

HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Decision Report

Decision Maker	Executive Lead Member for Children's Services
Date:	25 October 2024
Title:	Department for Work and Pensions Household Support Fund October 2024 to March 2025
Report From:	Director of Children's Services

Contact name: Sarah Snowdon, Assistant Director, Children's Services

Email: sarah.snowdon@hants.gov.uk

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 1 October 2024 to 31 March 2025. This report seeks approval from the Executive Lead Member for the programme approach enabling 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 the 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, disabled people, larger families, and single-person households, who may otherwise struggle with energy bills, food and water bills.
3. Whilst immediate needs should be prioritised, Local Authorities are able 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, as well as activity to build local resilience and prevent poverty.

Recommendations

4. It is recommended that the Executive Lead Member for Children's Services approves the following grants totalling £3,271,165:

a discretionary grant of £1,265,212 to be made available for schools, colleges and early years settings as described in paragraphs 20 to 22 of the report;

funding of £376,250 to organisations that support unpaid carers and £45,000 to organisations supporting young carers in Hampshire, inclusive of £26,250 administrative costs during the six-month period;

a grant of £482,964 to be made available to Citizens Advice East Hampshire to support the most vulnerable households in Hampshire with utility costs and eligibility checking, supporting 2,800 households, and £100,000 to deliver accompanying fuel poverty advice;

a grant of £110,736 to Citizens Advice Hampshire to deliver specialist resource targeting those who need extra help to navigate online application processes due to digital exclusion;

£455,963 is distributed to District and Borough councils to support households with exceptional housing costs during the Funding Period in accordance with paragraphs 50 to 53 of the report;

a grant to Hampshire Library Service of £75,040 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, warm spaces, 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 provision of practical household items, depending on need; and to provide capital grants to 75 households that are unable to afford essential repairs to heating systems; and

a grant of £140,000 to enable Adults' Health and Care to extend the community wellbeing service for six months.

5. It is recommended that the Executive Lead Member for Children's Services approves the allocation of £989,679 to deliver or commission direct support to households as follows:

£5,000 is allocated to enable one £100 food voucher to be distributed to 50 families open to children's social care teams whose children are educated other than at school to contribute to the cost-of-living pressures;

£52,000 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 £18,000 be awarded to 180 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 1,000 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 £100,000;

£40,000 to provide one £100 voucher per eligible household supported by Hampshire Youth Justice Service to access food support and address their immediate needs;

£25,000 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;

£100,000 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;

to distribute food vouchers to the total value of £23,000 to unaccompanied asylum seeking children aged between 16-18 during the six-month period; and

£70,000 is ringfenced to provide one £100 food voucher to families open to the Disabled Children's Team and £556,679, inclusive of £19,179 administrative costs, to provide direct fuel support to 5,400 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 Adults' 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 £2,473,854 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:

to approve the approach and any related grants to organisations best placed to deliver proactive support for other low-income households in need, up to the total value of £1,464,057;

award up to £39,264 to community-based organisations to deliver advice relating to food or fuel poverty;

to work with community organisations that act as referral points for household items, such as replacement of white goods, rugs and carpeting, supporting those who cannot afford to replace these items to award grants up to £120,000;

award £250,533 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; and

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 £600,000 throughout the Funding Period.

7. It is recommended that the Executive Lead Member for Children's Services approves up to £389,429 to be retained by the County Council, in accordance with the grant guidance, to meet the costs of administering the Household Support Fund between October 2024 and March 2025, including closure of the scheme in the event the Government do not continue it beyond March 2025.
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 7 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 the programme to provide further support with 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 cohorts.

Contextual information

11. On 2 September 2024, the Department for Work and Pensions issued a press release announcing that the Household Support Fund (HSF) would be extended for six months from 1 October 2024 to 31 March 2025, with a further £421m of national funding.
12. The final guidance relating to the sixth iteration of The Fund was shared with local authorities on 24 September 2024 ([Household Support Fund: guidance for local councils - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/128444/Household-Support-Fund-guidance-for-local-councils-2024.pdf) (www.gov.uk)). The grant determination confirms

that Hampshire County Council's allocation is £7,124,127, to be spent between 1 October 2024 and 31 March 2025, this allocation being the same as for the 1 April 2024 to 30 September 2024 grant period. Despite being informally considered to be a grant extension, it is a new grant subject to its own grant conditions. 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 provision with signposting, advice services and preventative support.
14. Whilst immediate needs should be prioritised, for this round of funding, the guidance enables Local Authorities to use The Fund to be used to prevent poverty locally and build local resilience. This could include support to individual households or wider support within the broader community, such as warm spaces. 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 such as charities and community groups. 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 have the ability 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 1 October 2024 to the end of March 2025. 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 £1,265,212 be allocated 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 is based on the number of children on roll, and for schools only, 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 most in need, for example low paid working parents who seek support. Support may be provided for example via a food voucher or for wider essentials such as warm clothing, white goods and/or blankets.

22. 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. There are 50 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 £5,000 is allocated to enable a £100 food voucher to be distributed to these families to contribute to the cost-of-living pressures.

24. Hampshire County Council has 520 foster carers with a child in placement supporting some of the most vulnerable children in Hampshire. In recognition of this, approval is sought for £52,000 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 £18,000 to be awarded to 180 families where there is a Looked After Child placed at home, to be provided in the form of one £100 voucher per household.

25. There are children currently placed with connected carers either on a temporary or permanent basis by way of a public law children act Order 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 1,000 eligible special guardians or connected carers at a total cost of £100,000.

26. There are currently 400 young people with whom Hampshire Youth Justice Service is working with, many of whom do not meet criteria or threshold for other forms of professional support or services. The Service assists these families to access food support and address their immediate needs. Approval is sought for £40,000 to provide one £100 voucher per eligible household supported by Hampshire Youth Justice Service.
27. Children's social care teams provide a range of support to families in need and in crisis. Approval is sought to enable £25,000 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 1,000 households.
28. Care Leavers
29. It is proposed that £100,000 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 60 to 63 and utility support and advice outlined in paragraphs 42 to 47. This will benefit 1000 care leavers and post-16 children in supported lodging.
30. Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children
31. There are 230 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 £23,000 during the Funding Period.
32. Unpaid carers and young carer support
33. 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.

34. It is proposed that grant funding of £376,250 is provided to organisations that support unpaid carers inclusive of £26,250 of administrative costs during the six-month period and grant awards to organisations supporting young carers in Hampshire totalling £45,000.
35. Those with disabilities
36. 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.
37. 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 700 children open to our Disabled Children's Team.
38. For adults with disabilities, we will target adults that have met the threshold for the council's Adults' 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 5,200 adults with disabilities open to social care that are not in residential accommodation and just over 200 who do not have any care provision in place that would benefit from this grant.
39. It is proposed to allocate £70,000 to provide one £100 food voucher to families open to the Disabled Children's Team and £556,679, inclusive of £19,179 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 Adults' and Health Care services.

Pensioners, low-income households and households that may not be in receipt of other government support:

40. In previous grant rounds this support has been via food voucher distribution by District and Borough Councils across Hampshire to specific groups of residents in receipt of certain benefits. Recipients may not necessarily have utilised their vouchers, and there will be households in need who did not meet the criteria. It is proposed that £1,464,057 is ringfenced to provide targeted support for other low-income households, with the delivery mechanism to be

determined following further review. Approval is sought for the Executive Lead Member to delegate authority to the Director of Children's Services to approve the approach and any related grants to organisations best placed to deliver proactive support for low-income households in need, in consultation with the Executive Lead Member up to the total value of £1,464,057.

Self-referral Applications:

41. Utility support

42. It is proposed that a grant of £482,964 is made available to Citizens Advice East Hampshire, which includes £64,812 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 1,400 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.

43. 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.

44. Advice relating to food or fuel poverty

45. DWP expects advice services to complement other support within the Fund for households most in need. It is proposed that that £250,000 be ringfenced to commission advice services on budgeting, finances, maximising income as well as accessing other help.

46. Approval is sought to award Citizen's Advice East Hampshire, on behalf of the 12 Local Offices, £100,000 to deliver fuel poverty advice across the county to applicants for Household Support Fund utility support, thus enabling opportunity for claiming other benefits and longer-term support. Digital exclusion has been evidenced as a barrier to accessing benefits and services, particularly for older adults, with 73% of those reporting digital exclusion being aged between 60 and 89 and 63% being disabled or having a long-term health condition. Approval is sought to award Citizen's Advice Hampshire £110,736 to provide additional specialist resource to support

those who need extra help navigating online application processes, via a mixture of office-based and outreach delivery.

47. Approval is sought from the Executive Lead Member to delegate authority to the Director of Children’s Services to work with community-based organisations to deliver the remaining advice services and grants up to £39,264 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.
48. Exceptional housing support
49. 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 £455,963, inclusive of £21,713 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. Where a District or Borough council has indicated that they are unable to utilise all their allocated exceptional housing, these funds have been incorporated in the proposed ringfence for community-based provision for white goods, flooring etc, as set out in paragraph 54.3, to ensure there is support across the county.

Table One: Exceptional housing support District and Borough allocations:

	Exceptional housing (£)
Basingstoke and Dean Borough Council	57,750
East Hampshire District Council	62,475
Eastleigh Borough Council	48,825
Fareham Borough Council	0
Gosport Borough Council	33,075
Hart District Council	15,488
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	22,575
TOTAL	£455,963

50. 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).

51. 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.
52. 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

53. Infrastructure grants
54. 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:
 - 54.1. 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 £75,040 is awarded to the Library Service to extend and develop its current offer, including provision of warm and welcome resources, warm spaces, and sanitary products.
 - 54.2. 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 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.

- 54.3. There are also community organisations and housing offices that act as referral points for household items, such as replacement white goods, beds, rugs and carpeting, supporting those who cannot afford to replace these items. Each round of Household Support Funding has seen consistent demand for this support, and it is proposed that an allocation of £120,000 is ringfenced for this support, and that approval is sought from the Executive Lead Member to delegate authority to the Director of Children's Services to work with such organisations to ensure provision across the county. 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.
- 54.4. Adults' Health and Care has been running a scheme with voluntary sector community wellbeing workers, who receive referrals from Older Adults social care teams, focus on providing preventative services including reducing food and fuel poverty, and are linked in with the Hampshire Social Prescribing Network. The grant will extend the community wellbeing worker offer to provide face to face support signposting to the most vulnerable older adults to support networks, such as accessing community pantries and Citizens Advice. It is recommended that £140,000 is awarded to Adults' Health and Care to extend the community wellbeing service, anticipated to support 440-660 older adults.

55. Community grants

56. It is proposed that £250,533 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 support officers; and health visitors can make applications for support, for example in respect of those struggling with one-off financial shocks or unforeseen events.
57. 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.

58. 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 £250,533.
59. Community pantries and food support schemes
60. 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.
61. There are 26 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:



62. 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.
63. 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 £600,000 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.
64. Administration and scheme evaluation costs
65. The DWP Household Support Fund guidance allows for reasonable administration costs to be funded from the grant allocation such that enable local authorities 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.

66. The County Council intends to use up to £389,429 (5.5%), in addition to partners' administration costs set out in paragraphs 34, 39, 42 and 49 to cover direct programme delivery costs, the cost of evaluation activities and any costs associated with the Government not continuing the scheme beyond March 2025.
67. 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.
68. 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>)
69. 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

70. 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:

Household Support Fund - Connect4Communities				
	Proposed budget (£)	Grant (£)	Direct delivery (£)	Delegated approval (£)
Proactive support to vulnerable households				
Low-income households with children	1,505,212	1,265,212	240,000	
Care Leavers	100,000		100,000	

Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children	23,000		23,000	
Unpaid Carers and Young Carer support	421,250	421,250		
Those with disabilities	626,679		626,679	
Pensioners, low-income households and households that are not in receipt of other government support	1,464,057			1,464,057
Self-Referral Applications:				
Utility support	482,964	482,964		
Advice relating to food or fuel poverty	250,000	210,736		39,264
Exceptional housing support	455,963	455,963		
Community Based Support:				
Infrastructure Grants	555,040	435,040		120,000
Community Grants	250,533			250,533
Community pantries and food support schemes	600,000			600,000
Sub Total	6,734,698	3,271,165	989,679	2,473,854
Administration Cost	389,429			
Grand Total	7,124,127			

71. It is sought that the Executive Lead Member delegates approval to the Director of Children's Services to agree 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.
72. 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

73. 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.
74. 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.
75. 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.
76. 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.
77. 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

78. Consultation and engagement with partners has been undertaken as part of developing and delivering the connect4communities programme.
79. An Equalities Impact Assessment has been completed, which will be published in advance of the decision day and is contained at Appendix A.
80. 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

81. 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.

82. 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

83. 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

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

Other Significant Links

Links to previous Member decisions:	
	<u>Date</u>
Department for Work and Pensions Household Support Fund - April 2024 to September 2024	14 May 2024
Department for Work and Pensions Household Support Fund April 2023 to March 2024	11 May 2023
Department for Work and Pensions Household Support Fund October 2022 to March 2023.	22 November 2022
DWP Household Support Fund April – September 2022	17 May 2022
Department for Work and Pensions Household Support Fund – Vouchers for Easter 2022 School Holiday	1 April 2022
COVID Household Support Fund – Vouchers for October 2021 Half Term	18 October 2021
Direct links to specific legislation or Government Directives	
<u>Title</u>	<u>Date</u>
1 October 2024 to 31 March 2025: Household Support Fund guidance for county councils and unitary authorities in England	27 September 2024

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.)

Document

Location

None

1. 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.

2. 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	james.atkins@hants.gov.uk
	Children's Services	Tel:

Title:	Department of Work and Pensions - Household Support Fund October 2024 to March 2025
Related EIAs:	EIA Number: 609
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 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 £7.124m funding to HCC to support vulnerable households with costs of food, energy, water bills and housing costs between October 2024 and March 2025. 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 October 2024 and March 2025. 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 continuous support available.
------------------------------------	--

Engagement
<p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>This EIA accompanies a report to the Executive Lead Member of Children's Services on 25th October 2024.</p>

Equalities considerations - Impact Assessment

Age

Impact on public	Positive
Impact on staff	Neutral
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 over 600 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. 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 5,000 adults with disabilities open to social care that are not in residential accommodation or 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, 67% of the support provided by Citizens Advice was accessed by households with a disability or long-term health condition.</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	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	

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 January 2024, around 45 % of Black or Black British adults and 31% of Asian or Asian British adults reported they occasionally, hardly ever, or are never, able to keep comfortably warm in their home in the past two weeks, compared with around 18% of 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 February 2024 that the proportion of all adults finding it difficult to afford their: energy bills was 40%; rent or mortgage payments 35%; and around 1 in 25 adults (4%) have reported that their household had run out of food and could not afford to buy more in the past two weeks.</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. Professionals supporting households in crisis will be able to apply for a 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 25th October 2024.

Overview Statement:

A summary assessment to show that due regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty has been paid, which is undertaken when a full EIA is not needed:

EIA reference number: 00714

Date of production of EIA for publication: 15/10/2024