

HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Decision Report

Decision Maker	Executive Lead Member for Children's Services
Date:	17 May 2022
Title:	DWP Household Support Fund April – September 2022
Report From:	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 the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) Household Support Fund Extension across Hampshire for the period April – September 2022. This report seeks approval from the Executive Lead Member for spend and grant funding to organisations in support of vulnerable households via the connect4communities programme.
2. The expectation is that the grant should primarily be used to support households in the most need particularly those including children and pensioners who would otherwise struggle with energy bills, food and water bills. Energy bills may be of particular concern to low income households during the period of the scheme and Local Authorities should especially consider how they can support households with the cost of energy. It can also be used to support households with essential costs related to those items and with wider essential costs. In exceptional cases of genuine emergency it can additionally be used to support housing costs where existing housing support schemes do not meet this exceptional need.

Recommendation(s)

3. It is recommended that funding of up to £575,000 is provided in grants to expand existing community pantry provision and to organisations seeking to further develop a broader offer alongside the pantries to include health services, employment support and other services funded by means other than the DWP Household Support Fund extension. Community pantries will ensure a sustainable source of support for food poverty is in place beyond the period of the grant. Such grant will be provided on terms to be agreed by the Director of Children's Services and in accordance with the grant criteria set out in paragraph 16.

4. It is recommended that a grant of £810,000 is made available to the Citizens Advice Service to provide emergency financial support to vulnerable households with fuel bills. Such grant will be provided on terms to be agreed by the Director of Children's Services and in accordance with the grant criteria set out in paragraph 16.
5. It is recommended 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 (as set out in paragraph 16) for targeted financial support for those in need, in consultation with the Executive Lead Member up to the total value of £300,000.
6. It is recommended that a total of £500,500 is allocated to district and borough councils in Hampshire for exceptional housing support which meets the DWP grant criteria described in paragraph 31. Such grant will be provided on terms to be agreed by the Director of Children's Services and in accordance with the DWP grant criteria set out in paragraphs 16 and 33.
7. It is recommended that a further £3,223,920 is allocated to district and borough councils in Hampshire for support to vulnerable pensioners and other households in accordance with the DWP criteria set out in paragraph 16.
8. It is recommended that the Executive Lead Member approves the grant of £752,440 funding to schools, colleges and early years setting for a discretionary grant to support vulnerable households with children in accordance with the grant guidance set out in paragraph 16.
9. 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 2-8 to organisations delivering services that meet the criteria of the grant set out in paragraph 16 in consultation with the Executive Lead Member.

Executive Summary

10. This report seeks to detail the proposed approach and offer for the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) Household Support Fund Extension across Hampshire. A key aim for the connect4communities programme will be to continue to support sustainable and environmentally beneficial food poverty support.

Background

11. In the Spring Statement delivered on the 23 March 2022, the Chancellor announced that the funding for the Household Support Fund will continue to help households with the cost of essentials such as food, clothing and

utilities.

12. Due to Hampshire schools breaking up for the Easter holidays on the 8th April, the Executive Lead Member for Children's Services approved the decision to issue food vouchers to eligible children at a value of £15 per child per week in advance of the guidance being received by the local authority. The decision was made on the assumption that because this was an extension to an existing grant, the guidance would remain unchanged.
13. Approval was given on 1st April for £733,560 of funding for schools, colleges and early years providers who were more than two miles from a connect4communities pantry so that they could provide food vouchers to eligible families. For schools less than two miles from a connect4communities pantry, £479,639 was funded from the October – March Household Support Fund to the pantries for eligible families to collect.
14. Funding for free school meal vouchers was made available to:
 - All children who are eligible for benefits related Free School Meals (FSM)
 - All children with a social worker
 - All children open to early help services
 - 16–18-year-olds previously eligible for FSM
 - All 2–4-year-olds accessing childcare and eligible for Early Years Pupil Premium.
15. The final guidance relating to the grant extension was shared with local authorities on 20 April 2022 ([Household Support Fund \(1 April 2022 to 30 September 2022\): final guidance for county councils and unitary authorities in England - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)). The guidance confirms that Hampshire County Councils allocation is £7,124,127.25 to be spent from 01 April 2022 to 30 September 2022. 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.
16. The expectation is that the grant should primarily be used to support households in the most need particularly those including children and pensioners who would otherwise struggle with energy bills, food and water bills. Energy bills may be of particular concern to low income households during the period of the scheme and Local Authorities should especially consider how they can support households with the cost of energy. It can also be used to support households with essential costs related to those items and with wider essential costs. In exceptional cases of genuine emergency it can additionally be used to support housing costs where existing housing support schemes do not meet this exceptional need.
17. The main change to the grant relating to the earlier period is that at least one third of the total funding must be ring fenced to support households with

children (rather than 50% previously) and at least one third must be ring fenced to support pensioners, with the remaining amount to other households genuinely in need of support. A significant proportion of the previous grants over the last two years have been allocated to food vouchers for eligible children during the school holidays, this new criterion means we are no longer able to offer support to households with children in this way.

Consultation

18. A variety of stakeholders have been consulted so that existing local provision and need can be identified, risks in respect of duplication of funding can be addressed and emerging ideas validated or challenged. The engagement has included Adult Health and Care, Community Pantries, Citizens Advice Service, housing associations, and District Councils.

The Proposed Hampshire Offer

Financial Context

19. Table One below gives a high-level illustration on how the grant could be allocated between the types of households according to the DWP criteria.

Table One: Household Support Fund Extension breakdown

	£
Administration (at 5%)	356,205
Households with Children	2,255,974
Pensioners	2,255,974
Other Households	2,255,974
Total grant	7,124,127

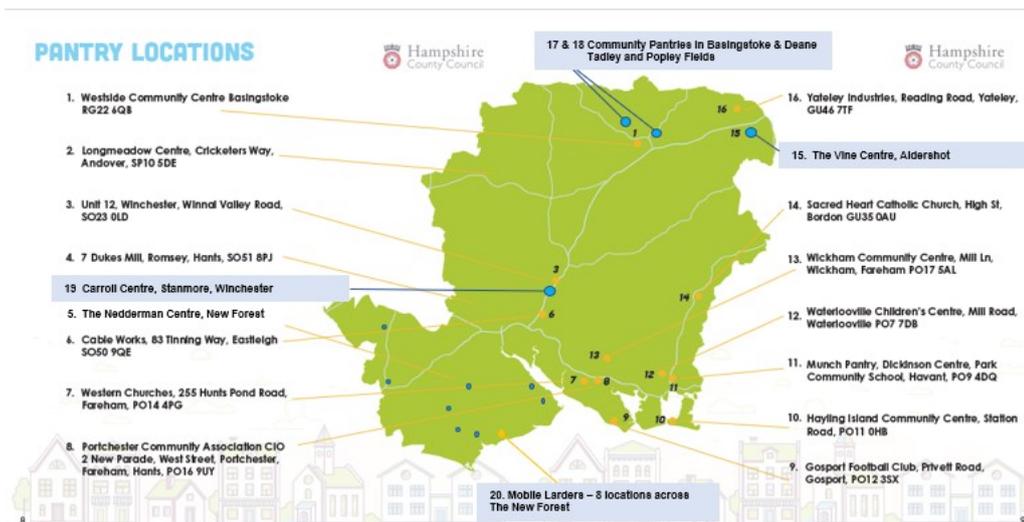
20. Funding has already been spent for the Easter holidays for households with children of £733,560 and therefore, the amount remaining that can be targeted to households with children is **£1,522,414**.

Provision for all vulnerable households

21. It is proposed that funding is provided to continue to support the network of existing community pantries to provide sustainable alternatives to free school meal vouchers and support to any vulnerable household including pensioners and households without children.
22. 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 £575,000. Through the grant, we will also work with organisations to provide a network through which further support can be offered to work with the

community pantries to develop a broader support offer including health services, employment support and financial support and advisory services, funded by means other than the DWP Household Support Grant.

23. 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.
24. The map below shows where the community pantries are located across the Hampshire, with the new pantries marked in blue:



25. Supported by funding from previous Household Support Fund grants, the number of community pantries in Hampshire has increased from 16 to 20 and the target of doubling the number of households per week accessing the pantries has been exceeded.
26. Governance is in place to allow the connect4communities programme to work effectively with the network of pantries. An operational group of pantry managers provides support and best practice and a strategic group with members from the County Council, food providers, the voluntary sector and other groups aims to ensure the future sustainability of the pantries and develop joint solutions to shared problems.
27. It is recommended that a grant of £675,000 is made available to the Citizens Advice Service to support the most vulnerable households in Hampshire. During engagement with stakeholders, it was felt that, when the initial connect4communities programme was set up, targeting this funding at fuel

bills will reduce the potential for double funding with other grants available and asking Citizens Advice to administer the fund will ensure that any financial support can be provided alongside broader support and advice. Citizens Advice are also well placed to undertake ID and benefits checks to mitigate potential risks of fraudulent claims.

28. Citizens Advice will require an additional £135,000 administration fee to implement the support. It is anticipated that over 4,500 households will benefit from this funding.
29. It is recommended that a grant of £300,000 is made available for organisations who wish to support their local community with food and fuel poverty, particularly in rural areas. Any funded support must meet the DWP grant criteria and use of such a grant fund will enable a flexible and responsive approach to addressing local needs as and when they are identified. This fund will also provide support to households who may not be able to access other initiatives set out in this report.
30. As per the previous grant round, it is recommended that £500,500 is distributed to district and borough councils to support households with exceptional housing costs, as identified in the DWP grant guidance.

Targeted provision

31. It is recommended that the Executive Lead Member approves the grant of £752,440 funding to schools, colleges and early years setting such that they have a discretionary grant to support vulnerable households with children in accordance. Schools will be able to provide food vouchers if they feel that is the most appropriate form of support, however any vouchers should not be explicitly associated with school holiday periods as there is insufficient funding available to support all vulnerable households in this way.
32. The Household Support Fund criteria includes provision for support of housing costs, in exceptional cases of genuine emergency where existing housing support schemes do not meet this exceptional need. The grant cannot be used:
 - For ongoing support for rent or mortgage payments
 - When eligibility for Discretionary Housing Payments (DHPs) must be considered first, and
 - Where there is a statutory risk of homelessness and therefore a duty of support is owed through the Homelessness Prevention Grant (HPG).
33. It is recommended that a further £3,223,920 is distributed to district and borough councils for support for vulnerable pensioners and other households as per the DWP grant guidance. In order to ensure an equitable provision across Hampshire it is proposed that;
 - Individuals in receipt of pension credit are awarded an £80 food voucher

- Individuals in receipt of council tax benefit are awarded a £75 food voucher.
34. It is recommended that district and borough councils can top slice some funding, increasing their grant allocation if additional administration costs are required to distribute the grant.

Administration Costs

35. 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 can deliver the programme.
36. The County Council intends to use up to £344,597 (5%) of the funding to cover reasonable administration costs for all partners which will include relevant staff costs and administration costs of partner organisations.
37. The DWP is keen that a telephone helpline is provided to help signpost households to support funded through the Household Support Fund. It is proposed that the existing Hampshire County Council Childrens Services and General Helplines are used for this purpose and funding will be allocated to provide additional capacity to meet the increased scope of the helpline.
38. 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.
39. 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>)
40. 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

41. 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:

connect4communities – Hampshire County Council Household Support Fund Extension	
Component	Funding allocation (£)
Community Pantries	575,000
Citizen’s Advice	675,000
Community Grants	300,000
Exceptional Housing Support to district and borough councils	500,500
Schools Discretionary Grant	752,440
District and Borough Targeted Fund	3,223,920
Administration costs	344,597
Contingency	19,110
Sub total	6,390,567
Easter Holiday Vouchers for vulnerable children	733,560
Total plan	7,124,127

Performance

42. 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.
43. Third party organisations will be required to report to the County Council on how they have spent the funding provided, in line with the DWP grant criteria set out in paragraph 16.
44. Allocation of funding across the grant criteria set out in paragraph 16 will be monitored to ensure spend remains compliant with the terms of the grant.

Consultation and Equalities

45. Consultation and engagement have been undertaken as part of developing and delivering the connect4communities programme.
46. School and colleges have previously been consulted regarding their preferred method of supporting children with food by way of a questionnaire.
47. An Equalities Impact Assessment has been completed and will be published after the decision day.

Climate Change Impact Assessment

48. 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.

Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation

49. The carbon mitigation tool and climate change adaptation tools were not applicable on this occasion because the decision relates to a programme that is strategic/administrative in nature.

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:	No
People in Hampshire enjoy being part of strong, inclusive communities:	Yes
OR	

Other Significant Links

Links to previous Member decisions:	
<u>Title</u>	<u>Date</u>
Direct links to specific legislation or Government Directives	
<u>Title</u>	<u>Date</u>

Section 100 D - Local Government Act 1972 - background documents	
<p>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.)</p>	
<u>Document</u>	<u>Location</u>
None	

EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT:

1. Equality Duty

The County Council has a duty under Section 169 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 169(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 169(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:

See guidance at <https://hants.sharepoint.com/sites/ID/SitePages/Equality-Impact-Assessments.aspx?web=1>

Insert in full your **Equality Statement** which will either state:

- why you consider that the project/proposal will have a low or no impact on groups with protected characteristics or*
- will give details of the identified impacts and potential mitigating actions*