gives any information over the telephone, this may be acceptable as corroborating evidence.

If the applicant does not produce the evidence, a decision maker will make a decision based on the completed application and any other evidence already held. If the evidence already provided seems inconsistent, improbable or contradictory, and no further evidence is provided, a decision maker may deem such application as defective and the Local Welfare Assistance (community care/crisis elements) payment will not be paid.

### **c) Repeat applications**

- If the applicant applied for a LWA (community care element) for the same items or services within the last 12 months and there has not been a relevant change of circumstances, then he/she will not be eligible for a LWA (community care element).
- The applicant will be allowed maximum 4 crisis payments. Subsequent awards in 12 months may be considered at the discretion of the Council if an emergency or a disaster is not a consequence of an act or omission for which the applicant or his partner is responsible and the applicant or his partner could not have taken reasonable steps to avoid the emergency, and
- In case where the reason for Crisis payment application is 'lost or stolen money' only one application will be allowed within 12 month period.
- The applicant will agree to be referred for further help and advice depending on reoccurring emergency (i.e. budgeting advice, debt management or other agencies/charities e.g. turn2us)

### **d) Referral from another service**

Referral from another Council Service, in particular, Social Care or Housing where the department identified an individual's genuine need for support with food, utilities and other essentials.

## **2. Decision making process**

The decision maker will have regard to all the circumstances of each case, in particular:

- the nature, extent and urgency of the need
- the existence of other available resources from which the need may be met
- the possibility that some other person or body may wholly or partly meet the need
- Local Welfare Assistance funds remaining

### **a) the amount of Local Welfare Assistance (Community Care element)**

In deciding the amount of the grant the decision maker will take into account:

- 100% of the needed grant to cover essential items minus any savings above £250 (depending on funds available)
- Price list of essential items for guidance
- In some cases it may be decided that payment in kind is made, i.e. second hand furniture, clothing, etc.

### **b) The amount of the Local Welfare Assistance(Crisis Element)**

- If the application is made to cover living expenses and/or groceries the maximum amount of awarded Crisis Payment will be 60% of applicant's weekly personal allowance however the actual payment amount will be determined by the caseworker dealing with the claim and will depend on the applicant's personal circumstances.
- If the application is made to cover other emergencies the amount awarded will be dependent on type of emergency and immediate needs of the applicant
- In all cases the decision maker will also take into account the existence of other available to the applicant resources from which the need may be met (cash in the bank, building society, Post Office accounts, cash in hand and others)

## **3. Notification of the decision**

- In case of Local Welfare Assistance (Community Care element) applications the decision will be notified in writing directly to the applicant and/or his representative within 2 weeks from the date of the application provided all required supporting evidence have been submitted. A decision maker will explain the reasons for their decision.

- In case of LWA applications (Crisis Element) the decision will be notified by telephone followed by a written explanation of the decision. The decision will be made within 2 working days depending on the type of emergency.

#### **4. Method of payment**

Majority of the payments will be issued as cash payments directly to the applicant's bank account. The Council reserves the right to issue the payments in a different form, for example in the form of supermarket voucher or via a pre-paid card.

In some cases, Local Welfare Assistance (Community Care element) may not be paid until the claimant moves into the property.

#### **5. Requests for reviewing a decision**

If an applicant is unhappy with the decision you can ask for a review. The application together with supporting documents will be looked at again and a further decision will be notified in writing.

#### **6. Further help available**

If the application for a payment from a Social Fund is unsuccessful or we cannot pay full amount requested Ealing Council can refer the applicant to a voluntary or charitable organisation for further help.

#### **7. Purpose of Local Welfare Assistance Community Care Element**

LWA Community Care element is intended to help vulnerable people live as independent a life as possible in the community. There are certain eligibility criteria that need to be met however the scheme is discretionary and an award of LWA Community Care Element will not only depend on applicant's circumstances and their needs but also on budget remaining for Local Welfare Assistance payments.



The objectives of Local Welfare Assistance Community Care Element are to:

- help people to establish themselves in the community
- help people remain in the community
- help with the care of a prisoner or young offender on release on temporary licence
- ease exceptional pressures on families
- help people setting up home as a part of a resettlement programme

## **8. Qualifying conditions**

### **a) Qualifying age**

LWA Community Care Element is available to people aged 18 and over. In certain cases, where all other qualifying conditions are met LWA Community Care Element can be paid to 16 -18 year old.

### **b) Qualifying benefit**

LWA Community Care Element is available to individuals:

- already in receipt of Job Seekers Allowance Contribution based or Employment Support Allowance Contribution based if these benefits are the only income in the claimant's household for a period of no longer than 26 weeks
- already in receipt of Income Support, income-related Employment and Support Allowance, income-based Jobseeker's Allowance, Pension Credit, or payment on account of one of these benefits or their replacement under Universal Credit for a period of no longer than 26 weeks

or

- who are likely to start getting one of these benefits within the next six weeks because they are moving out of care
- or
- in receipt of Income Support, income-related Employment and Support Allowance, income-based Jobseeker's Allowance, Pension Credit, or payment on account of one of these benefits or their replacement under Universal Credit for a period of more than 26 weeks but who are not eligible for a budgeting loan from DWP
- or

- where available budgeting loan will not cover all the priority needs of the individual and that would prevent the person from living independent life in the community.

**c) Circumstances that may entitle an individual to apply for LWA Community Care Element**

- Applicant is an Ealing resident. Ealing resident is someone who is established in Ealing area. Established means someone who resided in Ealing for at least 6 months' period or someone who has secured a tenancy and can provide evidence of that.
- Applicant is in receipt of one of the qualifying benefits or likely to receive them within the next 6 weeks because they are moving out of care
- Applicant is moving out of residential or institutional care to live independently. Examples of residential or institutional care:
  - hospital or other medical establishment
  - care home
  - hostel
  - staff intensive sheltered housing
  - local authority care
  - prison or detention centre.
- Applicant is moving to a new home which will be more suitable following an unsettled period in his/her life and is being resettled by an organisation like a local council or voluntary organisation
- Applicant needs help because he/she and his/her family face exceptional pressure, such as family/marital breakdown or because one of them has a long-term illness.
- Applicant looks after someone who is ill or disabled, or who has been released from custody on temporary licence
- Applicant needs help with expenses (excluding travel) such as visiting someone who is ill, or to attend a relative's funeral

**d) Savings**

All savings above £250 will be taken into account and offset against the amount of eligible grant.

**e) Budgeting loan**

The amount of budgeting loan available to the individual should also be taken into account if the applicant is applying for a Community Care Grant to cover difference between the

amount of money needed to meet the priority needs and the amount of the budgeting loan available to him.

## **9. Goods and services that may and may not be covered via LWA Community Care Element**

### **a) LWA Community Care Element may cover full or partial costs of the following items:**

- Essential furniture (e.g. settee, armchair, carpets, curtains, wardrobe)
- Essential white goods/household equipment (e.g. cooker, fridge, washing machine, kettle, toaster)
- Bedding
- Crockery
- Storage charges
- Reconnection charges
- TV or radio if recommended as an essential item (e.g. if house bound)

### **b) LWA Community Care Element will not cover the following expenses:**

- Non-essential items such as DVD players, Hi-Fis, computers, laptops, mobile phones, garden sheds, TV licences, etc.
- a need which occurs outside the United Kingdom
- or an educational or training need including clothing and tools
- or distinctive school uniform or sports clothes for use at school or equipment to be used at school
- or travelling expenses to or from school
- or school meals taken during school holidays by children who are entitled to free school meals
- or expenses in connection with court (legal proceedings) such as legal fees, court fees, fines, costs, damages, subsistence or travelling expenses
- or removal or storage charges if you are being rehoused following a compulsory purchase order, a redevelopment or closing order, a compulsory exchange of tenancies, or under homelessness legislation
- or domestic assistance and respite care
- or any repair to property
- or a medical, surgical, optical, aural or dental item or service (note that needs under all of these headings can be provided free of charge by the National Health Service, if you are getting Income Support, income-based Jobseeker's Allowance, Employment and Support Allowance (income-related), or Pension Credit)
- or work related expenses

- or debts to government departments
- or investments
- or costs of purchasing, renting or installing a telephone and of any call charges
- or costs of fuel consumption and any associated standing charges
- or housing costs including minor repairs and improvements and charges for accommodation associated with certain visits
- or council tax, water rates, arrears of council tax, collective community charge contributions or community water charges
- or daily living expenses, such as food and groceries, except when caring for a prisoner on release on temporary licence
- adaptations to properties due to disability
- rent

## **10. Purpose of Local Welfare Assistance Crisis Element**

LWA Crisis Element is intended for applicants who are unable to meet their immediate short term needs:

- To meet immediate needs and help those who are struggling to afford food, energy and water bills or other essentials
- either in an emergency in relation to some expenses or
- as a consequence of a disaster
- where there is an immediate danger to health or safety of the applicant (and his family)

## **11. Qualifying conditions**

### **a) Residency**

Applicant is an Ealing resident. Ealing resident is someone who is established in Ealing area. Established means someone who resided in Ealing for at least 6 months' period or someone who has secured a tenancy and can provide evidence of that.

Tenants who have been placed in Temporary Accommodation by Ealing Council in an accommodation out of borough but who remain liable for rent to Ealing Council and cannot receive support under the Local Welfare Provision where they live.

### **b) Qualifying age**

LWA Crisis Payment Element is available to people aged 18 and over. In certain cases, where all other qualifying conditions are met LWA Crisis Element can be paid to 16 -18 year old.

### **c) Qualifying benefit**

Crisis Payments are available to individuals:

- already in receipt of Job Seekers Allowance Contribution based or Employment Support Allowance Contribution based or State Retirement Pension if these benefits are the only income in the claimant's household
- already in receipt of Universal Credit and not in employment, Income Support, income-related Employment and Support Allowance, income-based Jobseeker's Allowance, Pension Credit, or payment on account of one of these benefits
- as a result of a disaster the LWA Crisis element can be awarded even if the above benefits are not in payment. A disaster can be defined as flood, fire, gas explosion, chemical leak and similar
- those who are employed or self-employed (regardless whether Universal Credit is in payment) and whose household net earned income does not exceed the following thresholds:

	Single person	Couple
weekly	£230	£379
monthly	£997	£1642

those with no income where lack of income is not an act of omission or negligence on individual's behalf

### **d) Savings**

LWA Crisis Element is awarded to persons who have no savings. Any available funds in the bank or building society account including Post Office and Credit Union accounts, stock and shares, cash ISAs or cash in hand will be taking into

account by a decision maker. Any agreed bank account overdraft facilities will also be taken into account.

## **12. Items LWA Crisis element may and may not cover**

Crisis Payment may be paid for certain expenses in other emergency or disaster situations. These are:

- Living expenses for up to 60% of weekly personal allowance. The amount of living expenses will take into account how many days the support is needed for. The living expenses payment will be calculated as follows:  $(60\% \text{ of person's or family's personal allowance}) / 7 \times \text{number of days support is needed for}$ . The maximum days of support that can be paid for is 14 days however final decision on the payment amount will depend on the caseworker dealing with the claim and taking into account personal circumstances of the claimant.
- Groceries
- Sanitary products
- essential clothing (e.g. winter clothing)
- blankets
- certain travel expenses and transport-related costs such as repairing a car, car fuel for essential travel only e.g. hospital appointments, school transport, etc (maximum award of £500)
- energy bills (including ineligible services which are part of customer's rent)
- repaying emergency credit on a pre-payment fuel meter
- cost of gas cylinders
- water bills
- boiler service and repairs (maximum award of £1,500)
- support with other bills such as essential broadband and phone bills
- other emergencies, i.e. benefit spent and need money for living expenses
- disasters such as fire, flood, gas explosion or chemical leak
- lost or stolen money (if it affects persons health and safety)
- need to replace essential white goods following a disaster i.e. flood, fire in the property
- housing costs in cases of exceptional emergency (e.g. where customer is at high risk of eviction) where existing housing costs schemes do not meet this exceptional need (eligibility for HB, UC, DHP and Homelessness Prevention Grant needs to be considered in the first instance)

LWA Crisis element will not be made towards the following items:

- emergencies which are result of an act or omission for which applicant or partner is responsible for example gambling or misspending

- rent and deposit payments (these can be applied for through Discretionary Housing Payment)

### **13. People excluded from applying for LWA Crisis Element**

Some groups of people are excluded from a Crisis Payment and they are listed below:

- care home residents and hospital in-patients unless it is planned that they will be discharged within the following 2 weeks.
- persons who are members of and fully maintained by a religious order
- those receiving education and thus not entitled to Income Support, income-based Jobseeker's Allowance or income-related Employment and Support Allowance;
- you may be entitled to LWA payment if you are a full time student and you have parental responsibility for a child;
- you are disabled and in receipt of Personal Independent Payment, Disability Living Allowance, Attendance Allowance or Armed Forces Independent Payment
- Prisoners who are in prison or released on temporary licence
- Persons from abroad/persons subject to immigration control except in cases where:
  - There are community care needs
  - They have serious health problems
  - There is a risk to a child's wellbeing

### **14. Maximum awards**

Maximum awards of Local Welfare Assistance will be capped at £400 per household. In exceptional circumstances, where urgent needs of an applicant and their household exceed the maximum award allowed, the Council has a discretion to award higher amount.

# Household Support Fund: Draft Guidance for County Councils and Unitary Authorities in England (1 October 2022 to 31 March 2023)

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## Introduction

1. £421 million has been made available to County Councils and Unitary Authorities in England to support those most in need to help with global inflationary challenges and the significantly rising cost of living. This funding covers the period 1 October 2022 to 31 March 2023 inclusive. Local authorities (LAs) have discretion on exactly how this funding is used within the scope set out in the accompanying grant determination and this guidance. This guidance sets out the required collaboration between the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), LAs, including their delivery partners (such as District Councils as well as any charitable or third-party organisations) to successfully meet the policy intent within the agreed framework. It also provides the framework that Authorities need to work within and the arrangements for distribution of funding and reporting.
2. DWP is providing funding to County Councils and Unitary Authorities (including Metropolitan Councils and London Boroughs), under section 31 of the Local Government Act 2003, to administer The Fund and provide assistance to households most in need. **Note: County Councils and Unitary Authorities will be referred to as 'Authorities' and the Household Support Fund will be referred to as 'The Fund' throughout the remainder of this guidance.** Authorities must work together with District Councils to ensure the funding meets its objectives by identifying those most in need.
3. The expectation is that The Fund should be used to support households in the most need; particularly those who may not be eligible for the other support government has recently made available but who are nevertheless in need. This includes the Cost of Living Payments set out on 26 May 2022 and the energy support set out on 3 February (enhanced on 26 May 2022), and detailed on [29 July 2022](#) (details on eligibility for these schemes are at **Annex A**). This may include, but is not limited to, people who are entitled to but not claiming qualifying benefits, people who are claiming Housing Benefit (HB) only, people who begin a claim or return to payment of a benefit after the relevant qualifying date as well as people who have fuel costs but who cannot access the £400 of energy support from the Energy Bill Support Scheme or the equivalence package confirmed on 29 July 2022. There may be groups who are vulnerable to rising prices even though they are supported through these schemes, for example large families or single-income families. It is important to stress that The Fund is intended to cover a wide range of low income households in need including families with children of all ages, pensioners, unpaid carers, care leavers and disabled people.
4. Energy bills may be of particular concern to low income households during the period of The Fund and LAs should prioritise supporting households with the cost of energy. Support which can make a quick but sustainable impact on energy costs is particularly encouraged; for example, insulation of hot water tanks, fitting draft excluders to a door, or replacing inefficient lightbulbs or white goods. The Fund can also be used to support households with the cost of food and water bills, essential costs related to energy, food and water, and with wider essential costs. In exceptional cases of genuine emergency, it can additionally be used to support housing costs where existing housing support schemes do not meet this exceptional need.
5. Authorities should also consider providing support to disabled people in their area. Disabled people in particular may be facing acute challenges due to the

disproportionate impact that rising costs bring for the additional services they need in order to manage their conditions, remain independent and avoid becoming socially isolated. For example, some disabled people may have increased utility bills due to the usage of equipment, aids or adaptations associated with their disability. They may also have additional heating, water or transport costs. Authorities are therefore encouraged to explore ways in which this group may be supported and must record the total value of awards granted to disabled people in their management information (MI) returns for this grant (see paragraphs 64-68).

6. Authorities have the ability to deliver the scheme through a variety of routes including providing vouchers to households, making direct provision of food or goods, or issuing grants to third parties (with the exception of grants for advice provision). Every area must operate at least part of their scheme on an application basis. In other words, residents should have the opportunity to come forward to ask for support. There is flexibility on exactly how this can be run, including through third parties rather than directly by the LA.
7. Authorities have access to DWP's Searchlight portal which provides information on individual citizens' entitlement to (and confirms receipt of) DWP welfare benefits. Since June 2021 we have provided Authorities with information relating to Universal Credit (UC) claims with limited capability for work or earnings below the Free School Meals (FSMs) and free prescription thresholds in their area. In April 2022, DWP established a data share covering people receiving the Guarantee Credit and/or Savings Credit elements of Pension Credit, as well as for all claimants on income-related (IR) Employment and Support Allowance (ESA IR). Authorities may find this information useful in identifying those most in need.
8. In October 2022, DWP will also introduce a further data share for those who are only in receipt of HB. This group is not eligible for the means-tested Cost of Living Payments unless they are of State Pension age or eligible for a Disability Cost of Living Payment. LAs should consider how they could use this data to provide support to this group.
9. However, support is not restricted only to vulnerable households in receipt of benefits. Therefore, Authorities should also use other sources of information to identify vulnerable households, including advice from professionals who come into contact with vulnerable households such as social workers and Supporting Families keyworkers and housing workers. As paragraph 5 above, Authorities should also have a process to consider applications for support.
10. This guidance applies to Authorities in England only and when finalised should be read in conjunction with the Household Support Fund Grant Determination issued alongside it.

## **Communication**

11. The Authority must, as appropriate and practical, reference that the grant is funded by the Department for Work and Pensions or the UK Government in any publicity material, including online channels and media releases.
12. LAs must make public their plans for The Fund, for example on their Authority website.

## Objective and key principles

13. The objective of The Fund is to provide support to vulnerable households in most need of support to help with significantly rising living costs.
14. Although this is considered an extension to the previous two Household Support Fund schemes, it is a new grant subject to its own grant conditions as is set out in the Grant Determination letter. Any underspends from the previous schemes cannot be carried forward.
15. Funds should be spent or committed before 31 March 2023 and cannot be carried over for future usage. All Authorities are encouraged to ensure, wherever possible, that any vouchers issued are redeemed before the end of The Fund, or shortly thereafter, or consider recycling unused vouchers. However, it is acceptable for vouchers that have been purchased and delivered to households before the end of The Fund to be spent shortly thereafter (see paragraphs 104 to 107 on committed spend).
16. When administering The Fund, Authorities are encouraged to adopt the following principles:
  - use discretion on how to identify and support those most in need, taking into account a wide range of information
  - use the funding from 1 October 2022 to 31 March 2023 to meet immediate needs and help those who are struggling to afford energy and water bills, food, and other related essentials. Authorities can also use the funding to support households who are struggling to afford wider essentials
    - **Note:** this includes payments made, or committed to, by the Authority or any person acting on behalf of the Authority, from 1 October 2022 to 31 March 2023
  - in exceptional cases of genuine emergency, the funding can additionally be used to support housing costs where existing housing support schemes do not meet this exceptional need, subject to the provisions at paragraph 30
  - work together with District Councils and third parties including, where necessary and appropriate, other local services. This may include social workers, housing and family support services and may incorporate intelligence and data from wider children's social care systems to help identify and support individuals, families and households within the scope of The Fund.
17. When deciding how to help people, Authorities should consider:
  - how they plan to provide support to vulnerable households, in other words, paying into bank accounts, use of cash and vouchers, provision of goods
  - any risks associated with these payment methods (see section 'Managing the risk of fraud' at paragraph 107 for further information).

## Working with other organisations

18. Authorities must work collaboratively with District Councils and other organisations in their area who may come into contact with those households who may benefit from this grant. Authorities that do not have the mechanisms in place to administer this grant should consider whether District Councils are better placed to do so on their behalf. Authorities are encouraged to engage with District Councils as quickly as

possible to ensure roles, responsibilities and effective arrangements are put in place to deliver The Fund promptly and efficiently.

19. Third party organisations (TPOs) may include but are not limited to:

- registered charities and voluntary organisations
- schools
- food banks
- general practitioners
- care organisations

20. Where Authorities are working with TPOs, this should be done on an objectively fair, transparent and non-discriminatory basis whilst having regard to the time available to deliver The Fund. As with District Councils, Authorities should make arrangements with any TPOs as quickly as possible.

### **Unused funding returned from a TPO**

21. Where a TPO returns unused funding after The Fund has ended the Authority can re-issue any returned funding within a reasonable timeframe, but only under the category that the spend was originally reported against. Authorities are able to distribute funding themselves and do not have to go back through the original TPO.

22. For audit purposes, where an Authority re-issues returned TPO funding they must confirm the following by email to [lawelfare.pdt@dwp.gov.uk](mailto:lawelfare.pdt@dwp.gov.uk) (copying in their Section 151 Officer):

- the amount that has been returned
- reason for the return (for example TPO underspend)
- what the original spend was reported against in their **final** management information (MI) return
- the intention to spend the total unspent amount against the same category of spend for the same group.

### **Establishing eligibility**

23. In accordance with their general legal duties, Authorities must have a clear rationale or documented policy/framework outlining their approach, including how they are defining eligibility and how households access The Fund. We expect Authorities to review any existing approach and to have a strong rationale for their targeting so that funding is available to the households who most need it.

24. Authorities have the flexibility within The Fund to identify which vulnerable households are in most need of support and apply their own discretion when identifying eligibility. Rather than focus on one specific vulnerable group, Authorities should use the wide range of data and sources of information at their disposal to identify and provide support to a broad cross section of vulnerable households to prevent escalation of problems. Authorities should ensure that they consider the needs of various households including families with children of all ages, pensioners, unpaid carers, care leavers and disabled people.

25. Authorities should particularly consider how they can support those vulnerable households who are ineligible for other government support with the cost of living, including the:

- Energy Bills Support Scheme and the equivalence package confirmed on 29 July 2022
- Council Tax Rebate and the associated £144 million Discretionary Fund
- Cost of Living Payments for those on means tested benefits
- £150 Disability Cost of Living Payment
- One-off £300 Pensioner Cost of Living Payment (through the Winter Fuel Payment)

26. The eligibility criteria for the schemes listed in paragraph 24 can be found at **Annex A**. The majority of households in England will receive some form of support from at least one of the above schemes. Authorities should have regard to the fact that receipt of any of the above support should not exclude a resident from receiving support through The Fund in principle and households in receipt of support from these schemes may still be in need. It remains at the discretion of Authorities to establish their local eligibility and identify those most in need in their area.

27. However, the schemes listed in paragraph 24 do not cover everyone and Authorities should consider prioritising those households, who (for example):

- are eligible for but not claiming qualifying benefits
- become eligible for benefits after the relevant qualifying dates
- are in receipt of HB only
- are ordinarily eligible for benefits but who had a nil award in the qualifying period due to, for example, a fluctuation in income
- have fuel costs but who cannot access the £400 of energy support from the Energy Bill Support Scheme or the equivalence package confirmed on 29 July 2022

This list is not exhaustive and there may additionally be households that are vulnerable to rising costs despite being in receipt of this government support with the cost of living.

28. Authorities must operate an application-based service for support to ensure those in need have a route to emergency support. This can be delivered directly by the LA or by a TPO on their behalf. Authorities should establish eligibility criteria for their application service and should communicate with residents to ensure that their scheme and the mechanism for applying is clear and accessible. Authorities could make the entirety of their scheme application-based. However, when an LA chooses to use all or part of this funding for an application based process, they must make sure that this support is clearly advertised to residents. Authorities can also proactively identify households who will benefit from support, as with previous schemes.

29. Where Authorities proactively identify households, they should consider how they can ensure that they are focusing on those in the most need to prevent escalation of problems. There is no requirement for Authorities to undertake a means test or conduct a benefit check unless this specifically forms part of the Authority's local eligibility criteria. However, in relation to housing costs, Authorities must establish whether other forms of support are available to the household, such as Discretionary Housing Payments (DHPs).

## **Types of support**

30. Eligible spend includes:

- Energy and water. The Fund should primarily be used to support energy bills for any form of fuel that is used for the purpose of domestic heating, cooking, or lighting, including oil or portable gas cylinders. It can also be used to support water bills including for drinking, washing, cooking, as well as for sanitary purposes and sewerage.
- Food. The Fund can be used to provide support with food, whether in kind or through vouchers or cash.
- Essentials linked to energy and water. The Fund can be used to provide support with essentials linked to energy and water (for example period products, warm clothing, soap, blankets, the purchase of equipment such as fridges, freezers, ovens, slow cookers), in recognition that a range of costs may arise which directly affect a household's ability to afford or access energy, food and water. In particular, we encourage LAs to consider supporting households on low incomes to repair or replace white goods and appliances with more energy efficient ones, or to invest in simple energy efficiency measures which will pay back quickly, such as insulating a hot water tank, fitting draft excluders to a front door, or replacing inefficient lightbulbs or white goods. The intention of this is to provide sustainable support which could result in both immediate and long-lasting savings for the household.
- Wider essentials. The Fund can be used to support wider essential needs not linked to energy and water should Authorities consider this appropriate in their area. These may include, but are not limited to, support with other bills including broadband or phone bills, clothing, and essential transport-related costs such as repairing a car, buying a bicycle, or paying for fuel. This list is not exhaustive.
- Housing costs. In exceptional cases of genuine emergency, where existing housing support schemes do not meet this exceptional need, the Fund can be used to support housing costs. Where eligible, ongoing housing support for rent must be provided through the Housing cost element of UC and HB rather than The Fund. In addition, eligibility for DHPs must first be considered before emergency housing support is offered through The Fund. The Authority must also first consider whether the claimant is at statutory risk of homelessness and therefore owed a duty of support through the Homelessness Prevention Grant (HPG).
- In exceptional cases of genuine emergency, households in receipt of HB, UC, or DHPs can still receive housing cost support through The Fund if it is

deemed necessary by their Authority. However, The Fund should not be used to provide housing support on an ongoing basis or to support unsustainable tenancies.

- Individuals in receipt of some other form of housing support could still qualify for the other elements of The Fund, such as food, energy, water, essentials linked to energy and water and wider essentials.
  - The Fund cannot be used to provide mortgage support, though homeowners could still qualify for the other elements of The Fund (such as energy, food, water, essentials linked to energy and water and wider essentials). Where a homeowner is having difficulty with their mortgage payments, they should contact their lender as soon as possible to discuss their circumstances as lenders will have a set procedure to assist.
  - The Fund can exceptionally and in genuine emergency be used to provide support for historic rent arrears built up prior to an existing benefit claim for households already in receipt of UC and HB. This is because these arrears are excluded from the criteria for DHPs. However, support with rent arrears is not the primary intent of the fund and should not be the focus of spend.
- Reasonable administrative costs. This includes reasonable costs incurred administering The Fund. These include for example:
    - staff costs
    - advertising and publicity to raise awareness of The Fund
    - web page design
    - printing application forms
    - small IT changes, for example, to facilitate MI production
  - Eligible spend does not include:
    - advice services including debt advice
    - mortgage costs.

31. It is expected that the focus of support should be on bills and that support for housing costs should only be given in exceptional cases of genuine emergency. Beyond this, Authorities have discretion to determine the most appropriate Fund for their area, based on their understanding of local need and with due regard to equality considerations.

32. There is no prescriptive definition of essentials. Authorities have discretion to assess what is reasonable to assist those in genuine need this winter with regard to the examples above.

33. Individual awards can be whatever type and amount is deemed appropriate by Authorities for the receiving household, bearing in mind the overall spend eligibility priorities listed above and the risk of fraud and error. Awards to any given household can cover several or only one of the spend eligibility categories listed above.

34. Authorities should not make The Fund eligibility conditional on being employed or self-employed, or directly linked to a loss of earnings from employment or self-

employment. This will ensure that there is no National Insurance contribution liability payable on any payments by either the citizen, the Authority or employer.

## **Funding overlap**

35. Authorities should consider household circumstances when making a decision on how to spend this grant. Households may be receiving other forms of support, and this should be taken into account to avoid duplicating provision where possible. In particular, LAs should prioritise those who have not already received additional support for the cost of living. However, families receiving other forms of assistance are not excluded from receiving support through The Fund.

## **Individuals with No Recourse to Public Funds**

36. Authorities can provide a basic safety net support to an individual, regardless of their immigration status, if there is a genuine care need that does not arise solely from destitution, for example if:

- there are community care needs
- they have serious health problems
- there is a risk to a child's wellbeing

37. The rules around immigration status have not changed. Authorities must use their judgement to decide what legal powers and funding can be used to support individuals who are ineligible for public funds or statutory housing assistance.

## **Access to data**

38. The Household Support Fund is being classified as Local Welfare Provision (LWP). The provision of DWP data to Authorities is under the terms of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the 'Department for Work and Pensions and LAs (Access, handling, exchange and protection of DWPss' and HM Revenue and Customs' data)'.

39. Authorities who have signed and returned the relevant section (Annex C) of the current DWP/LA MoU have legal permission to access DWP's Searchlight portal and specific UC, Pension Credit, ESA (IR) and HB only data through a monthly data share for the purpose of The Fund.

40. Authorities will need to ensure they sign future iterations of the MoU and the appropriate Annex to continue to have the legal permission to access the data sources for LWP.

41. Staff accessing Searchlight will need to be registered with the Employee Authentication System. Further information on Searchlight can be found in the Local Authority Searchlight Training Pack available in the Searchlight folder on Glasscubes (the LA/DWP online collaboration tool). If your Authority needs to discuss access to Glasscubes, contact DWP at [lawelfare.lasupport@dwp.gov.uk](mailto:lawelfare.lasupport@dwp.gov.uk)

## **DWP Searchlight**

42. This portal provides information on individual citizens' entitlement to (and confirms receipt of) DWP welfare benefits. Therefore, this data can be used to help Authorities



identify and target those families and individuals to support . Authorities may also wish to establish if other forms of support are available to the household. In relation to housing costs this must include checking whether the household could receive DHPs. The Authority must also first consider if the claimant is at statutory risk of homelessness and, therefore, owed a duty of support through the HPG.

43. Searchlight can only be used to verify a specific individual's DWP benefit information. Therefore, if an Authority identified a group of potential claimants who may be eligible for The Fund from their own records, they can access Searchlight to verify each claimant's DWP benefit entitlement (although benefit entitlement is not a condition of support).

### **Monthly data share**

44. We are providing Authorities with details of UC claimants in their Authority whose income is below the FSM and free prescription thresholds and those with Limited Capability For Work both at individual level and summary level by Ward. We are also providing Authorities with details of those in receipt of Guarantee Credit and/or Savings Credit element of Pension Credit and their appointees if appropriate, as well as for all claimants on ESA (IR). Authorities may find this information useful in identifying those most in need.

45. We are also introducing a further data share for those in receipt of HB only. Individuals in this group are not eligible for a means-tested Cost of Living Payment and so this data share will allow Authorities to identify them and more easily consider their need for support.

46. The UC, Pension Credit, ESA (IR) and HB only data will be provided monthly via Transfer Your File.

47. Authorities will receive two data shares on a monthly basis:

- **File one** - contains individual data of the National Insurance number and names of UC claimants within the Authority area and:
  - income below the thresholds of £7,400 per year for FSMs and income below the free prescription threshold of £935 per month as identified in their last UC assessment period
  - those with a Limited Capability for Work indicator within the last assessment period, and
  - the number of children in the household.
  - those whose award is subject to the benefit cap
  - those in receipt of the Removal of the Spare Room Subsidy and Local Housing Allowance (available from Autumn 2022)
- the National Insurance number, names, addresses and contact telephone numbers of those in receipt of Guarantee Credit and/or Savings Credit element of Pension Credit and their appointees if appropriate, as well as for all claimants on income-related ESA (IR).
- the National Insurance number, names, addresses and contact telephone numbers of customers who are in receipt of HB but not in receipt of a means tested benefit (for example: UC, Income based Jobseekers Allowance, ESA (IR), Income Support and Pension Credit)

**File two** - contains aggregate data showing those UC claimants that are:

- at or below the Free School Meal income threshold
- at or below the free prescription income threshold, and
- in the Limited Capability for Work group.

For a full breakdown of the file contents see **Local Welfare Provision monthly data share field definitions** at **Annex B**.

48. Authorities also have access to their own non-DWP data to help identify vulnerable households who may be eligible for support under The Fund.

## Reporting requirements

49. Authorities are required to make two Statements of Grant Usage and MI returns – see the **Grant Determination**.. The deadline for completing these returns is shown in the table below. Completed MI returns should be sent to [lawelfare.pdt@dwp.gov.uk](mailto:lawelfare.pdt@dwp.gov.uk)

50. An interim MI return is required by 25 January 2023 for spend for the period 1 October 2022 to 31 December 2022. The interim MI return will be used to determine eligible spend to 31 December 2022 and an interim grant payment will be made to your Authority for this period when the information in your return has been verified.

51. A final MI return is required by 28 April 2023 showing total spend from 1 October 2022 to 31 March 2023. The final MI return will be used to determine total eligible spend to 31 March 2023 and a final grant payment will be made to your Authority for this period when the information in your return has been verified.

52. Authorities should use the standard MI reporting template provided, which incorporates the Statement of Grant Usage. For the purpose of this section:

- **Grant allocation** refers to the amount of grant allocated to a TPO to distribute to vulnerable households.
- **Grant award or spend** refers to the amount provided or paid to vulnerable households under the remit of this grant.

MI return	Reporting period		Deadline
	From	To	
Interim MI return	1 October 2022	31 December 2022	25 January 2023
Final MI return	1 October 2022	31 March 2023	28 April 2023

53. It is the responsibility of Authorities to provide the MI returns to DWP. Failure to return the MI by the deadline may result in a delayed payment or a payment being refused.

54. Where Authorities (including District Councils) issue awards directly to vulnerable households they should either obtain information at source or via information or data they have access to, in order to complete the split of spend and number of awards

across the reporting categories. For example, households with children and pensioners; food, energy bills, essentials linked to food and energy bills, wider essentials and (in exceptional circumstances) housing support. Where Authorities decide to deliver support to vulnerable households through TPOs they should use whatever information the TPO holds, or other available data, to split the level of spend and volume of awards across the eligibility criteria to the best of their ability.

55. The different elements of the MI template are shown below together with guidance on how to complete them.

Table 1 Governance

<b>Table 1: Governance</b>	<b>Response</b>
Local Authority (full name)	
Section 151 officer (name)	
Section 151 officer (email address)	
Is the Section 151 officer / CFO copied into the return to DWP? (Y/N)	
Reporting Period	
Approved signed off by	
LA Single Point of Contact	
Date Returned to DWP	

56. Each MI return must include your Section 151 Officer's name and email address to provide assurance on validation of funding spend. If the Section 151 Officer is also the SPOC (single point of contact) for the scheme, please input details in both response fields.

57. We also require you to copy your Chief Financial Officer/Section 151 Officer into the email, providing this assurance when you return the MI template to DWP. This will be checked against DWP records. By doing this you confirm that the Section 151 Officer has agreed the correctness of spend reported.

58. Please indicate that you have done this in row 4 of the table "Is the section 151 Officer/CFO copied into the return to DWP?" If the MI is incomplete or incorrect it will be returned to the Authority by the DWP for correction and re-submission which must also be copied to your Chief Financial Officer/Section 151 Officer.

59. Table 2: Total Awards

<b>Table 2: Total Awards</b>	
<b>Item</b>	<b>Spend (£s)</b>
a) Total amount provided to vulnerable households	
b) Administration Costs	
c) Total LA spend (a+b)	£ -

60. Total amount provided to vulnerable households – this is the total amount of The Fund that has been paid or awarded to vulnerable households. It includes amounts paid by Authorities and by TPOs on behalf of Authorities. It should not include amounts allocated to TPOs that have not been spent during the reporting period. This cell will automatically populate from the total in table 3. Note, all cells which automatically populate are shaded grey and are protected.

61. Administration costs – this includes reasonable costs incurred administering The Fund. These include for example:

- staff costs
- advertising and publicity to raise awareness of The Fund
- web page design
- printing application forms
- small IT changes, for example, to facilitate MI production

62. Total LA spend – this is the total of the above. It is the amount that will be used to determine the grant funding payment from DWP to cover the full cost of administering the grant in an Authority area. A single grant payment will be made in arrears on the receipt of a fully completed and verified MI return. This cell will automatically populate from the figures in rows a and b.

63. Table 3: Total value of awards split by household composition

Table 3: Total Value of Awards Split by Household Composition						
		a) Households with Children	b) Households with Pensioners	c) Households with a Disabled Person	d) Other households	e) Total amount provided to vulnerable households (a+b+c+d)
Row 1	Spend (£s)					£ -
Row 2	Volumes					-
Row 3	Number of Households Helped					-

64. Table 3 relates to grant spend, the volume of awards made, and number of households helped in relation to households with children, pensioners, a disabled person and all other households. Rows 1 and 2 relate to grant awards made by Authorities (including District Councils) directly to vulnerable households, and grant awards to vulnerable households made by TPOs. Row 3 refers to the number of households helped.

65. Spend (£s) - this is the amount paid/awarded to vulnerable households within the eligibility criteria. Authorities should make every effort to gather information to establish the household type. For example, for households with children whether a child resides in the household (including being the only member of the household) in order to complete the template as fully as possible. This information is important for DWP to evaluate how successful The Fund has been in providing support to households with children.

66. Authorities should either gather information or check existing records they hold or have access to, in order to establish whether the household includes a child or a pensioner (as defined below) or a disabled person and complete columns a, b and c accordingly. Responsibility for MI reporting rests with Authorities. Where Shire Counties pass grant allocations to District Councils, District Councils should pass the information relating to columns a, b and c to the County Council/Unitary Authority to collate the information and send one collated template to DWP.

67. For the purposes of recording spend in the MI template, if an award relates to more than one of 'Households with Children', 'Households with Pensioners' (in other words, pensioners living with children) and 'Households with a Disabled Person' (for example disabled people living with children), Authorities have the flexibility to categorise and record the spend under the household composition(s) which they consider more fitting. In determining this, Authorities should, as far as is possible, consider who the award is principally intended to support.

68. For the purpose of the reporting requirements for this grant (and without prejudice to other schemes):

- The definition of a household with a child is a household containing any person:
  - who will be under the age of 19 at the time of award or,
  - a person aged 19 or over in respect of whom a child-related benefit (for example, Child Benefit) is paid or FSMs are provided.
  
- The definition of a household with a pensioner is any household containing any person:
  - who has reached State Pension age at the time of award
  
- The definition of disability and disabled people aligns with the definition in the Equality Act 2010. Therefore, a disabled person is someone who has a physical or mental impairment that has a ‘substantial’ and ‘long-term’ negative effect on their ability to do normal daily activities:
  - ‘substantial’ is more than minor or trivial, for example it takes much longer than it normally would to complete a daily task like getting dressed;
  - ‘long-term’ means 12 months or more, for example a breathing condition that develops as a result of a lung infection.

69. For tables 3 to 6

- Volumes: this is the number of individual/separate payments made to vulnerable households within the eligibility criteria. If multiple awards are made to the same household throughout the period of The Fund each award should be counted separately. Where an award is made to a household with multiple children, it should be classed as a single award.
- Number of Households Helped: this is the number of individual households helped by The Fund within the eligibility criteria. There should be only one record for each household helped, even if multiple awards are made to the same household throughout the period of The Fund.
- Reporting TPO Spend and TPO Volumes: we acknowledge that some TPOs, for example, charitable and voluntary organisations such as food banks, have limited or no access to household information and may not be in a position to provide this information to the same level of accuracy as Authorities. We are therefore asking Authorities and TPOs to report the actual level of spend and the volume of awards across the different eligibility criteria in rows 1-3 to the best of their ability.

70. Table 4: Total Value of Awards Split by Category

		Table 4: Total Value of Awards Split by Category						
		a) Energy and Water	b) Food excluding FSM support in the holidays	c) Free School Meals support in the holidays	d) Essentials linked to Energy and Water	e) Wider Essentials	f) Housing Costs	g) Total amount provided to vulnerable households (a+b+c+d+e+f)
Row 1	Spend (£s)							£ -
Row 2	Volumes							-
Row 3	Number of Households Helped							-

71. Table 4 relates to grant spend, volume of awards made, and households helped in relation to food, energy and water bills, essentials linked to energy and water bills, wider essentials, and (in exceptional circumstances) housing costs.

72. Table 5: Total Value of Awards Split by Types of Support

Table 5: Total Value of Awards Split by Types of Support							
		a) Vouchers	b) Cash Awards	c) Third Party Organisations	d) Tangible Items	e) Other	f) Total amount provided to vulnerable households (a+b+c+d+e)
Row 1	Spend (£s)						£ -
Row 2	Volumes						-
Row 3	Number of Households Helped						-

73. Table 5 relates to grant spend, volume of awards made, and households helped in relation to Vouchers, Cash Awards, Third Party Organisations, Tangible Items and Other.

74. By 'Tangible Items' we mean products that are of a physical nature such as clothing or household items.

75. Table 6: Total Value of Awards Split by Access Routes

Table 6: Total Value of Awards Split by Access Routes					
		a) Application-based Support	b) Proactive Support	c) Other	d) Total amount provided to vulnerable households (a+b+c)
Row 1	Spend (£s)				£ -
Row 2	Volumes				-
Row 3	Number of Households Helped				-

76. Table 6 relates to grant spend, volume of awards made, and households helped in relation to Application-based support, Proactive Support and Other.

77. By application-based support, we mean any awards made through a successful application for support made to the Authority by eligible recipients or through third parties who run self-referral support services on behalf of the Authority.

78. By proactive support we mean any awards made as a result of the Authority proactively identifying recipients.

79. Total - Table 3 Row 1 column g, Table 4 row 1 column g, Table 5 Row 1 column f and Table 6 column row 1 d are protected and will automatically add up spend across the different headings. This figure will automatically populate Table 2 row a.

80. When allocating spend and the volume of awards across the eligibility criteria please follow the guidance below.

- Each award needs to be allocated four times – one allocation for each of Tables 3-6 so that when you report on the total spent on:
  - Table 3, award by household composition
  - Table 4 award by category of spend
  - Table 5 type of support
  - Table 6 access route

the total amount you have paid will be the same across the four tables.

81. Tables 3 to 6 ask for spend and award volumes to be recorded against four sets of criteria, one for each table. Therefore, the details of each award need to be recorded four times; once against one set of criteria in Table 3, then a second time for Table 4 and again in Tables 5 and 6. Shown below is a worked example of how the MI template should be completed.

82. Authorities are asked to report and manage spend in relation to all of these areas. For example, if a £100 award of vouchers is made following a successful application for support to a household with children for food, you would allocate £100 to the 'Households with children' section in Table 3, £100 to the 'food' section in Table 4,

£100 to the Vouchers section of Table 5 and £100 to the Application-based support of Table 6. You would also allocate one award and one household supported in these sections of Tables 3 to 6.

83. If The Fund payments are paid directly to a vulnerable household's Council Tax Account in lieu of a different payment method: for example for food excluding FSM in the holidays /energy and water; then the amount paid must be recorded under the intended heading, in this case food excluding FSM support in the holiday. If the payment is in relation to both food and energy in equal measures put 50% of the award in each of the two categories.

### **Additional guidance and examples when working with TPOs**

84. Include, where possible, the amount of spend across the following categories:

- households with children, households with pensioners, households with a disabled person, other households, and
- energy and water bills, essentials linked to energy and water bills, wider essentials, and (in exceptional circumstances) housing costs.

85. For example, if you have allocated:

- grant funding to a food bank to provide food to vulnerable people, establish the amount of that allocation the food bank has spent and enter in Table 4 the full amount spent under 'food excluding FSM through the school holidays' as you know that the grant allocation has been spent in respect of food in term time and not covering FSMs, and in Table 3 provide the split across household composition to the best of your ability in accordance with the example below.
- grant funding to a charity that specialises in providing vulnerable children with clothing, establish the amount of that allocation the charity has spent and enter the full amount spent in 'households with children' and the full amount of the grant spent in 'wider essentials'. This is because you know that the purpose of the grant is for children and the nature of support is clothing which comes under wider essentials.
- As this is TPO spend record the full amount of the grant spend under 'Third Party Organisations' in Table 5 and record the full amount of the grant spend under 'Other' in Table 6. For all entries, please add volumes of awards and numbers of households helped when completing the MI.

86. The amount of MI available will vary considerably across each TPO. Use whatever information is already available or reasonable to collect to be as accurate as possible.

87. Shown below are some examples of how to complete the template.

#### **Example 1**

88. A food bank operates on an open basis where anyone can turn up and pick up food and supplies. This is not an award made directly to vulnerable households by an Authority. The cost is picked up by a TPO, for example, the food bank. The MI template should be completed as per guidance below. The award was not made as a result of an application nor proactive support.

89. The total value of grant spent, the volume of awards made by the charity or voluntary organisations providing the food bank and number of households helped should be



entered in Table 3 (The Authority or food bank provider will need to provide the split between household composition to the best of their ability) and column b (Food Excluding FSM support in the holidays) of Table 4. These values should be reported in column c (Third Party Organisations) of Table 5 and column c (Other) of Table 6.

## Example 2

90. The Authority directly provides vouchers to vulnerable households as a result of the Authority proactively identifying the recipients. These could be redeemable at a number of food outlets including supermarkets or food banks. Food voucher amounts can vary depending on how many children reside in the household. Authorities are expected to collect or verify information to establish whether the award is made to a household with children or a household with pensioners or a disabled person. The MI template should be completed as follows:

- the value of awards should be entered in Table 3 in 'spend' row 1 column a (households with children), row 1 column b (households with pensioners), row 1 column c (households with a disabled person) and row 1 column d (other households) based on the information the Authority has been capturing to split spend across these categories.
- the volume of awards should be included in Table 3 row 2 (Volumes) column a and row 2 column b based on the information the Authority has been capturing to split the volume of awards spent across these categories.
- the number of households helped should be included in Table 3 row 3 (number of households helped) column a and row 3 column b based on the information the Authority has been capturing to split the number of households helped across these categories.
- the value of awards should be entered in Table 4 row 1 column b because it relates to food excluding FSM support outside the holidays.
- the volume of awards should be included in Table 4 row 2 column b because it relates to food
- the number of households helped should be included in Table 4 row 3 (number of households helped) column b because it relates to food
- the value of awards should be entered in Table 5 row 1 column a because it relates to vouchers
- the volume of awards should be included in Table 5 row 2 column a because it relates to vouchers
- the number of households helped should be included in Table 5 row 3 column a because it relates to vouchers
- the value of awards should be entered in Table 6 row 1 column b because it relates to proactive support
- the volume of awards should be included in Table 6 row 2 column b because it relates to proactive support
- the number of households helped should be included in Table 6 row 3 column b because it relates to proactive support



## **DWP engagement**

91. LA Performance Relationship Managers (PRMs) from DWPs LA Partnership, Engagement and Delivery (LA-PED) division will contact Authorities to provide support and gather information throughout The Fund. LA-PED will contact Authorities for initial compliance (where necessary) including where:

- the MI templates have not been completed and returned,
- the MI templates have not been copied to the Authority's Section 151 Officer or CFO.
- an incorrect template has been used – MI should only be returned on the MI template provided. No local versions or PDF copies are acceptable.

92. They will also contact Authorities where further clarification is needed in respect of the information provided on the MI reporting template, if for example:

- critical data is missing, or the data looks odd, or
- the Authority is reporting a high value of awards where they have not been able to establish the household composition. We may need the Authority to explain why that is the case and provide supporting evidence.
- the Authority is reporting a high value of administration costs. We may need the Authority to explain why that is the case and provide supporting evidence.
- there is a significant gap between actual and allocated spend. We may need the Authority to explain why spend was so low.

93. They will look to identify good practice and identify case studies where appropriate.

94. Authorities are required to complete a delivery plan to outline their intentions for The Fund and to demonstrate some of the ways in which they intend to allocate their funding. The delivery plan will be due one month after the start of The Fund on 28 October 2022. At the end of The Fund we will also ask for a summary of spend against the final delivery plan with this due at the same time as the final MI in April 2023.

95. DWP will also continue to engage with Authorities throughout the course of The Fund and will provide opportunities to engage with the department and other Authorities to share good practice and work collaboratively. DWP will continue to respond to questions we receive via the designated inbox as quickly as possible.

96. Where Authorities work with District Councils and TPOs it is the responsibility of Authorities to collect and collate MI and complete one collated MI return and submit to DWP.

## **DWP funding arrangements**

97. The Fund is ring-fenced to be spent as detailed in this guidance and the accompanying grant determination. To ensure that the objectives of The Fund are being met during the course of the grant and reduce administration costs for all concerned, including the need for DWP to recover underspend, grant payment will be

made in arrears upon DWP being satisfied with the MI returns. This will enable DWP to adjust the amount of the payment based on the MI returns.

98. Payment of The Fund from DWP to Authorities will be made in arrears after the interim MI return in January 2023 and the final MI return at the end of grant period in April 2023 after we have verified the MI. If an Authority feels that the payment arrangements will create significant cash flow problems, please notify DWP as soon as possible with supporting evidence. Both an interim and a final MI return will be required and grant payments will be made in respect of the periods 1 October 2022 to 31 December 2022 and 1 October 2022 to 31 March 2023.
99. MI returns **must be endorsed by the Section 151** Officer in accordance with their statutory assurance responsibility in order for the grant payment to be made by copying your Chief Financial Officer and Section 151 Officer into the email.
100. The guidance for completion is provided on a separate tab within the MI template.
101. The definition of spend includes grant funding that has been provided to vulnerable households, within the scope of the eligibility criteria, and within the period of The Fund 1 October 2022 to 31 March 2023.
102. Spend also includes 'committed spend'. For the purpose of The Fund committed spend relates to grant funding that has been spent and delivered to vulnerable households even though the vulnerable household may not have used their grant funding. An example would be the award of a food voucher on 31 March 2023 to a vulnerable household. It would be unreasonable to expect the household to be restricted to redeem the voucher on the day of receipt. In this example, spend has been committed by the Authority, support has been provided to a vulnerable household and, therefore, should be included as eligible grant spend. It would be reasonable to expect the vulnerable household to redeem the food voucher during the month following the end of The Fund.
103. However, committed spend does not include large volumes of food vouchers, procured quite late in The Fund, which cannot be distributed to vulnerable households within the period of The Fund.
104. Authorities that plan to order vouchers in bulk should attempt to be realistic in the volumes ordered to avoid holding large stocks of unused vouchers at the end of The Fund. Alternatively, Authorities may want to consider:
  - purchasing vouchers on a sale or return basis, so that they can return any unused vouchers, or
  - expired vouchers returned to an Authority after The Fund has ended can be recycled and re-issued within a reasonable timeframe but must be done so under the same categories of spend as originally reported and under the same terms as The Fund they were issued under.
105. For audit purposes where an Authority recycles and reuses expired vouchers the Authority must confirm by email to [lawelfare.pdt@dwp.gov.uk](mailto:lawelfare.pdt@dwp.gov.uk), copying in the Section 151 Officer:
  - the amount that has been returned
  - reason for the return (for example, expired voucher)
  - what the original spend was reported against in their **FINAL MI** return

- confirm they intend to spend the total unspent amount against the same category of spend for the same group.

106. The definition of committed spend for the purpose of The Fund does not affect its accounting treatment in accordance with normal rules.

107. The timetable for provision of funding is as follows:

**Funding:**

<b>Payment</b>	<b>Amount (%)</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Notes</b>
Interim	Actual grant spend up to 100% of grant allocation*	February/March 2023	Payment made in arrears
Final	Actual grant spend up to 100% of grant allocation*	June/July 2023	Payment made in arrears

\*Subject to eligible spend criteria

**Managing the risk of fraud**

108. Fraudsters can target funds of this type.

109. As with any welfare payment to vulnerable recipients there is a risk of fraud, as recipients might appear to be eligible when they are not.

110. To help mitigate this risk, Authorities should involve District Councils and other organisations chosen to administer The Fund to help identify vulnerable families, households and individuals.

111. Authorities wishing to work with TPOs to deliver The Fund must carry out suitable due diligence checks to ensure they are viable and able to deliver the support. So, for example, ensuring all charities are registered and taking extra caution if they are new organisations.

112. Authorities are also encouraged to ensure checks are in place to verify the identity of those eligible.

113. Authorities are encouraged to ask neighbouring Authorities to work together to help prevent double provision and/or no provision – especially where allocation of provision is by school in one area and by residential address in another.

114. It is for Authorities to decide how payments are made to recipients. However, when making decisions, Authorities should consider the risks involved. Although they still carry fraud risks, vouchers should be used instead of cash where possible as this

helps to mitigate the risk of the money being spent by the recipient on things outside of the policy intent.

115. Authorities should ensure that they consider and put in place suitable controls when making use of vouchers as part of The Fund. Authorities may wish to consider restricting access to these vouchers; and also consider restricting usage to ensure that they cannot be spent outside the intended scope of The Fund.
116. It is important to be vigilant to fraud and error risks in relation to housing costs, and to assure yourself that the appropriate checks are in place. Authorities should take appropriate steps to ensure they take into consideration household income and rent liability which may be requested and reviewed as set out in the grant determination. We expect Authorities to work with district councils to ensure support is going to those with genuine need and to help minimise the risk of fraud on housing support.
117. Where possible, any payments made into a bank account should be in the same name of the person that is eligible for that payment. Authorities have access to a range of data sources, and checks can be carried out against this data to verify the identity of the recipient. Authorities are also encouraged to use existing tools at their disposal to verify personal bank accounts.
118. If the Authority has any grounds for suspecting financial irregularity in the use of any grant paid under this Determination, it must notify DWP immediately, explain what steps are being taken to investigate the suspicion and keep DWP informed about the progress of the investigation. For these purposes 'financial irregularity' includes fraud or other impropriety, mismanagement, and the use of grant for purposes other than those for which it was provided.
119. If you suspect fraud, you should notify DWP of the:
  - number of instances
  - total amount lost
120. This will help DWP identify any emerging threats and share them with other Authorities, so they can take steps to prevent and detect any fraud in their Fund.

### **Complying with Subsidy (previously State Aid) rules**

121. The funding is intended to benefit households most in need of support with energy bills, food, related essentials, wider essentials and (exceptionally) housing costs, in order to help with global inflationary challenges and the significantly rising cost of living. The funds should not be used for any economic undertaking.
122. Whichever way you use the funding, including where you work in partnership with others, you should consider all Subsidy rules (previously State Aid) issues. Check whether the 'de minimis' regulation exception applies. You should also follow government procurement procedures where relevant.

### **Administration costs**

123. The Household Support Fund funding allocation includes reasonable administration costs to enable Authorities to deliver The Fund. Authorities should deduct their administration costs from the total allocation to determine the amount remaining.
124. In all cases, Authorities should keep administrative costs to a reasonable level.

125. Administration costs for each Authority will be published on [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk) alongside detail of all spend and volumes related to The Fund.

### **Public Sector Equality Duty**

126. In accordance with the public sector equality duty, DWP has had due regard for the potential equalities impacts of this grant.

127. Under the Equality Act 2010, all public authorities must comply with the Public Sector Equality Duty. For the purposes of this grant, you should consider how any support that helps people facing severe financial hardship impacts those with characteristics protected under the Equality Act.

128. When developing your local delivery frameworks, you should ensure people are not disadvantaged or treated unfairly by The Fund. For example, any application process should be easy to access and to navigate.

### **Contact**

129. If you have any queries about the content of this guidance or use of the funding, you can contact [lawelfare.pdt@dwp.gov.uk](mailto:lawelfare.pdt@dwp.gov.uk)

## **Eligibility for cost of living and energy support**

Detailed eligibility requirements for the Cost of Living Payments can be found at:

[Cost of Living Payment - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/cost-of-living-payment)

Further details on the Energy Bills Support Scheme can be found at:

[Energy Bills Support Scheme explainer - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/energy-bills-support-scheme-explainer)

Eligibility requirements for the Council Tax Rebate and information on the associated £144m Discretionary Fund can be found at:

[The council tax rebate 2022-23 – billing authority guidance - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/council-tax-rebate-2022-23-billing-authority-guidance)

## Local Welfare Provision monthly data share field definitions

The definitions will be updated to include information regarding the additional data share of those who are in receipt of HB only when the details are confirmed.

### File 1 – The list of individuals:

Field Name	Description
claimant1_nino	The national insurance number (NINO) of the lead UC claimant
claimant1_surname	The surname of the lead UC claimant in the Household
claimant1_forename1	The forename of the lead UC claimant in the Household
claimant2_nino	If applicable the NINO of the UC partner in the household. In some cases this may be the same as the UC claimant NINO, usually where the partner NINO data is not available.
claimant2_surname	The surname of the UC partner if Claimant 2 NINO provided
claimant2_forename_1	The forename of the UC partner if Claimant 2 NINO provided
ap_start_date	The start date of the household's UC assessment period (AP)
ap_end_month	This will always be the month of the extract.
has_children_latest_ap	Set to 1 if the UC Household is recorded to have children in the AP used for the extract 1= children 0 = no children
total_children	The number of children recorded in the UC Household for the AP used in the extract, null = no children, the field HAS_CHILDREN_LATEST_AP will also be 0 if there are no children
has_lcw_latest_ap	Set to 1 if a member of the UC Household is in the UC limited capability for work group
eligible_prescription_latest_ap	Set to 1 if the UC Household is below the Free Prescription threshold
earnings_below_fsm_threshold	Set to 1 if the UC Household is below the Free School Meal threshold
country_name	England Scotland

	Wales
local_authority_name	Your LA name
local_authority_code	the standard lookup code for your authority
tyf_la_id_code	the LA ID code as registered on Transfer Your File for your authority
postcode_outward_code	Postcode sector in the ward
ward_name	Name of the ward
ward_code	Code of the ward
cap_applied	True, False or Null
spare_room_subsidy_removal	True, False or Null
local_housing_allowance_applied	True, False or Null
BENEFIT_TYPE	Will show one of the following: UC PC GC SC SC/GC ESA-IR HB
PC/ESA-IR/HB_NINO	The NINO of the PC/ESA-IR/HB customer
PC/ESA-IR/HB_SURNAME	The surname of the PC/ESA-IR/HB customer
PC/ESA-IR/HB_FORENAME_1	The first name of the PC/ESA-IR/HB customer
PC/ESA-IR/HB_ADDRESS_LINE_1	The PC/ESA-IR/HB customer address as recorded on the PC/ESA-IR/HB claim
PC/ESA-IR/HB_ADDRESS_LINE_2	The PC/ESA-IR/HB customer address as recorded on the PC/ESA-IR/HB claim
PC/ESA-IR/HB_ADDRESS_LINE_3	The PC/ESA-IR/HB customer address as recorded on the PC/ESA-IR/HB claim
PC/ESA-IR/HB_ADDRESS_LINE_4	The PC/ESA-IR/HB customer address as recorded on the PC/ESA-IR/HB claim
PC/ESA-IR/HB_POSTCODE	The postcode as recorded on the PC/ESA-IR/HB customer claim
PC/ESA-IR/HB_TELEPHONE_NO1	The telephone number of the PC/ESA-IR/HB customer as reported on the PC/ESA-IR/HB claim
PC/ESA-IR/HB_TELEPHONE_NO2	The second telephone number (if applicable) of the PC/ESA-IR/HB customer as reported on the PC/ESA-IR/HB claim
PC_APPOINTEE_SURNAME	If appropriate the surname of the Personal/Corporate Acting Body as reported on the PC claim
PC_APPOINTEE_FORENAME_1	If appropriate the forename of the Personal/Corporate Acting Body as reported on the PC claim
PC_APPOINTEE_ADDRESS_LINE_1	If appropriate the address of the Personal/Corporate Acting Body as reported on the PC claim



PC_APPOINTEE_ADDRESS_LINE_2	If appropriate the address of the Personal/Corporate Acting Body as reported on the PC claim
PC_APPOINTEE_ADDRESS_LINE_3	If appropriate the address of the Personal/Corporate Acting Body as reported on the PC claim
PC_APPOINTEE_ADDRESS_LINE_4	If appropriate the address of the Personal/Corporate Acting Body as reported on the PC claim
PC_APPOINTEE_POSTCODE	If appropriate the address of the Personal/Corporate Acting Body as reported on the PC claim
PC_APPOINTEE_TELEPHONE_NO1	If appropriate the telephone number of the Personal/Corporate Acting Body as reported on the PC claim
PC_APPOINTEE_TELEPHONE_NO2	If appropriate the second telephone number of the Personal/Corporate Acting Body as reported on the PC claim

## File 2 – The Aggregate file

This shows for your Authority:

Country (England, Scotland or Wales)

Local Authority (the name of your Authority)

LOCAL\_AUTHORITY\_CODE (the standard lookup code for your authority)

TYF\_LA\_ID\_CODE (the Transfer Your File code for your authority)

For each postcode sector (POSTCODE\_OUTWARD\_CODE) in a ward (WARD\_NAME), (WARD\_CODE)

Number of Households in the ward with UC Limited Capability to Work group (HAS\_LCW\_LATEST\_AP)

Number of UC households in the Authority without children

(HHS\_NO\_CHILDREN\_IN\_LA)

Number of UC households in the Authority with children

(HHS\_WITH\_CHILDREN\_IN\_LA)

Number of children in the Authority in UC households with children

(NO\_OF\_CHILDREN\_IN\_LA)

Number of UC households without children in the postcode sector that are below the Free School Meal income threshold and free prescription threshold

(HHS\_NO\_CHILDREN\_PRESC\_OR\_FSM)

Number of UC households without children in the postcode sector that are below the Free Prescription income threshold (HHS\_NO\_CHILDREN\_PRESC)

Number of UC households without children in the postcode sector that are below the Free School meal income threshold (HHS\_NO\_CHILDREN\_FSM)

Number of UC households with children in the postcode sector that are below the Free School Meal income threshold and free prescription threshold

(HHS\_WITH\_CHILDREN\_PRESC\_OR\_FSM)

Number of UC households with children in the postcode sector that are below the Free Prescription income threshold (HHS\_WITH\_CHILDREN\_PRESC)

Number of UC households with children in the postcode sector that are below the Free School meal income threshold (HHS\_WITH\_CHILDREN\_FSM)

Number of children in UC households in the postcode sector that are below the Free School Meal income threshold and free prescription threshold (CHILDREN\_PRESCRIPTIONS\_OR\_FSM)

Number of children in UC households in the postcode sector that are below the Free Prescription income threshold (CHILDREN\_PRESCRIPTION)

Number of children in UC households in the postcode sector that are below the Free School meal income threshold (CHILDREN\_FSM)