

# HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

## Decision Report

<b>Decision Maker:</b>	Executive Lead Member for Children's Services
<b>Date:</b>	14 May 2024
<b>Title:</b>	Department for Work and Pensions Household Support Fund April 2024 to September 2024
<b>Report From:</b>	Director of Children's Services

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### Purpose of this Report

1. The purpose of this report is to outline the proposed approach for allocation of £7,124,127 from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) Household Support Fund across Hampshire for the grant period April 2024 to September 2024. This report seeks approval from the Executive Lead Member for six months of spend and grant funding to organisations in support of vulnerable households via the connect4communities programme.
2. The DWP expectation is that the grant should primarily be used to support households in the most need, particularly those not eligible for the other support Government has recently made available but who are nevertheless in need. 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 who would otherwise struggle with energy bills, food and water bills.
3. Whilst immediate needs should be prioritised, Local Authorities are encouraged to use the Fund to provide support that has a long-term sustainable impact, for example household items that would reduce bills in the long term. This can also include support with income maximisation through advice and signposting to benefit, debt and employment services.

### Recommendations

4. It is recommended that the Executive Lead Member for Children's Services approves the following grants totalling £4,728,768:
  - a discretionary grant of £1,185,742 be available for schools, colleges and early years settings as described in paragraphs 20 to 23 of the report;
  - grants to a total value of £1,835,527 are distributed to District and Borough Councils across Hampshire, such that they can provide one £25 food

voucher to households in receipt of council tax support and £40 to households in receipt of housing benefit only, as described in paragraphs 32 to 33 of the report;

- funding to organisations that support unpaid carers and young carers in Hampshire up to the value of £421,250, inclusive of £26,250 administrative costs during the six-month period;
  - a grant of £483,569 is made available to Citizens Advice to support the most vulnerable households in Hampshire with utility costs and eligibility checking, supporting 2,800 households;
  - £525,525 is distributed to District and Borough councils to support households with exceptional housing costs during the Funding Period in accordance with paragraphs 47 to 51 of the report;
  - a grant to Hampshire Library Service of £57,155 to extend and develop its current community offer including signposting to relevant services, chat about groups for the elderly and infirm and the provision of warm and welcome resources and sanitary products;
  - a grant of £220,000 to the Environment Centre for providing direct guidance and support to households of any tenure on a range of energy-related topics, which would be delivered through a mix of remote help as well as well as provision of practical household items, depending on need; and to provide capital grants to 75 households.
5. It is recommended that the Executive Lead Member for Children's Services approves the allocation of £824,100 to deliver or commission direct support to households as follows:
- £4,300 is allocated to enable one £100 food voucher to be distributed to 43 families open to children's social care teams whose children are educated other than at school to contribute to the cost-of-living pressures;
  - £48,400 is ringfenced to award food vouchers to the value of £100 to each Hampshire Foster Carer household with a child or children currently in placement to contribute to the increase in cost of living, and that £16,400 to be awarded to 164 families where there is a Looked After Child placed at home, to be provided in the form of one £100 food voucher per household;
  - food vouchers to the value of £100 are awarded to 946 eligible special guardians or connected carers where children are placed either on a temporary or permanent basis, and who are currently receiving financial support, at a total cost of £94,600;
  - £18,000 is distributed to children's social care district-based and out of hours teams across Hampshire, so that financial assistance can be given at their discretion to vulnerable families as described in paragraph 27 of the report;
  - £88,700 is awarded for individuals open to Care Leavers teams to receive two £50 food vouchers across the six-month period to contribute to the increased cost of living;
  - to distribute food vouchers to the total value of £21,500 to unaccompanied asylum seeking children aged 16-18 during the six-month period;
  - £56,200 is ringfenced to provide one £100 food voucher to families open to the Disabled Children's Team and £476,000 to provide direct fuel support

to 8,000 adults open to social care not in residential accommodation, those that do not have any care and vulnerable adults who present in crisis at the front door to Adult and Health Care services.

6. It is recommended that the Executive Lead Member for Children's Services delegates authority to the Director of Children's Services to award grants up to the total value of £1,395,000 in respect of the following initiatives, and in accordance with the grant criteria as set out in paragraphs 13 and 14, in consultation with the Executive Lead Member:
  - award up to £125,000 to organisations best placed to deliver advice services, which may include Citizens Advice and community-based organisations;
  - award £720,000 through grants for organisations who wish to support vulnerable residents county-wide or within their local area with food and fuel poverty and wish to apply for a community grant. In addition, this allocation would enable applications to be made for a 'crisis grant' whereby professionals working with vulnerable individuals can make applications for support, for example in respect of those struggling with one-off financial shocks or unforeseen events;
  - approve grant awards to organisations for the delivery of community pantry network schemes and to develop sustainable approaches to food support up to the value of £550,000 throughout the Funding Period.
7. It is recommended that the Executive Lead Member for Children's Services approves £176,259 to be retained by the County Council, in accordance with the grant guidance, to meet the costs of administering the Household Support Fund between April and September 2024.
8. It is recommended that the Executive Lead Member delegates approval to the Director of Children's Services to approve the reallocation of any Household Support Fund remaining or underspent funds from initiatives set out in paragraphs 4 to 6 to organisations delivering services that meet the criteria of the grant in consultation with the Executive Lead Member.

### **Executive Summary**

9. This report seeks to detail the proposed approach and allocation of funds for the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) Household Support Fund six-month extension across Hampshire. A key aim for the connect4communities programme will be to continue to support sustainable and environmentally beneficial food poverty initiatives. In addition to direct energy support, this will also enable us to further support with the increasing energy costs by freeing up household income which can be allocated to utility bills.
10. Although the grant has no ringfenced spend relating to types of households, the DWP grant guidance stresses 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, larger families, single-person households, and those struggling with one-off financial

shocks or unforeseen events. The proposed Hampshire offer has initiatives in place to support these target cohorts.

### **Contextual information**

11. On 6 March 2024, the Government announced, as part of its Spring Budget, that the Household Support Fund (HSF) would be extended for six months from 1 April 2024 to 30 September 2024, with a further £500m of national funding.
12. The final guidance relating to the fifth iteration of The Fund was shared with local authorities on 26 March 2024 ([Household Support Fund: guidance for local councils - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/household-support-fund-guidance-for-local-councils) (www.gov.uk)). The grant determination confirms that Hampshire County Council's allocation is £7,124,127, to be spent between 1 April 2024 and 30 September 2024. Despite being a grant extension, any grant underspend from the grant relating to the previous period cannot be carried forward and there are some changes to the grant guidance.
13. The DWP's expectation is that the grant should primarily be used to meet immediate needs and help those who are struggling to afford household essentials including energy and water bills, food, and wider essentials. Local Authorities can also use the funding to support households with housing costs where existing housing support does not meet this need, and to supplement support with signposting and advice.
14. Whilst immediate needs should be prioritised, for this round of funding, the guidance encourages Local Authorities to use The Fund to provide support that has a long term sustainable impact, for example household items such as insulating a hot water tank, fitting draft excluders to a front door, or replacing energy inefficient lightbulbs which would reduce bills in the long-term. This can also include support with income maximisation through advice and signposting to benefit, debt and employment services.
15. Local Authorities have discretion on how to identify and support those most in need, adopting the principle of working together with District Councils and third-party organisations including, where necessary and appropriate, other local services and charities. The Fund is intended to support a wide range of low-income households in need, including families with children of all ages, pensioners, unpaid carers, care leavers and disabled people, larger families, single-person households, and those struggling with one-off financial shocks or unforeseen events.
16. Local Authorities are expected to deliver support through a variety of routes, including proactive support; application-based support; or issuing grants. As part of the offer, there is a requirement for all Local Authorities to operate at least a part of their scheme on an application basis. This means residents should have the opportunity to come forward to ask for support.

17. Local Authorities are expected to offer support throughout the duration of The Fund period and must make public their plans for The Fund on their website, including how and when they intend to deliver the application-based portion of their scheme. Local Authorities are also expected to advertise the scheme through various channels, and not just online.

### **The Proposed Hampshire Offer**

18. The following sections of the report outline the proposed Hampshire offer for the grant period April to the end of September 2024. All proposals are in accordance with the grant guidance as set out in paragraphs 13 and 14.

### **Proactive support to vulnerable households**

#### **19. Low-income households with children**

20. It is proposed that a discretionary grant of £1,185,742 be available for schools, colleges and early years settings such that the funding would be available to support vulnerable families during the Funding Period.
21. The value of the discretionary grant allocation to each setting would be based on the number of children on roll, and for schools, the number of benefits-related free school meal eligible children there are. The discretionary grant is not means tested and is not specifically for those in receipt of benefits. Schools, colleges and early years settings have the discretion to support families they recognise as being in need, for example low paid working parents who seek support. Support may be provided through a food voucher or for wider essentials such as warm clothing, white goods and/or blankets.
22. Settings can apply for a discretionary grant to enable them to assist those families most in need, as intake and need may change throughout the year. Any schools that require additional funding over and above the amount allocated can apply for additional funding through the Community Grant Scheme outlined in paragraphs 54 to 56.
23. The element of the discretionary grant relating to the free school meal eligible children is for schools only and is not available for schools that had over 15% of their income held as balances over three years as at the end of 2023/24.
24. There are 43 children open to children's social care teams who are educated other than at school in Hampshire, who would otherwise have been eligible for free school meals. It is proposed that £4,300 is allocated to enable a £100 food voucher to be distributed to 43 families open to children's social care teams whose children are educated other than at school to contribute to the cost-of-living pressures.
25. Hampshire County Council has 484 foster carers with a child in placement supporting some of the most vulnerable children in Hampshire. In recognition of this, approval is sought for £48,400 to award food vouchers to the value of

£100 to each Hampshire Foster Carer with a child or children currently in placement to contribute to the increase in cost of living, and that approval is also sought for £16,400 to be awarded to 164 families where there is a Looked After Child placed at home, to be provided in the form of one £100 voucher per household.

26. There are children currently placed with connected carers either on a temporary or permanent basis or under Special Guardianship Orders where the Council provides an element of financial assistance that is usually means tested. It is proposed that food vouchers to the value of £100 are awarded to 946 eligible special guardians or connected carers at a total cost of £94,600.
27. Children's social care teams provide a range of support to families in need and in crisis. Approval is sought to enable £18,000 to be distributed to children's social care district-based and out of hours teams across Hampshire. The grant will be used for discretionary assistance, according to the presenting financial needs of the families they support who may be receiving early help, subject to Child in Need Plans or Child Protection Plans. Enabling this discretionary support could provide an immediate response for families and support them in achieving desired outcomes, and could take the form of food vouchers, contributions to clothing, transport or warm packs for example. This could support up to 720 households.
28. **Care Leavers**
29. It is proposed that £88,700 is awarded for individuals open to the Care Leavers teams to receive two £50 food vouchers across the six-month period to contribute to the increased cost of living. As per the other targeted groups, care leavers will also be able to access the other forms of support on offer, such as the community pantry network outlined in paragraphs 58 to 62 and utility support and advice outlined in paragraphs 42 to 46. This will benefit 887 care leavers and post-16 children in supported lodging.
30. **Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children**
31. There are 215 unaccompanied asylum-seeking children aged between 16 and 18 who could benefit from financial support. It is proposed to distribute food vouchers up to the value of £21,500 during the Funding Period.
32. **Pensioners, low-income households and households that are not in receipt of other government support**
33. It is proposed that grants to a total value of £1,835,527, including £114,592 for voucher production and distribution costs, are distributed to District and Borough Councils across Hampshire, such that they can provide one £25 food voucher to households in receipt of council tax support and £40 to households in receipt of housing benefit only. As per the DWP guidance, those on housing benefits only are being targeted because they are ineligible for other Government support with the cost of living. This support will benefit

nearly 65,500 households across Hampshire.

#### **34. Unpaid carers and young carer support**

35. The most recent census data from 2021 shows 117,000 people in Hampshire who identified as carers. People with caring responsibilities may be facing acute challenges incurred through fulfilling these responsibilities for vulnerable citizens. For example, they may have additional heating, water or transport costs. In addition, a national survey of young carers by the Carers Trust in 2023 found that 57% of young carers reported that the cost of living was impacting on their families.

36. It is proposed to grant funding to organisations that support unpaid carers and young carers in Hampshire up to the value of £421,250, including £26,250 of administrative costs during the six-month period.

#### **37. Those with disabilities**

38. Disabled people in particular may be facing acute challenges to meet additional needs 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.

39. For children with disabilities, we will target children that have met the threshold to be open to our Disabled Children's Team, working with our social care teams and organisations to deliver direct support. There are currently 562 children open to our Disabled Children's Team.

40. For adults with disabilities, we will target adults that have met the threshold for our Adult Health and Care social care teams. Within this cohort, adults that do not live in residential care will be targeted for support. There are around 7,500 adults with disabilities open to social care that are not in residential accommodation and just over 500 who do not have any care provision in place that would benefit from this grant.

41. It is proposed to allocate £56,200 to provide one £100 food voucher to families open to the Disabled Children's Team and £476,000, inclusive of £16,000 administrative costs to provide direct fuel support to adults open to social care not in residential accommodation, those that do not have any care, and vulnerable adults who present in crisis at the front door to Adult and Health Care services.

#### **Self-referral Applications**

#### **42. Utility support**

43. It is proposed that a grant of £483,569 is made available to Citizens Advice, which includes £66,319 to deliver the administration of this scheme in order to administer the payments, carry out eligibility and fraud checks and to provide debt relief support, if applicable. This will support the most vulnerable households in Hampshire with utility costs during the six-month period, supporting 2,800 households. County council officers will continue to work with Citizens Advice to target support towards energy costs, reduce the potential for double funding and providing the financial support alongside broader support and advice. Citizens Advice is also well placed to undertake ID and benefits checks to mitigate potential risks of fraudulent claims.
44. Whilst there are providers on the market for providing fuel vouchers for pre-payment meters, there is a fee payable for each voucher and there is not yet an offer available for paying fuel bills that are not pre-payment. Conversely there is a wide market of providers who supply easy to use food vouchers with no fee, thus through the use of food vouchers the programme is freeing up more disposable income which would be available for fuel costs.
- 45. Advice relating to food or fuel poverty**
46. It is proposed that that £125,000 be ringfenced to commission and support advice on budgeting, finances, maximising income as well as accessing other help. Council officers will work with local communities to identify those organisations best placed to deliver such advice services, which may include Citizens Advice and community-based organisations such as outreach from DWP job seekers support in Hampshire's libraries and community pantries. Approval is sought from the Executive Lead Member to delegate authority to the Director of Children's Services to work with such organisations and grant will be provided on terms to be agreed by the Director of Children's Services and in accordance with the grant criteria as set out in paragraphs 13 and 14.
- 47. Exceptional housing support**
48. The grant guidance states that in exceptional cases of genuine emergency and where existing housing schemes do not meet the exceptional need, support for housing costs can be met. It is proposed that £525,525, including £25,025 for administrative costs, is distributed to District and Borough councils as set out in the table below to support households with exceptional housing costs during the Funding Period.



**Table One: Exceptional housing support District and Borough allocations**

	<b>Exceptional housing (£)</b>
Basingstoke and Dean Borough Council	57,750
East Hampshire District Council	62,475
Eastleigh Borough Council	48,825
Fareham Borough Council	31,500
Gosport Borough Council	33,075
Hart District Council	30,975
Havant Borough Council	73,500
New Forest District Council	47,250
Rushmoor Borough Council	44,100
Test Valley Borough Council	50,925
Winchester City Council	45,150
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£525,525</b>

49. In the case of providing financial support around housing, eligibility for Discretionary Housing Payments (DHPs) must first be considered before emergency housing support is offered through the Household Support Fund. Similarly, 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).
50. 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 Discretionary Housing Payments. However, support with rent arrears is not the primary intent of the fund and should not be the focus of spend.
51. The Household Support Fund should not be used to provide housing support on an ongoing basis or to support unsustainable tenancies, nor can it be used to provide mortgage support, though homeowners could still qualify for the other elements of the Fund (such as food, energy, 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.

### **Community based support**

52. **Infrastructure grants**
53. To enable organisations providing support across Hampshire that meet the DWP criteria as set out in paragraphs 13 and 14, it is proposed that grants

are awarded as follows:

- 53.1. Hampshire Library Service provides essential resources to the most vulnerable within our communities, including after school clubs, signposting to relevant services, chat about groups for the elderly and infirm including those with disabilities, additional needs and those living with dementia. It is recommended that £57,155 is awarded to the Library Service to extend and develop its current offer, including provision of warm and welcome resources and sanitary products.
- 53.2. DWP is encouraging Local Authorities 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 energy inefficient lightbulbs or white goods. The intention of this is to provide sustainable support which results in immediate and potentially long-lasting savings for the household. The Environment Centre supports those in most need with affordable warmth related matters and has seen more than a 50% increase in demand for affordable warmth support over the last two years. It is proposed that a grant of £220,000 is awarded to the Environment Centre to continue and enhance this provision by providing direct guidance and support to households of any tenure on a range of energy-related topics. This would be delivered through a mix of remote help, as well as provision of practical household items to reduce energy or help them to keep warm, depending on need; and to provide grants to 75 households on means tested benefits or low income and vulnerable for essential heating and hot water works, such as repair or replacement of boilers.

#### **54. Community grants**

55. It is proposed that £720,000 is made available through grants for organisations who wish to support vulnerable residents county-wide or within their local area with food and fuel poverty and wish to apply for a community grant. In addition, this allocation would enable applications to be made for a 'crisis grant' whereby professionals working with vulnerable individuals such as: social workers; keyworkers delivering early help and family support; housing officers; health visitors; and housing support officers can make applications for support, for example in respect of those struggling with one-off financial shocks or unforeseen events.
56. Any funded support must meet the DWP grant criteria as set out in paragraphs 13 and 14, however the fund will be flexible and responsive to local needs as and when they are identified. This community grant fund will also provide support to households who may not be able to access other initiatives set out in this report, for example, period poverty stations, baby banks, community cooking lessons through to food parcels and cooking equipment.

57. It is proposed that the Executive Lead Member delegates authority to the Director of Children’s Services to approve community grants to organisations delivering services that meet the criteria of the grant for targeted support for those in need, in consultation with the Executive Lead Member up to the total value of £720,000.

**58. Community pantries and food support schemes**

59. Community pantries work on the principle of giving those in need the opportunity to have a ‘helping hand’ by getting food at a lower rate on a weekly basis. Items found in the pantry will be a range of fresh, frozen and general foods which will change on a weekly basis. Access to the community pantry is by way of membership and, for a small weekly contribution, members receive food to a significantly higher value than if purchased in local shops or the supermarket. For example, members are charged a nominal sum of £5.00 per shop and receive £15 plus worth of goods. Community pantries will be encouraged to provide a delivery service for those who are not able to come and shop for whatever reason.

60. There are 25 fixed venue connect4communities pantries in Hampshire and 10 mobile larders, of which nine are based in the New Forest. There is a current membership of over 13,000 households which continues to increase. The map below shows where the pantries are located. In addition, there are an estimated 80 food banks in Hampshire providing support for those in greater need.

**Map One: location of connect4communities pantries and larders in Hampshire**



61. It is proposed that funding is provided to continue to support the network of community pantries to provide sustainable alternatives to free school meal vouchers and support to any household that is in need. This will be through support to fund the increase in cost of food and gaps from a decrease in donated food; food vouchers for those unable to afford the membership fee; support of a food hub scheme; and a discretionary fund to support households with home, family and cooking essentials (not including white goods). Due to the ongoing food poverty being experienced within the local population, it is proposed that this allocation is also used to support other organisations such as food banks or local food partnerships wishing to build sustainable approaches to food support.
62. Approval is sought from the Executive Lead Member for Children's Services to delegate authority to the Director of Children's Services to approve grant awards to organisations for the delivery of such schemes up to the value of £550,000 throughout the Funding Period. Through the grant, we will also continue to work with community organisations to broaden the support offer to include wraparound services such as health services, employment and financial support, and to develop sustainable approaches to food support.
- 63. Administration and scheme evaluation costs**
64. The DWP Household Support Fund guidance allows for reasonable administration costs to be funded from the grant allocation such that enable local authorities, and their partners to deliver the programme. Authorities are able to use a limited proportion of their allocations to conduct local evaluation of their scheme, considering evidence of impact and informing the best use of funding within the local area.
65. The County Council intends to use up to £176,259 (2.5%), in addition to partners' administration costs set out in paragraphs 33, 36, 41 and 48 to cover direct programme delivery costs, and the cost of evaluation activities.
66. Extensive communications are planned to ensure that a range of professional agencies and partner organisations are aware of the connect4communities programme and can signpost vulnerable households to the support being offered. It is proposed that the existing Hampshire County Council Children's Services and General Helplines are used to receive any telephone enquiries, as has been the case for previous Household Support Fund programmes.
67. Furthermore, the existing connect4communities directory will be further developed so that organisations and community groups can publish details of any local opportunities or support they wish to share. This is hosted on the Hampshire Family Information and Services Hub:  
(FISH: <https://fish.hants.gov.uk/kb5/hampshire/directory/home.page>)
68. This directory enables residents of Hampshire to search by postcode to identify where they may be able to access financial and other support including subsidised food. For Hampshire County Council and partners, this

will provide a way to capture offers of support beyond those coordinated directly by the connect4communities programme, and an effective way of signposting residents to available support.

## Finance

69. A summary of the proposed allocation of funding across the initiatives to be delivered through the connect4communities scheme, funded by the Household Support Fund is set out in Table 2.

**Table 2: Proposed funding allocations**

<b>Household Support Fund - Connect4Communities</b>				
	<b>Proposed budget (£)</b>	<b>Grant (£)</b>	<b>Direct delivery (£)</b>	<b>Delegated approval (£)</b>
<b>Proactive support to vulnerable households</b>				
Low-income households with children	1,367,442	1,185,742	181,700	
Care Leavers	88,700		88,700	
Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children	21,500		21,500	
Pensioners, low-income households and households that are not in receipt of other government support	1,835,527	1,835,527		
Unpaid Carers and Young Carer support	421,250	421,250		
Those with disabilities	532,200		532,200	
<b>Self-Referral Applications</b>				
Utility support	483,569	483,569		
Advice relating to food or fuel poverty	125,000			125,000
Exceptional housing support	525,525	525,525		
<b>Community Based Support</b>				
Infrastructure Grants	277,155	277,155		
Community Grants	720,000			720,000
Community pantries and food support schemes	550,000			550,000
<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>6,947,868</b>	<b>4,728,768</b>	<b>824,100</b>	<b>1,395,000</b>
Administration Cost	176,259			
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>7,124,127</b>			

70. Approval is sought that the Executive Lead Member delegates approval to the Director of Children's Services to approve the reallocation of any Household Support Fund remaining or underspent funds from initiatives set out in this report to organisations delivering services that meet the criteria of the grant in consultation with the Executive Lead Member.
71. This grant is for a defined six-month period, with no expectation of recurrent funding. There is therefore an element of risk that without further funding after the grant period ends, services may experience an increase in demand from households in crisis. Mitigations include the community pantries and work to ensure that, where appropriate, projects receiving community grant funding can be sustainable.

## **Performance**

72. Authorities are required to send DWP a delivery plan outlining their intentions for the Fund, clearly setting out priorities and approach for use of the Fund and to demonstrate the ways in which they intend to allocate their funding.
73. All funding granted to third party organisations (including schools, colleges, early years providers and district and borough councils) will be supported by a grant agreement setting out the conditions of the funding as well as reporting requirements.
74. Third party organisations will be required to report to the Council on how they have spent the funding provided, in line with the DWP grant criteria.
75. Authorities are required to comply with DWP's reporting and Management Information (MI) requirements. The management information required by the DWP for this grant requires a granular data return from grant recipients. For each award as well as the spend and volumes, the number of households is also required. For example, if one family received £15 food vouchers from their school for their two children this will be reported as a total spend of £30, with a volume of 2 for 1 household.
76. Spend information is required by:  
Household composition (household with children, with pensioners, with a disabled person or other).  
Category (energy and water, food excluding free school meal support in the holidays, free school meal support in the holidays, essentials linked to energy and water, wider essentials, advice services or housing costs).  
Type of support (vouchers, cash, third party, tangible item, or other).  
Access route (application based, proactive support, other).

## **Consultation and Equalities**

77. Consultation and engagement with partners has been undertaken as part of developing and delivering the connect4communities programme.

78. An Equalities Impact Assessment has been completed, which will be published in advance of the decision day and is contained at Appendix A.
79. The proposals will have a positive impact on those with protected characteristics associated with age, disability, race, and poverty. Initiatives include open access as well as targeted support, and funding will be allocated across District geographies to reflect need across the county.

### **Climate Change Impact Assessment**

80. Hampshire County Council utilises two decision-making tools to assess the carbon emissions and resilience impacts of its projects and decisions. These tools provide a clear, robust, and transparent way of assessing how projects, policies and initiatives contribute towards the County Council's climate change targets of being carbon neutral and resilient to the impacts of a 2°C temperature rise by 2050. This process ensures that climate change considerations are built into everything the Authority does.
81. A full assessment of climate change vulnerability was not completed as the initial vulnerability assessment showed that the project is at minimal risk from the climate vulnerabilities because it is largely administrative and short-term in nature.

### **Conclusion**

82. The Household Support Fund is intended to cover a wide range of low-income households in need. The proposed Hampshire offer has initiatives in place to support target cohorts, those in crisis, and in support of sustainable approaches to food or fuel support.

**REQUIRED CORPORATE AND LEGAL INFORMATION:**

**Links to the Strategic Plan**

<b>Hampshire maintains strong and sustainable economic growth and prosperity:</b>	Yes
<b>People in Hampshire live safe, healthy and independent lives:</b>	Yes
<b>People in Hampshire enjoy a rich and diverse environment:</b>	Yes
<b>People in Hampshire enjoy being part of strong, inclusive communities:</b>	Yes

**Other Significant Links**

<b>Links to previous Member decisions:</b>	
	<u>Date</u>
<a href="#">Department for Work and Pensions Household Support Fund April 2023 to March 2024</a>	11 May 2023
<a href="#">Department for Work and Pensions Household Support Fund October 2022 to March 2023.</a>	22 November 2022
<a href="#">DWP Household Support Fund April – September 2022</a>	17 May 2022
<a href="#">Department for Work and Pensions Household Support Fund – Vouchers for Easter 2022 School Holiday</a>	1 April 2022
<a href="#">COVID Household Support Fund – Vouchers for October 2021 Half Term</a>	18 October 2021
<b>Direct links to specific legislation or Government Directives</b>	
<u>Title</u>	<u>Date</u>

**Section 100 D - Local Government Act 1972 - background documents**

The following documents discuss facts or matters on which this report, or an important part of it, is based and have been relied upon to a material extent in the preparation of this report. (NB: the list excludes published works and any documents which disclose exempt or confidential information as defined in the Act.)

<u>Document</u>	<u>Location</u>
None	



## **EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

### **Equality Duty**

The County Council has a duty under Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 ('the Act') to have due regard in the exercise of its functions to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by or under the Act with regard to the protected characteristics as set out in section 4 of the Act (age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation);
- Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic within section 149(7) of the Act (age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation) and those who do not share it;
- Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic within section 149(7) of the Act (see above) and persons who do not share it.

Due regard in this context involves having due regard in particular to:

- The need to remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic that are connected to that characteristic;
- Take steps to meet the needs of persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of persons who do not share it;
- Encourage persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity in which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.

### **Equalities Impact Assessment:**

## Equality Impact Assessment

### What is an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) and why does the County Council do them?

The [Public Sector Equality Duty](#) (PSED) is an obligation within the [Equality Act 2010](#) ("the Act"), which asks public authorities, like Hampshire County Council, to give 'due regard' to equality considerations, in particular to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

This includes assessing the impact of policies and practices on individuals and communities with a protected characteristic, as defined in the Act and some other specific groups. The County Council uses EIAs to ensure it has paid 'due regard' to equalities considerations when there are changes to a service or policy, a new project or certain decisions.

EIA author	Position & Department	Contact
James Atkins	Project Manager  Children's Services	james.atkins@hants.gov.uk  Tel:01962 845696

Title:	New round of Department of Work and Pensions - Household Support Fund April to September 2024
Related EIAs:	EIA Number: 414

EIA for Savings Programme:	No
Service affected	Support provided to vulnerable households through the Connect4Communities programme
Description of the service/policy/project/project phase	The Household Support Fund is a continuation of the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) provision of funding to Local Authorities to provide financial support for food, water and energy bills. The Fund is intended to support those who are vulnerable or find themselves in financial hardship being impacted by the inflationary challenges and the cost of living. It covers a range of low-income households in need including families with children of all ages, pensioners, unpaid carers, care leavers and disabled people. Hampshire County Council (HCC) will work with a wide variety of partners and other organisations and support the development and delivery of a range of initiatives to support those most vulnerable. The DWP provide grant guidance to Local Authorities.
New/changed service/policy/project	The DWP will provide a further £7.124m funding to HCC to support vulnerable households with costs of food, energy, water bills and housing costs between April 2024 and September 2024. The grant conditions do not ringfence proportions of the funding for specific cohorts, however there is a requirement for at least a part of local schemes to operate on an application basis, enabling residents the opportunity to come forward to request support. Working with schools, colleges, and early years providers the proposed programme will deliver financial support to a wide range of vulnerable families between April 2024 and September 2024. Through grant funding, the programme will also support the development and delivery of a range of community led projects to meet local needs across Hampshire. A variety of initiatives have been identified working with our local community partners, to ensure there is year round support available.

Engagement
The use of the grant is constrained to within the criteria set by the Department for Work & Pensions and approved by Executive Member.

Stakeholder discussions have informed the proposals.

#### Equalities considerations - Impact Assessment

#### Age

Impact on public	Positive
Impact on staff	Positive
Rationale	<p>Children, families, individuals and pensioners who are vulnerable or find themselves in financial hardship: this programme, with support from signposting agencies, will help to identify and support those people to ensure they have access to food and heating over the coming year, as well as other basics such as cooking facilities, bedding or other essentials to keep warm over the coming winter.</p> <p>Discretionary funding allocated to over 600 schools, colleges and early years settings is not means tested, so settings can support families they recognise as being in need.</p> <p>Food vouchers will be awarded to over 500 Hampshire Foster Carers supporting some of Hampshire's most vulnerable children, as well as vouchers for families with open Special Guardianship Orders and Connected Carers and who receive financial support from the council.</p>
Mitigation	

#### Disability

Impact on public	Positive
Impact on staff	Neutral

Rationale	<p>Children, families, individuals and pensioners with disabilities who are vulnerable or find themselves in hardship can via this programme and with signposting from agencies, be identified and helped to ensure they have access to food and heating, as well as other basics which may be identified such as cooking facilities, bedding or other essentials.</p> <p>There are currently 560 children open to the Council's Disabled Children's Team, who may receive support via our social care teams or from working with provider organisations to deliver direct support.</p> <p>Adults with disabilities who have met the threshold for support from Adult Health and Care social care teams may benefit from this grant. There are around 7,500 adults with disabilities open to social care that are not in residential accommodation and just over 500 who do not have any care provision in place.</p> <p>Any adults with disabilities struggling with fuel costs will be able to access support from Citizens Advice. In the previous round of Household Support Fund, 37% of the support provided by Citizens Advice was accessed by households with a disability.</p> <p>Support will also be available for eligible unpaid and young carers.</p>
Mitigation	

## Gender Reassignment

Impact on public	Neutral
Impact on staff	Neutral
Rationale	<p>There will be no change in benefits to this protected characteristic group, over and above the current circumstances and over other protected characteristics groups.</p>
Mitigation	

## Pregnancy and Maternity

Impact on public	Neutral
Impact on staff	Neutral
Rationale	There will be no change in benefits to this protected characteristic group, over and above the current circumstances and over other protected characteristics groups.
Mitigation	

## Race

Impact on public	Positive
Impact on staff	Neutral
Rationale	<p>According to the Office of National Statistics in October 2022, around two-thirds (69%) of Black or Black British adults and (59%) Asian or Asian British adults reported finding it difficult to afford their energy bills, compared with around 4 in 10 (44%) white adults.</p> <p>Community grants will provide opportunities for organisations working within ethnic minority communities to apply for funds to provide support. Additionally, through delivery partners and the communications planned, we can raise awareness of the connect4communities programme and signpost ethnic minority households to the support being offered.</p>
Mitigation	

## Religion or Belief

Impact on public	Neutral
Impact on staff	Neutral
Rationale	There will be no change in benefits to this protected characteristic group, over and above the current circumstances and over other protected characteristics groups.
Mitigation	

### Sex

Impact on public	Neutral
Impact on staff	Neutral
Rationale	There will be no change in benefits to this protected characteristic group, over and above the current circumstances and over other protected characteristics groups.
Mitigation	

### Sexual Orientation

Impact on public	Neutral
Impact on staff	Neutral
Rationale	There will be no change in benefits to this protected characteristic group, over and above the current circumstances and over other protected characteristics groups.

Mitigation	

## Marriage and Civil Partnership

Impact on public	Neutral
Impact on staff	Neutral
Rationale	There will be no change in benefits to this protected characteristic group, over and above the current circumstances and over other protected characteristics groups.
Mitigation	

## Poverty

Impact on public	Positive
Impact on staff	Neutral
Rationale	<p>The Office for National Statistics reported in October 2022 that the proportion of all adults finding it difficult to afford their energy bills, rent or mortgage payments has increased through the year: almost half of adults (45%) who paid energy bills (compared with 40% in March to June 2022) and 30% (compared with 26% March to June 2022) paying rent or mortgages reported these being difficult to afford.</p> <p>Children, families, individuals and pensioners who are vulnerable or find themselves in financial hardship: this programme, with support from signposting agencies, will help to identify and support those people to ensure they have access to food and heating, as well as other basics such as cooking facilities, bedding or other essentials to keep warm.</p> <p>Professionals supporting households who find themselves in crisis will be able to apply for a</p>



	<p>crisis grant through the scheme.</p> <p>Exceptional housing support where existing schemes do not meet the need, may be available via District Councils.</p>
Mitigation	

## Rurality

Impact on public	Neutral
Impact on staff	Neutral
Rationale	<p>There will be no change in benefits to this protected characteristic group, over and above the current circumstances and over other protected characteristics groups.</p> <p>It is the intention to work with community organisations in all Hampshire districts to ensure there is a means to apply for support. Additionally, community grants can be applied for by organisations across the county.</p>
Mitigation	

Geographical Impact: All Hampshire

## Equality Statement

### Additional information:

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) Household Support Fund extension is targeted towards members of the public. There is no specific delivery aimed at staff, or required changes to working practices for our staff, therefore the impact for staff has been assessed as neutral.

This EIA accompanies a report to the Executive Lead Member of Children's Services on 14th May 2024.