



Appendix A Household Support Fund Policy April – September 2024

Bristol City Council - Household Support Fund Policy April – September 2024

1. Background

Following the Chancellor's recent budget statement, a fifth round of Household Support Fund was announced for the period April to September 2024, 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 only as opposed to previous versions which have been for the whole year.

Monies must be distributed and received by recipients by 30 September 2024, with the council having to provide their initial delivery plans by 10 May 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 only for six months, as opposed to the previous two iterations of twelve months, to enable further support to vulnerable households and individuals from 01 April to 30 September 2024.

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 on 19 July 2024 and final return on 25 October 2024. 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.

There have been some minor additions for this latest round of funding, as below.

- 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 October 2024.

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 first six months of the financial year 2024/25.	£2,043,000	This is a £30 voucher for Easter and £15 for May school holidays, plus £45 voucher per child for the summer holidays. 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 to cover all households not covered by below/above, via the Local Crisis and Prevention Fund	£498,000	Advertised assistance to help c3,000 low-income household in crisis with food/fuel /furniture poverty and associated administration/staff costs. (£350k already agreed in 2024/25 budget + £148k respectively). Awards will be made via vouchers will be supplied which allows the recipient to choose which supermarket they wish to use or on fuel bills and/or essential household goods.
Application based support to cover those who still need assistance with Housing Costs (over and above HB/UC) via the Discretionary Housing Payment fund.	£150,000	Advertised assistance to help c400 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/ Afghanistan 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 Older People's forum	£2,000	Fund quarterly newsletter, to 3,000 members in hard copy across their networks. The focus is on the cost-of-living crisis, with information on benefits and support to meet the COL challenges.

Bristol Age UK	£25,000	To provide emergency support to older people who are struggling financially due to the cost-of-living crisis (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	£340,000	Support at least 740 vulnerable households, who are negatively impacted by rising energy costs, who can't afford to pay their utility bills, or who need emergency support to install or repair their heating system. Eligible households will be low-incomes and have a clear need for assistance to pay their energy bills and stay warm over the year.
Advice Sector (Advice Grants)	£404,000	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. 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.
Support for disabled households	£10,000	Targeted support to disabled households to assist with food/fuel poverty via grants awarded by WECIL, Bristol Disability Equality Forum and Bristol Reclaiming Independent Living.
Administration, communications, and marketing.	£96,506	This is 2.5% of the total award and to assist with the cost of administration.
Total Spend	£4,408,506	
Total Grant	£4,039,965	
(Present) Overspend	£368,541	This will be reduced to zero by using a preexisting credit of £368,541 with our voucher payment supplier (Hawk) due to an over ordering of credit from various rounds of the Household Support Fund.