

Household Support Fund for Leeds

Date: 14th November 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

Brief summary

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 March 2023.

Authorities are asked to prioritise supporting households with the cost of energy; however, the fund can also be used to provide support with food, essentials linked to energy and water, wider essentials, and housing costs in exceptional cases of genuine emergency.

This report outlines the proposal for distributing the HSF across the city to support vulnerable households. These proposals aim to ensure 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 October 2022.

The full guidance can be found here: [Household Support Fund: guidance for local councils - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/household-support-fund-guidance-for-local-councils)

To ensure that the Council is 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.

Recommendations

- a) Accept the allocation of £7,098,648.16 HSF from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), to be used between 1st October 2022 and the end of March 2023.
- b) 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.
- c) 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.

What is this report about?

- 1 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 March 2023. A Key Decision (D55289) was taken in May 2022 to accept Household Support Fund monies from April to the end of September along with any further extensions of funding for the Household Support Fund.
- 2 The report also proposes how the funding will be utilised in accordance with the guidance provided by Government.
- 3 The Household Support Fund (HSF) has been extended from 1st October 2022 to 31st March 2023. As previously, the fund will be made available to local authorities in England.
- 4 Leeds City Council has been allocated £7,098,648.16 to spend between 1st October 2022 and 31st March 2023.
- 5 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 30th September 2022.
- 6 Final guidance from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) on how the funding should be spent was received on 30th September 2022.
- 7 There are changes to the guidance compared with previous schemes. These can be summarised as follows:
 - There will be no ringfence of any proportion of funding for any particular cohort of people.
 - A requirement for all Authorities to operate at least part of their scheme on an application basis i.e., residents should have the opportunity to come forward to ask for support.
 - Authorities are asked to consider those groups who may not have benefitted from recent cost of living support.
 - Authorities are asked to prioritise supporting households with the cost of energy.
 - Authorities are asked to consider providing support to disabled people in their area.
 - There has been an increase in the monitoring information required.
- 8 Although Authorities are asked to prioritise supporting households with the cost of energy, the fund can also be used to provide support with food, essentials linked to energy and water, wider essentials, and housing costs in exceptional cases of genuine emergency.
- 9 Authorities have been asked to aim to have arrangements in place as quickly as possible to support vulnerable households throughout the grant period.
- 10 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.
- 11 For Leeds it is proposed the funding is allocated as follows:

Direct support to working-age Housing Benefit (HB) recipients who were not eligible for the £650 cost of living support payment. £450k

DWP HSF guidance asks LAs to consider those groups who may not have benefitted from any of the recent cost of living support.

HB was not included as an eligible benefit for the £650 cost of living payment, despite this being a benefit for low-income households. Most households in receipt of Housing Benefit still qualified for the cost-of-living payment as they receive other eligible benefits but a relatively small number (estimated to be around 692 working-age households) did not. In accordance with DWP guidance, it is proposed that a direct payment of £650 is issued via BACs to HB recipients identified by the DWP as not benefiting from the cost-of-living payment.

The DWP will provide details of Leeds HB recipients who were not in receipt of eligible benefits during the qualifying period.

Local Welfare Support Scheme £600k

The council has a well-established Local Welfare Support scheme, which offers emergency and crisis support to people in need of food, fuel and essential items.

The LWSS is accessible by application and will therefore fulfil the requirement to offer an application process for at least a proportion of the funding. The allocation of funds to this scheme will ensure that people coming forward for crisis and emergency support who have not received support from other areas of scheme can also receive some support.

Direct cash awards to working-age Council Tax Support (CTS) recipients £2,880,070

It is proposed that cash awards are made via the Post Office Payout Scheme. Letters containing a barcode will be sent directly to households and these can be exchanged for cash at the Post Office upon provision of identification. This scheme has been used successfully during previous Household Support Fund initiatives.

Awards of £70 would be sent to all working-age households who are eligible for CTS on 28th November 2022. This will be approximately 43,000 households. Recipients will be encouraged to use the award to help them reduce their energy bills.

There are currently 16,825 households with children claiming CTS and a total of 30,795 children on those claims. There are 11,832 working-age households receiving CTS who are eligible for the severe or enhanced disability premium.

Under this proposal, Pensioner households in receipt of CTS will not receive a voucher, however low-income pensioner households will be eligible Winter Fuel Payment of £200 to £300 this winter. In addition to this, they will receive an additional £300 pensioner cost of living payment. Furthermore, pensioner households in receipt of Pension Credit were eligible for the £650 cost of living payment and pensioner households in receipt of CTS did receive a £100 Household Support Fund payment earlier this year. Any pensioners in emergency need will still be eligible for support from the Local Welfare Support Fund and the third sector support.

Third Sector support £1.3m

Through the Covid Winter/ Local Support Grants and the last two tranches of the Household Support Fund, a proportion of the funding has been used to support third sector organisations and charities in the city. This ensures that people in vulnerable households who do not engage with the Council receive support. It is proposed that approximately £1.3m be made available through organisations including:

- The Leeds Food Aid Network
- Voluntary Action Leeds
- Forum Central
- Charities able to support with fuel and energy, food and household items

Conversations with partner organisations will be undertaken to ensure they are to meet the criteria of the scheme and the monitoring requirements within the timescales.

Additional payments for people claiming Discretionary Housing Payments £220k

Throughout the previous Household Support Fund initiatives, people claiming Discretionary Housing Payments because of financial hardship were assessed for further support and awarded a £200 cash payment via the Cash perks scheme. This scheme was well received. It is proposed that this scheme is renewed until April 2023.

Children's Services £1m

It is anticipated that the majority of the funding will be used to support Foster Carers, however there may also be scope to offer support to Care Leavers and through Section 17 funding. More detailed proposals will be brought forward for approval in due course.

Emergency Support to Housing Leeds tenants £300k

In exceptional cases of genuine emergency, where existing housing support schemes do not meet this exceptional need, the HSF can be used to support housing costs. Housing Officers who identify tenants in financial crisis will be able to credit payments to tenants within the scope of the above criteria. This may include tenants with high debts/rent arrears and a sudden loss of income and tenants who have suffered fire/flood damage.

Emergency Fund £148k

This fund will be reserved to allow a degree of flexibility, reduce any risk of overspend and meet the needs of any individuals or groups who need support and do not qualify under the above schemes.

Administration- £200k

Less than 3% of the total funding will be used to administer the various schemes. Administration costs will predominantly cover the cost of staffing and post office charges.

What impact will this proposal have?

- 12 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 October 2022 and April 2023.
- 13 Approximately 40% of the funding will support working age households in receipt of Council Tax Support. This will ensure that working age households on the lowest incomes in the city receive support directly, without the requirement for an application process.
- 14 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.

15 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.

How does this proposal impact the three pillars of the Best City Ambition?

Health and Wellbeing

Inclusive Growth

Zero Carbon

What consultation and engagement has taken place?

Wards affected:

Have ward members been consulted?

Yes

No

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

What are the resource implications?

17 The grant funding guidance allows the Council to allocate a specified amount of funding to cover administration costs of the scheme.

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

18 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.

What are the legal implications?

19 A Key Decision (D55289) was taken in May 2022 to accept Household Support Fund monies from April to the end of September 2022 along with any further extensions of funding for the Household Support Fund. Therefore, a Significant Operational Decision is now required to accept this extension to the funding and agree how the funding is allocated.

20 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.

Options, timescales and measuring success

What other options were considered?

21 None

How will success be measured?

22 The HSF will be distributed in full to vulnerable households across the city in accordance with Government guidance.

What is the timetable and who will be responsible for implementation?

23 From October 2022 to 31st March 2023.

Appendices

- None

Background papers

- Link to Key decision [Council and democracy \(leeds.gov.uk\)](https://leeds.gov.uk/council-and-democracy)