

Household Support Fund for Leeds

Date: 17th May 2022

Report of: Chief Officer Community Hubs, Welfare and Business Support

Report to: Director of Communities, Housing and Environment

Will the decision be open for call in? Yes No

Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? Yes No

What is this report about?

Including how it contributes to the city's and council's ambitions

- This report is to gain approval for Leeds City Council to accept £7,098,648.16 from the Department for Work and Pensions Household Support Fund (HSF) to support vulnerable residents with the costs of food, fuel and essential items until the end of September 2022. The report also proposes how the funding will be utilised in accordance with the guidance provided by Government.
- On 23 March 2022, the government announced in the [Spring Statement](#) that the Household Support Fund (HSF) would be extended from 1st April 2022 to 30th September 2022. As previously, the fund will be made available to local authorities in England.
- Leeds City Council has been allocated £7,098,648.16 to spend between 1st April 2022 and 30th September 2022. Although this is an extension to the original HSF, local authorities are not allowed to carry forward any underspends from the previous HSF which ended on 31st March 2022.
- Final guidance from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) on how the funding should be spent was received on 22nd April 2022. The guidance states that **at least one third** of the total funding must be spent on families with children and **at least one third** must be spent on pensioners, with **up to one third** on other households. This is a change from the previous Household Support Fund criteria which stated that at least 50% of the funding should be spent on households with children.
- In terms of type of support, the expectation is that the HSF extension should be used in a similar way as the original HSF scheme, with a greater emphasis on supporting households with energy bills, with food and water bills also remaining priorities. It can also be used to support households with essential costs related to energy, food and fuel costs 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.

- For Leeds it is proposed that the funding is allocated as follows:
 - To provide financial support through the Post Office Payout Scheme to pensioners, households with children and working age households without children who are in receipt of Council Tax Support. Allocations will be as follows, with eligibility being dependent on people being in receipt of Council Tax Support on the dates indicated below;

Council Tax Support Recipients	Estimated number of households	Amount per household	Estimated total cost	Date at which eligibility determined
Pensioners	20,200	£100	£2,020,000	w/c 6 th June
Households with Children	16,200	£100	£1,620,000	w/c 4 th July
Working age households	27,300	£50	£1,365,000	w/c 20 th June
Total			£5,005,000	

- To provide care leavers living on a low income with supermarket vouchers. The total cost is estimated to be £20,000.
- To provide households with emergency support through the Council's Local Welfare Support Scheme. An estimated £600,000 will be made available through the scheme and will support people in crisis with the costs of food, fuel and essential items.
- To provide additional payments for Discretionary Housing Payment applicants who demonstrate financial hardship. Applicants will be awarded a one-off payment of £200 via the Cash Perks system. Officers will issue a code to eligible residents who will then be able to use that code at an ATM to receive a cash payment. The estimated total cost will be £204,000.
- To subsidise the section 17 budget (Children's Act 1989) within Children & Families with £300,000 to provide food, fuel, essential item and housing support to those children deemed as children in need.
- To provide up to £790,000 funding to third sector organisations to support people directly with food, fuel and essential items. This will include funding for food aid charities through the Leeds Food Aid Network and Voluntary Action Leeds, third sector organisations assisting families and older people, and third sector organisations able to support directly with food and fuel bills.
- To provide up to £190,000 for the costs of administration of the funding.
- Accepting the HSF funding contributes to the Best Council Plan focus of tackling poverty and reducing inequalities. The funding supports the Best City Priorities of Child Friendly City, Safe, Strong Communities, Inclusive Growth, and Health & Wellbeing.

Recommendations

The Director of Communities, Housing and Environment is recommended to:

- Accept the allocation of £7,098,648.16 Household Support Fund from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), to be used between 1st April 2022 and the end of September 2022.
- Accept any further extension of funding from government for the Household Support Fund.
- Accept the proposed levels of expenditure as outlined in this report to ensure that the funding meets the grant criteria to support vulnerable pensioners, families and individuals.

- d) Agree that the amounts per expenditure type may be varied to ensure that the funding is appropriately utilised and spent within the allowable grant criteria provided by Government.

Why is the proposal being put forward?

- 1 The Department for Work and Pensions have allocated £7,098,648.16 of the Household Support Fund to Leeds City Council to spend on supporting vulnerable households until September 2022 with the cost of food, fuel and essential items. In order to ensure that the Council able to start to allocate this funding as soon as possible the funding needs to be accepted and the approach agreed on how the funding is allocated.
- 2 These proposals aim to ensure that residents most in need receive support directly and quickly. The proposals are based on the experience of running the Covid Winter and Local Grants schemes between December 2020 and September 2021, and the Household Support Fund between October 2021 and March 2022. The full guidance can be found here; <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/household-support-fund-guidance-for-local-councils>
- 3 The proposal will ensure the criteria of the Household Support Fund is met. At least a third of the funding will support low income pensioner households, at least a third will support low income households with children and up to a third will support working age adult households.

What impact will this proposal have?

Wards Affected:

Have ward members been consulted? Yes No

- 4 The HSF funding of £7,098,648.16 will provide support with the costs of food, fuel and essential items to vulnerable families and individuals in Leeds between April and September 2022.
- 5 The majority of the funding will support people in receipt of Council Tax Support. This will ensure that households on the lowest incomes in the city receive support directly, without the requirement for an application process.
- 6 Funding welfare support through the existing Local Welfare Support Scheme, applications for Discretionary Housing Payments and through Section 17 arrangements will enable more households in financial hardship to receive support.
- 7 Third sector support will enable local based and targeted support to be delivered, including to people who do not wish to engage with the Council.

What consultation and engagement has taken place?

- 8 All relevant Executive Members have been briefed on the guidance and remit of the funding and proposed spending allocations.

What are the resource implications?

- 9 Leeds City Council has been allocated £7,098,648.16 Household Support Funding from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), to be used between 1st April and the end of September 2022. The funding is to enable Local Authorities to provide support to families

with children, other vulnerable households and individuals with the cost of food, energy, water bills and other essentials.

- 10 Local Authorities are required to provide two management information (MI) returns on 22nd July 2022 and 21st October 2022, outlining grant spend and the volume of awards. Grant payments will be made to authorities in arrears on receipt of a fully completed and verified MI return.
- 11 The grant funding guidance allows the Council to allocate a specified amount of funding to cover administration costs of the scheme

What are the legal implications?

- 12 A Key Decision is required to accept the funding and agree how the funding is allocated. The decision is eligible for call-in.
- 13 Leeds City Council will adhere to the guidance of the funding provided by the Department for Work and Pensions and will ensure monitoring requirements are met by council services and third party organisations.

What are the key risks and how are they being managed?

- 14 Leeds City Council will ensure that the provision of support undertaken meets the objectives and criteria set out by the Department for Work and Pensions.

Does this proposal support the council's 3 Key Pillars?

Inclusive Growth Health and Wellbeing Climate Emergency

- 15 The funding supports the Best City Priorities of Child Friendly City, Safe, Strong Communities, Inclusive Growth, and Health & Wellbeing.

Options, timescales and measuring success

a) What other options were considered?

16 None

b) How will success be measured?

17 The HSF will be distributed in full to vulnerable households across the city.

c) What is the timetable for implementation?

18 From April 2022 until 30th September 2022.

Appendices

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Background papers

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