



## Appendix A Household Support Fund Policy October 2024 - March 2025

### Bristol City Council - Household Support Fund Policy October 2024 - March 2025

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#### 1. Background

On 2 September 2024 the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions announced a sixth round of the Household Support Fund was announced for the period October 2024 to March 2025, with £421 million being released to County Councils and Unitary Authorities in England, to support those most in need with the cost of food, energy and water bills, phone, broadband and clothing and in exceptional cases, housing costs. This funding is for six months.

Monies must be distributed and received by recipients by 31 March 2025, with the council having to provide their initial delivery plans by 01 November 2024.

The funding to councils on behalf of the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) is made under section 31 of the Local Government Act 2003, who will administer the scheme and provide direct assistance to vulnerable households and families with children particularly affected by the increase in the cost of living.

#### 2. Period Covered

This further extension to the Household Support Fund is for six months only, to enable further support to vulnerable households and individuals from 01 October 2024 to 31 March 2025.

#### 3. Household Support Fund

##### 3.1 Funding available

Bristol City Council will receive a grant of £4,039,965 in arrears and based on two management information returns; an interim return in January 2025 and final return in April 2025. These will be based on the amounts committed in quarter one, and then for the full six months.

##### 3.2 Eligibility Criteria

Eligibility criteria has broadly remained the same over all five rounds of funding but is summarised below.

- Can be used to assist households with the costs of; food, gas/electricity, water, phone/broadband, essential household items (e.g. white goods, beds/bedding, clothing, baby/sanitary products) and housing costs (in exceptional circumstance)
- Monies are not ringfenced to any proportion of funding for any cohort of people.
- The fund can be used to provide supplementary advice services to award recipients, including debt and benefit advice, but should not be the primary function.
- Local authorities need to consider those groups who may not have benefitted from any of the recent cost of living support.
- No application is needed if households requiring assistance can be determined in advance.

- Every local authority must, at least in part, have an application basis grant provision i.e. residents should have the opportunity to come forward to ask for support.
- Individuals, regardless of their immigration status are eligible to ensure a basic safety net of support, but only when need is in excess of existing aid routes.
- Cannot be used for advice or mortgage related costs.
- The scheme must also be adequately advertised.

In addition;

- Funding for evaluation activities, including data collection, analysis and report writing, will now be considered eligible spend as an administrative cost.
- Any publicity material for the scheme must make it clear that this funding is being provided by the UK Government.
- Delivery plans must be signed off by your Section 151 Officer and the responsible Cabinet Member before submission to DWP.

### **3.3 Implementation of fund**

The fund can be used;

- For existing schemes and other support which deliver the same outcomes and where the need is greatest but need to be mindful of possible funding overlaps and must be in addition to any amounts previously committed by the council.
- To provide in cash, vouchers and/or advice.
- Via distribution of grants using the voluntary/third sector.
- For administration, however, these costs should be kept to a minimum, to maximise the overarching funds available to support our most vulnerable citizens.

### **3.4 Reporting structure**

All public authorities must comply with the Public Sector Equality Duty and MI is required to be kept and maintained by the relevant organisations and provided to the Council to report on delivery of agreed objectives and actual spend.

### **3.5 Receipt of funds**

The grant will be paid in arrears and based on two quarterly returns with the final MI return at the end of April 2025.

#### 4. Approved /Proposed Spend

The table below shows the proposed amount of monies to be agreed.

Award	Spend Value	Comments
Targeted support for 2 – 16+ who receive Free School Meals and/or Pupil Premium over school holidays within last six months of the financial year 2024/25.	£2,043,000	This is a £15 voucher, per child for the October 2024 and February 2025 half terms, and £30 per child for Christmas 2024 and Easter 2025.  This is an extension of the previous FSM reach. Vouchers will be supplied which will allow the recipient to choose which supermarket they wish to.
Application based support to cover those who still need assistance with Housing Costs (over and above HB/UC) via the Discretionary Housing Payment fund.	£100,000	Advertised assistance to help c300 low-income households in additional need with housing costs.  This will be paid via the Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP) fund with support being enabled in addition to any government (DWP) grant.
Targeted support to assist those with No Resource to Public Funds (including Syrian/ Afghan Refugees and Asylum Seekers households known directly to BCC).	£120,000	This is being administered by direct award using the existing provisions via Housing Options to the Red Cross.  This will assist c250 households at approx. £400 on average, plus administration costs (£20k), where families are on low incomes and unable to access state benefits and are not being assisted by other existing refugee schemes.
Care Leavers and Foster Children payments	£220,000	To assist c100 care leavers and c450 foster children to get vouchers at £400 each, to assist with their food and heating costs. To be administered by Children, Families and Safer Communities Directorate.
Bristol Age UK	£50,000	To provide emergency support to older people who are struggling financially due to the cost-of-living pressures (e.g. high inflation on food, fuel, and housing costs).
Feeding Bristol	£500,000	Targeted support to assist city wide households in need with food poverty via a variety of solutions.  This includes; supporting existing food pantries, increasing food supply (via FareShare), extending food parcels beyond the HAF programme, allowing Community Groups and Organisations and Welcoming Spaces to access funding for the food support, and ensuring funds assist those most vulnerable.
Centre for Sustainable Energy	£380,667	Support at least 760 vulnerable households, who are negatively impacted by rising energy costs, who can't afford to pay their

		<p>utility bills, or who need emergency support to install or repair their heating system.</p> <p>Eligible households will be low-incomes and have a clear need for assistance to pay their energy bills and stay warm over the year, but also targeted to pensioners, especially those that have lost out as a result to changes to the universal Winter Fuel Allowance.</p>
Advice Sector (Advice Grants)	£404,000	<p>Grant to several organisations throughout the city, led by Bristol Advice Centre, to provide information, support, and guidance, allowing it to be used to tackle root causes, as opposed to immediate need.</p> <p>This will enable ACFA: The Advice Network, to help with outreach and longer term focus and will operate in partnership with local community hubs and welcoming spaces in East, North and South Bristol, and will add circa 9 FTE across 14 organisations.</p> <p>This will also enable advice and support to be targeted to pensioners, especially those that have lost out as a result to changes to the universal Winter Fuel Allowance.</p>
Support for disabled households	£25,000	Targeted support to disabled households to assist with food/fuel poverty via grants awarded by WECIL and its partners.
Administration, communications, and marketing.	£197,298	This is just under 5% of the total award and to assist with the cost of administration.
<b>Total Spend</b>	<b>£4,039,965</b>	
<b>Total Grant</b>	<b>£4,039,965</b>	